

Harmony of the Gospels

Two parables on prayer: the persistent widow, and the Pharisee and the tax collector Luke 18:1-14

- Prayer is never to be motivated or guided by our perception of how or how quickly the prayer is answered.
- This is one of the “how much more” parables in which if an unrighteous judge would eventually answer the request of a persistent widow, now much more will our righteous God and Father hear our requests and answer in the appropriate time and manner.
- God never capriciously withholds what is best for His people. He does answer speedily but never in rash haste.
- Jesus ends this teaching with a lament on how little faith He observes from the people toward the one true and living God.

Two parables on prayer: the persistent widow, and the Pharisee and the tax collector Luke 18:1-14

- The only standing we have before God is the grace He extends to us. There is never a time when I can come before God and expect or demand that He listen to me based on my righteousness.
- The only acceptable attitude of prayer is one of humility (see Isaiah 66:2)
- Willful persistent sin negatively impacts prayer in the sense that it clouds our spirit in listening to God's promptings and lessens our discernment of His will. The Pharisee here was so intent on his superiority over the tax collector he was not open to God's correction or direction.

Conflict with Pharisaic teaching on divorce

Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12

- Jesus continues the general journey toward Jerusalem. He also continues to do the works that prove His is the Messiah.
- The Pharisees will now increasingly challenge the teachings of Jesus and always to their peril.
- The grounds for ending a marriage through divorce was one of great debates among the Pharisees.
 - School of Shammai: A wife could be put away only for the cause of adultery.
 - School of Hillel: A wife could be put away for anything the husband considered an affront to him. The classic example given was that spoiling her husband's dinner fell under this interpretation.

Conflict with Pharisaic teaching on divorce

Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12

- Jesus appeals to scripture as giving the authoritative instruction on this subject as in any other.
- Jesus specifically goes back to creation and then God's expressed purpose for his creation.
 - God created two types of human beings, male and female
 - God created a relationship between the two that was so strong and permanent that it is described as "one flesh".
 - God has joined two people in the marriage relationship together. Jesus warns against any person dissolving this union.

Conflict with Pharisaic teaching on divorce

Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12

- The Pharisees counter with a question based on Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Their question mischaracterizes this scripture as a command to “give her a certificate of divorce and send her away.”
 - Jesus brings this scripture into proper focus by characterizing it as it really is, a limitation on a practice that was already in place.
 - Jesus points out that as human beings we often insist on our own selfish desires rather than to allow God to change our heart.

Conflict with Pharisaic teaching on divorce

Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12

- The Pharisees counter with a question based on Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Their question mischaracterizes this scripture as a command to “give her a certificate of divorce and send her away.”
 - The point of the prohibition of the woman returning to her first husband after being put away, remarrying and being put away again was to reveal that marriage is a serious commitment not to be taken casually in any sense.
 - Jesus again immediately appeals back to God’s purpose for marriage at creation.

Conflict with Pharisaic teaching on divorce

Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12

- Jesus reveals the motive behind the question of the Pharisees with the strong statement that whoever divorces his wife except for the cause of sexual immorality and marries another commits adultery.
 - The obvious desire to be able to put a wife away for any reason was to be able to marry another woman. Jesus called out this “serial adultery” under the guise of keeping the law.
- The shocked response of the disciples reveals the casual way marriage was viewed.
 - Jesus responds by the fact that there are physical and spiritual reasons not to marry. Celibacy is presented as the only alternative to marriage.

Example of little children in relation to the kingdom Matthew 19:13-15; **Mark 10:13-16**; Luke 18:15-17

- Small children would be the most insignificant of all classes of people. There is nothing they could offer to further anyone's cause. The disciples acted as if Jesus was too important to be bothered by them.
- Jesus indignation and rebuke reveals God's heart for those who are dependent and helpless. Those who would hinder anyone from coming to God always invokes His deep displeasure.
- Jesus uses the occasion to reveal that everyone who comes to Him must realize how helpless and dependent we are.
- A wonderful scene indeed as Jesus gives personal attention to each child.