

*Be Faithful to God's Word, Your Wedding Covenant, and The Gospel*  
Dr. Deric Thomas

July 24, 2017

Luke 16:16-18

## **Message Summary**

The gospel features the tensions of truth and love, holiness and grace. In our passage today, Jesus resumes his critique of the Pharisees by indicting not only their love of money (Lk. 16:1-13, 19-31), but their worldly lusts and faithlessness (vv. 16-18). In love and grace, Jesus preaches truth and commands holiness by insisting on three types of faithfulness from his people: God's Word, wedding covenants, and the gospel. While in stark contrast to the Pharisees' fickle devotion, Jesus teaches that such faithfulness is the natural and essential outflow of the gospel of grace.

Scripture is among God's greatest gifts. It is a treasure trove of truth and a fountain of wisdom. Those who neglect it inevitably run to the world for wisdom, and commit spiritual adultery. Jesus begins by defending the Bible's enduring truth: as real as the very earth on which we stand, this Word is even more everlasting (v. 17). The human authors of Scripture wrote as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pt. 1:21), writing the law of the Lord which is "perfect, reviving the soul" (Ps. 19:7).

The Pharisees abused this gift. Marriage is celebrated throughout Scripture as a gift of God, whereby two become one and celebrate companionship, intimacy, and offspring as they love one another sacrificially. In our fallen world (Gen. 3), human relationships exhibit conflict, tension, sin, and often separation and divorce. The Pharisees, however, abused God's pattern of marriage even more. They divorced their wives for any reason they chose, even for things as small as burning supper. Further, they misinterpreted God's law to suggest it endorsed their unfaithfulness! Jesus made clear that their behavior was nothing short of adulterous unfaithfulness to God and spouse (v. 18). From the beginning, God created one man and one woman in marriage in a permanent covenant. To break this pattern, with only the limited exceptions (sexual immorality, cf. Mt. 19:9, and an unbelieving spouse's abandonment, cf. 1 Cor. 7:13-15), is adultery.

But praise the Lord, there is grace in the gospel! The solution to all relational strife, between God and neighbor, is not obedience to the law. It is the gospel. The only one who fully held in tension truth and love, holiness and grace, was the Man preaching this very text. Marriage is not ultimately about companionship, love, or offspring. It is a testimony to God's eternal love for His church, exhibited throughout the ages. Thus, those who have neglected God's Word and pattern for marriage in any way find in the gospel grace to be forgiven, justified, and one day glorified in the perfect Garden City and marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 21-22).

## **WHY IT MATTERS**

### ***Digging Deeper***

How does the gospel address the tensions between truth and love, holiness and grace? How does the life and ministry of Jesus teach us how to preach the truth in love (Eph. 4:15)?

What are other examples of gospel truths veiled but still visible in the Old Testament, but clarified more in the New Testament? How does this passage teach us to read the Old Testament with gospel lenses?

Why is Christ so concerned with marriage's permanency on earth? What is at stake if we throw away faithfulness to our marriages as Jesus teaches? Cf. Mt. 19:3-9; Eph. 5:22-33.

## **NOW WHAT DO WE DO?**

### ***Group Discussion & Application***

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*Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don't have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.*

1. Do you seek to maintain the gospel tension of truth and love, holiness and grace, or do you emphasize one and neglect the other? How can you more robustly represent both this week?
2. Are you being faithful to read, study, pray through, memorize, meditate, and intake Scripture? What are the best times this week for you to begin such practices?
3. What worldly sources of wisdom (e.g., social media, newspapers/news media, entertainment) are competitors to the priority of God's Biblical wisdom in your life? How can you prioritize Biblical wisdom?
4. Do you hold marriage and its earthly permanency in as high of regard as Jesus did (cf. Heb. 13:4)?
5. Are you honoring your spouse the way Christ exhibits, or do you throw faithfulness to your spouse away on a whim like the Pharisees?
6. Are there any forms of sexual immorality or unfaithfulness in your life?
7. Are you looking to obedience to the law, or the gospel, for hope amidst the strife of human relationships (cf. Gal. 3:1-6)? How can you more depend on gospel hope this week?

## ***Prayer***

- Pray for Our Church:
  - Thank God for his perfect faithfulness to his bride, even though our own faithfulness often vacillates (2 Tm. 2:11-13).
  - Pray that the Lord would give our church a hunger for His Word, and faithfulness to constantly receive it and depend on it for life and godliness
- Pray for Our Community:
  - Pray that marriages at Christ Fellowship would faithfully exhibit the gospel for those in the Gadsden area.
  - Pray that we would faithfully preach the Word to Gadsden with truth and love, holiness and grace. Pray that constant intake of the Word would result in faithful gospel proclamation to ourselves, families, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and any others the Lord puts in our path.
- Pray for Our World:
  - Pray that God would fulfill his promise that "people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God" (v. 29), and allow our church to be part of it through prayer and proclamation.
  - Pray for Greg Johnson and his family in the Central Asia Project. Pray specifically that the Lord would, by 2025, establish a church in every town in Kyrgyzstan of more than 10,000 people, and from these plant churches in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan. Pray also that the Lord would open doors to push south towards Iran and Afghanistan, "*where Christ has not been named*" (Rm. 15:20). Go to [centralasiaproject.com](http://centralasiaproject.com) to learn more.