

New Testament May 19: Was Jesus Married? (Week 20)

333: May 19: Was Jesus Married? (New Testament Week 20)

Come, Follow Me:

Housekeeping

1. Prayer
2. Devotional
3. Nugget
4. Reading Review (Last week then this week)
5. Lesson
 - a. Questions and comments
 - b. Marriage!
 - i. The ideal of marriage
 - ii. The idea of marriage
 - iii. Present reality of marriage
 - iv. History of marriage
 - v. Heavenly marriage
 - vi. Was Jesus married?
6. Preview Mt 21-23; Mk 11; Lk 19-20; Jn 12 (Beginning of the end)
7. Conclusion

Prayer (Treat ourselves and others as whole people)

Devotional (What is it to be a person? Think about all the people who see as you go throughout your day. Each one of them has a history, desires, fears, concerns, relationships, hopes, dreams. What an extraordinary thing it is, to be surrounded by souls. Invitation: Remind yourself that we don't know ourselves as well as we think, let alone anyone else! Be open to being wrong. Embrace it. When people challenge you, stay curious whether it is true. When people surprise you, stay curious about what they are like, why they do what they do.

Nugget: Redaction criticism.

Reading review from last week: Luke 12-17; John 11

Invitation and reflection: Commit to principles of well-being and sustainably follow through.

Luke 12-17

12: Note we have more Sermon on the Mount material here

Be ready/watchful (We can live in such a way that we are ready for whatever happens, death, second coming, etc) (Hulk: I'm always angry. I'm always hurting. I'm always doing my job in such a way that my boss could visit)

Cost of discipleship: How does Jesus/the gospel divide us? (When we commit to truth and healthy principles, we challenge roles, expectations, systems. But we need to make sure we are truly committed to health, not just being a jerk).

13: Parable of the fig tree reminds me of Jacob 5.

Narrow door: Again, God pays attention to our *behavior*, not what we say or whether we think we have a relationship with God.

14: Humility. Don't assume, don't be entitled. Put yourself in a lower place, work hard, so people around you will lift you, put you where you belong, and be impressed.

Entitlement is even more annoying than arrogance.

Parable of the wedding feast is striking because the people are making excuses that are allowed in the Jewish Law! Also likely a reference to Gentiles, but we can take away from it that sometimes being willing and showing up is more important than being special. :)

14:26! (Teaching NT/Gospel of Thomas story) Koan/hyperbole. "Hate father and mother..."

14:28-32. One of my very favorite and most useful teaching in all scripture. Before we start things, make sure we have the resources to follow through!! (I need to work on this) Tower/army. Strategy, wisdom, forethought.

15: Lost sheep, lost coin, lost son/soul.

Prodigal son: Truly a masterpiece. "Came to himself" was humble, "no longer a son, but a servant" The father "while still far away" ran toward him. Celebration, but the older son received the reward for his hard work, but also wanted a party. "J'etais le bon fils!" Very clever! Wayment calls this the Parable of the Prodigal *Sons*. Plural.

16: Unjust steward. A bit tricky to understand. The master rewards the servants diligence, even with all his problems. Jesus teaches disciples that we need to be able to work within the world as we get ready for the kingdom, as I understand this.

16:18 about divorce seems pretty random in its context

Rich man and Lazarus: apocalyptic reversal, but also a true principle that it is hard to develop character in comfort (though as Jesus says, with God it is possible). "Even if someone were raised from the dead" functions as irony/foreshadowing.

17: Sense of perspective (take the lower seats). The good we do in the world is the rent we pay for our space on earth. I LOVE that idea.

10 lepers healed: The nine go to the priest to fulfill the religious requirement, but the one, the outsider, shows gratitude and is saved through his faith.

“The kingdom of God is within you” (17:21)

This next section is where the idea of the rapture comes from

John 11

Jesus loved

Jesus wept (perhaps most impressive, since he knew all along what was going to happen, yet he still felt and grieved with those around him)

In John, raising of Lazarus was the immediate impetus

Reading Review

Reading: Mark 10; Matthew 19-20; Luke 18

Mark 10

So much fascinating stuff here! Jesus as usual demonstrates his masterful teaching. He explains the marriage laws are the result of “hardness of your hearts” and then appeals to creation to argue for the ideal: lifelong married partnership. His argument seems to be that by creating humans in such a way to have sex (join/one flesh are more sexual in Hebrew), God joins the man and woman who have sex. This has Apocalyptic tones, the idea that the end will restore the perfection of the beginning. (There are very interesting Jewish traditions about the original human being androgynous, which was then split into male and female).

We then have one of the most challenging teachings recorded in the gospels: Marriage is for life, and remarriage is adultery.

We must “receive the kingdom as a child”; Jesus blesses children (presence, wonder, love, forgiveness)

Jesus loves the rich young man, celebrates all he has done good, and then tells him what he can do to move forward on the path of discipleship.

It is very difficult to care about eternal things when we are physically comfortable. “All things are possible with God”. Perhaps Jesus means that God can make us into the types of people who can get good, whether or not we have riches.

30 The addition of “with persecution” is unexpected! The idea is Messianic recompense and abundance.

Jesus teaches an important lesson about status (again, highly valued/emphasized in the Greco-Roman world): Jesus overturns traditional ideas of status, and says to be a leader is to be a slave, to serve.

Healing of Bartimaeus: Again, notice the personal and colorful details in Mark. Jesus first asks what Bartimaeus desires... that's where God starts, and then works with faith.

Matt 19

Matthew's version is much more legalistic and somewhat more supportive of the Jewish law. Note that the "except for immoral behavior" exception is added in Matthew, not present in Mark.

We have another very difficult saying by Jesus (Jesus himself acknowledges it is difficult), about eunuchs. I again busted out the big three volume Matthew commentary for this:

"The saying about eunuchs exhibits a pattern typical of the wisdom tradition: the first two lines relate concrete facts about the everyday world and serve to introduce or illustrate the third line, which proclaims a truth--much less concrete--from the moral or religious sphere. In the present instance our maxim mentions three types of eunuchs. The first two are taken for granted: they are known entities. They thus serve to illustrate the third type, which is novel...In addition to the two sorts of eunuchs just introduced (castrated men and men who were born without the ability to reproduce) there is a third type, one accounted for only by religion. Members of this class are not literal castrates nor impotent by nature. They are indeed unmarried, but not because they cannot take a wife but rather they will not--because the duty placed upon them by the kingdom of heaven is such that it is best discharged outside the confines of marriage" (Davies and Allison, Matthew 19-28, International Critical Commentary, 22-23)

Both Jesus here (though the commentators I am reading believe this passage was put here by Matthew) and Paul in 1 Cor. 7 emphasize that celibacy is an *exception*, "not everyone has the gift". The scholars I read also find it significant that Jesus did not mention that he himself followed this path, another support to the idea he may have been married.

Remember that Paul brings up the same question in 1 Corinthians 7, quoting a member of the community who said "It is good not to have sex with a woman".

The early Christians believed that they were in the "not-yet" period between the ages. The Kingdom of God had not fully come, but Jesus had already died. Jesus suggested and Paul taught that all social order had been disrupted "neither free nor slave, male nor

female" (Galatians 3:28), which was probably a baptismal formula. This approach was likely one reason why women were leaders in early Christianity.

Jesus very well may have been celibate during his ministry as well (though I believe he was married). Remember that during a holy war, Israelites did not have sex (which is why David can't pin his sin on Uriah). As an apocalyptic Jew, Jesus may have applied that focus to his ministry.

Note that Matthew changes Mark's "Why do you call me good"? To "Why do you ask me about what is good" to avoid the implication that Jesus himself is not good! Matthew adds the bit about the twelve "ruling on twelve thrones" (virtually certainly historical, since it counts Judas among the Eschatological Rulers)

Matt 20

The parable of the workers likely referred to Jews vs. Gentiles, and teaches a beautiful idea that all of us have access to the love of God and salvation, wherever we may be on our paths

Matthew changes James and John's request to sit at Jesus' right and left hands to their mother, making the disciples look better.

Bartimaeus loses his name and becomes two blind men. Matthew likes doubles.

Luke 18

Parable of the Widow: Following up helps; God is eager to bless us

Pharisee and tax collector: Awareness of our shortcomings begins the path to redemption

Notice that Luke has "Why do you call me good" like Mark does, and only Matthew changes it.

Lesson

Take-home point: the way we treat each other and love each other matters more than any historical detail or theological theory. Show up for ourselves and each other.

Questions and comments

Marriage!

The ideal of marriage

Our current culture puts tremendous weight on romance, especially because it helps companies sell stuff to us (based on our dissatisfaction, mostly). I love the ideal of

marriage. One of my favorite parts of hospice is hearing the love stories of couples who have been together for 40, 50, 60, even 70 years.

The idea of marriage

What we think of as marriage is just what we are used to (we defend ideas that are not necessarily right, just familiar). Our parents provide the first models, often messed up models, which is normal. My mom and dad were both married four times (glad to say I like step dad #3).

The church's current approach to marriage is strongly influenced by mid-century American social norms, partially a reaction against the former approach to marriage, polygamy. Can you see the irony in this?

Present reality of marriage

People are divorcing less. People are choosing marriage more mindfully. Marriage is more brittle because people rely on it more (Sue Johnson, Love Sense), but when it works, it works better than ever before.

(Story about training, my comment about how if every woman fully stood up for her needs and feelings in relationships, 98% of marriages would fail. A woman in her 80s said "That is absolutely right!")

One of the biggest issues in the Church involves same-sex marriage.

What do we do about same-sex marriage as members of the Church? Love each other, be good friends and citizens. I would add, In brief, don't marry anyone you don't want to, and let others marry who they choose to.

Something I posted in 2012:

To those who oppose gay marriage

First, I respect your right to your views. Second, you can tolerate gay marriage even if you think homosexuality is wrong.

Here are a few reasons:

- 1) We do not live in a theocracy. The government is responsible for protecting the rights of citizens, which means that there can be more types of marriage than you might personally approve of. For the same reason cohabitation cannot be

illegal. Unmarried people have kids all the time, and your tax dollars support services for them.

- 2) The idea that the courts “overturned the will of the people” sidesteps the issue that the government has a responsibility to protect the rights of minorities. Would you support legislation that made interracial marriage illegal? How about interfaith marriage? (President Kimball spoke out against both, as an aside)
- 3) To the argument that gay marriage compromises the sanctity of marriage. Think of the abuse and harm that has happened in heterosexual marriage. Perhaps we should work harder on cracking down on that. And if you think reproduction is the standard for marriages, infertile couples should not be able to marry either.

For those who are gay members: I don't envy you. I have friends who run the spectrum from mixed-orientation marriages, to faithfully single, to same sex married and believing, to those who hope same sex marriage will one day be accepted.

For those members who support same sex marriage: Be a good person, be a good member.

Do you see how the answer is the same no matter who you are? :)

<https://www.ksl.com/article/46546766/latter-day-saint-couples-can-now-be-sealed-in-the-temple-directly-after-civil-marriage>

Setting the “global standard”

“Where possible, leaders should encourage couples to be both married and sealed in the temple,” according to a letter from the church's First Presidency, or highest governing body. “Where a licensed marriage is not permitted in the temple, or when a temple marriage would cause parents or immediate family members to feel excluded, a civil ceremony followed by a temple sealing is authorized.”

History of marriage

Stephanie Coontz, Marriage, A History: How Love Conquered Marriage

(For most of the world's history, marriage was a political and economic institution, not an emotional or even social one)

The LDS document, *The Family: A Proclamation to the World* is a fascinating religious text. One of the most intriguing parts is the assertion found in the fourth paragraph: “the first commandment that God gave to Adam and Eve pertained to their potential for parenthood.”

In terms of the biblical narrative, this is absolutely a true statement, but NOT in the way the authors assume. The first command God gave to Adam and Eve is Genesis 2:16-17 (and technically, it was only given to the man):

“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you are free to eat; but as for the tree of knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat of it; for as soon as you eat of it, you shall die.’”

A careful reading of the account reveals that the specific knowledge the fruit gave the first humans was a knowledge of sexual awareness. After all, the first thing the couple learns after eating the fruit is the fact that they are naked. Prior to eating the fruit, the woman is simply called “the Woman.” After she partakes, God changes her name to Eve, meaning “life giver.” And, as soon as the couple leaves the garden, we read that the man “knew” his wife and she conceived a child.

Even the Book of Mormon specifically states that if Adam and Eve had not eaten the fruit, “they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence” (2 Nephi 2:23).

Hence, God’s first command to Adam and Eve did pertain to their potential for parenthood. God commanded them NOT to eat the fruit that would grant them this ability. God did not want the humans to gain sexual awareness and create families.

What the authors of the Family Proclamation fail to recognize is that the story of Adam and Eve is an entirely separate literary account from the creation story in Genesis 1. Adam and Eve are not even mentioned in the Genesis 1 narrative. Genesis 1:26 uses the word adam, but the Hebrew term clearly means “humanity,” not Adam, as is illustrated by the corresponding third person masculine plural jussive, “let them have dominion.”

Moreover, contrary to what the Proclamation asserts, there is literally nothing in the account that pertains to the human potential to create families as husband and wife. Marriage is not discussed, and if it was, it would be nothing like the views found in the Proclamation.

Marriage in the Bible is a legal arrangement that secured the rights of fathers, husbands, and masters over Israelite women, children, and slaves. Women are property, not partners. Biblical marriage never unites one man and one woman for the purpose of procreation and sexual

enjoyment. Instead, marriage unites free Israelite men with as many women and slaves as they can possibly support.

Heavenly marriage in Heaven

What can we say about the doctrine of marriage in heaven? I think it is safe to say that heavenly marriage would be beyond anything we could comprehend on earth. “The glory of the celestial kingdom is one”, and it would make sense that there would be more unity and intimacy that we can fathom. This should at least help us be open to the idea that we might not know everything.

Heavenly marriage on earth

We are set up to fail because we see the beginning as success (This is Us wedding scene)

What makes marriage right in the eyes of God? I think it is being married to a person. That sounds obvious, but it's not. It's surprisingly hard to treat other people like people, rather than as objects, as ways to get what we want, or obstacles to getting what we want.

We are the only people who are truly real to us, and often we don't even treat ourselves as well as we should!

(Treat each other as whole beings, respect, openness, curiosity. Cooperation, communication, adaptability.

Share my hangups, the idea of a “whole family” and “healthy marriage”; I've had to deconstruct that and really focus on principles of healthy relationships and parenting.

Was Jesus married?

See what you think based on your reading.

I think he was, most likely to Mary Magdalene. Here is how it might have worked:

The historical guideline is this: When sources are silent, assume the default. Marriage is a commandment/mitzvah in Judaism, and Jesus was from a small, rural (which usually means conservative) hamlet (smaller than a town). It makes sense he would have been married before his ministry.

It is also possible that he was celibate *during* his ministry, which explains some of his teachings. As an apocalyptic prophet, he may have extrapolated the “holy war” idea to the current age. This would explain why his wife was not mentioned... or was she?

All gospels mention that Mary was one of the first at the tomb, and a wife would have helped with the responsibility of preparing the husband's body. In fact, that is exactly

what Mary asks in John.. she wants the body of her "lord" (which can also mean husband)

Going out a bit on a limb, Raymond Jusino made the argument that the "disciple Jesus loved" was actually Mary Magdalene! According to this argument, later editors, not comfortable with a woman in such a powerful position, did an editorial sex change. This would also explain why Gnostic literature, which seems further down the same trajectory as John, calls Mary the "companion of Jesus". And the Gospel of Philip teaches that Jesus loved Mary the most and would kiss her often.

Meanwhile Jesus' wife would have shifted in memory from his wife to one of his most fervent disciples.

25 Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. **26** When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby

Preview Mt 21-23; Mk 11; Lk 19-20; Jn 12 (Beginning of the end)

Conclusion

Relationship with love and goodness