

Last week we discussed **Matthew 5:31-32** – Jesus said: **“It has been said, “Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.” But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”** What is Jesus saying? Why?

Johann Christoph Arnold (1940-2017) said; “The majority of Christians today believe that divorce and remarriage are morally and biblically permissible.” What is marriage?

Isaiah 62:4-5 – Isaiah wrote regarding the relationship between God (the bridegroom) and Israel (the bride): “...for the Lord will take delight in you, and your land will be married, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.” Who is the bride and who is the groom in this marriage?

Revelation 21:2 – John wrote: “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.” God loves his church so much that he wants the best for them.

If we as the church are married to God, what does this tell us about marriage?

David Fleer (1954-) said; “Jesus says, “No lust,” “no anger,” “pray for your enemies.”...These are not ideals beyond reach, an interim ethic, all about the hereafter. This is reprogramming for the community who call themselves the church of Christ.” How can we be reprogrammed in Christ?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) “Marriage is more than your love for each other. It has a higher dignity and power. For it is God’s holy ordinance by means of which he wills to perpetuate the human race until the end of time.” How should we consider marriage?

Matthew 5:33-37 – **“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord’ But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your heads, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’, and your ‘No’, ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”**

What do you think Jesus is saying? What does “swearing” mean in this context?

The primary Greek words for “swear” in Matthew 5 are **ὀμνύω (omnyō)**, meaning “to swear an oath,” and **ἐπιορκέω (epiorkeō)**, meaning “to swear falsely” or “break an oath,” alongside the noun **ὄρκος (horkos)** for “oath” itself, as Jesus teaches to “swear not at all,” but rather to let your “Yes” be yes and your “No” be no, making all oaths unnecessary by emphasizing truthfulness.

Peter Riedemann (1506-1556) was an early Anabaptist writer and Hutterian leader. He is considered the second founder of the Hutterite brotherhood, a branch of Anabaptist Christianity. Riedemann was born in Hirschberg (Silesia) and died in Brodsko (Slovakia). Anabaptists were radical reformers during the 16th-century Protestant Reformation, emphasizing believer’s baptism (adults only, rejecting infant baptism), a voluntary church separate from the state, and nonresistance (pacifism). This movement, which gave rise to the Mennonites, Amish, and Hutterites, sought a church modeled after the New Testament, composed of committed followers of Jesus, leading to intense persecution but ultimately spreading globally.

Riedemann says: “It is primarily Christ’s purpose, as Matthew 5 shows, to lead us to a more perfect righteousness than that to which God’s people of old were led...”. What is he saying here? What does this mean to you?

“That is one reason Christ forbids swearing. He wants to invite his people, those who have been called by him, to be more faithful to what they have been taught and to live more righteously than the people of the old covenant.”

By not swearing an oath to God, how does this change our relationship with God? How does this differ from the time Jesus was in?

“A second reason is our weakness. In our own strength, we are unable to do either small or great things unless God works in us.”

What is **Riedemann** telling us here? If this is true, then why should we not swear unto God?

“Those who are devoted to God will live according to his truth. They will allow the truth to rule and guide them, and will obey what it inspires, speaks, and acts through them. ...God himself is truth and is dwelling in them.” Why do we not need an oath?

Scot McKnight (1953 -) is a New Testament scholar and historian of early Christianity. He is an American theologian and author who has written widely on the historical Jesus, early Christianity, and Christian living.

“So the way to read this passage is this: because he values honesty so much, he uses a concrete example of a world that establishes dishonesty. Jesus wants a world of utter honesty, and that would mean, among other things, nonparticipation in the use of oaths.”

Do we live in a world of honesty?

“We live this text into our world when we live with utter honesty and work against systems where dishonesty has become systemic...”

I would argue, then, that followers of Jesus are to tell a judge who requests an oath that they are bound by Jesus not to use oaths because their words are honest.” What is McKnight saying here? Is this the oath that Jesus is referring to?

Romans 13:1 – Paul wrote: “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”

If our leaders and governments are established by God, how are we to act? Do we only follow the rules and laws we like?

Francis de Sales (1567-1622) was a Roman Catholic bishop of Geneva and saint. He was a Savoyard Catholic prelate who served as Bishop of Geneva. He became noted for his deep faith and his gentle approach to the religious divisions in his land resulting from the Protestant Reformation.

“Make it your rule never knowingly to say what is not strictly true...We are told in holy scripture that God’s Holy Spirit will not abide with the false or double-minded.” What is de Sales telling us here? Why is it a good idea to always be honest?

If you are always honest, what does this action tell God about your faith?

Eberhard Arnold (1883-1935) was a German publisher and founder of the Bruderhof Community in 1920. He escaped from the Nazis in 1933 and died from a leg injury in 1935.

“Jesus is saying to us: ‘When you are truly living you are truthful and genuine in all your words.’ So you will be glad when you are revealed in your weakness, for you no longer seek your own honor.” Do you take criticism well? How are we to act? Why?

Thomas Merton (1915 – 1968) was a Trappist monk, bestselling author, and contemplative. He was a theologian, mystic, poet, and social activist. He was a professed member of the Abbey of Our Lady of Gethsemani, near Bardstown, Kentucky, living there from 1941 to his death.

“In the end, the problem of sincerity is a problem of love. A sincere person is not so much one who sees the truth and manifests it as he sees it, but one who loves the truth with a pure love. The whole problem of our times is not lack of knowledge but lack of love.”