



October 7, 2018 - Created in Love for Love

Given by Rev. Mattei

You have probably heard the pseudo-scientific statistic that 50% of all marriages end in divorce. Well, the research on marriage suggests that this widely accepted statement isn't true. Sociology professor Philip Cohen of the University of Maryland reports that divorce rates have dropped by 8% from 2008 to 2016 driven primarily by a declining divorce rate among millennials (born between 1981-1996). While broken relationships and divorce are still a painful part of life in the world, statistics suggest that for those choosing to get married today, the chance of divorce is far lower than it was 40 years ago.¹

We need to acknowledge that the topic of divorce is painful for many who have personally gone through the dramatic and emotionally exhausting process. For others, it can be a safe solution to an abusive relationship. For many, what Jesus brings up rings true: it's about the hardness of the heart. Instead of giving a simple legalistic 'yes' or 'no' answer to the Pharisees' question, Jesus offers a much broader teaching which addresses the brokenness and sin in the world. He reminds us of God's original desire for people to live in healthy relationship with one another. We understand the Creator's intention for people to be one of unity in partnership and mutuality, where no jealousy, envy, fear, competition, emotional insecurity, superiority or inferiority complex are given any oxygen, but simplicity, mutual trust, generosity and enjoyment of the gifts offered for the growth of the couple are brought forward: something like what happens among children to whom the kingdom is given ([Mark 10:2-16](#)).

God's desire is that God's people will live in healthy relationship with one another. God's desire is that when two people choose to marry then nothing will be able to divide them. God's desire is that God's people would know the joy of having healthy, loving relationships in their lives. By not simply answering 'yes' or 'no' to the Pharisees' question about divorce, Jesus invites us to recognize the complexity of human relationships and to consider not simply what is legal, but how we can participate in the whole, healthy life that God desires for all God's people.

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/marriage-divorce.htm>

In the song, One, Johnny Cash struggles with the necessity of love and the hardship to remain in love, the challenge to forgive and the fear of breaking up.² We can be honest and acknowledge that loving relationships do not come easy and take vigilant individual and couple work. Distractions, self-centeredness and carelessness may be fatal. A healthy marriage needs attention and nurturing. It takes committed listening as well as patient silence. It needs a lot of giving and some taking (certainly not the humorous “I give, she takes” I have heard from a couple who has celebrated 68 wedding anniversaries.)

We need to acknowledge that we are fragile creatures in need of grace, not just compassion and forgiveness but the grace to be drawn closer to God and to one another. Our life together is in constant need to be held in a delicate balance between pride and humility, selfishness and generosity, fear and trust, disillusionment and hope.

Often, our lack of faith in God, ourselves and neighbor is a failure of imagination: we fail to perceive our potential as children of God as well as the power of God to redeem. However, our failure to see who and whose we are does not change how God sees us. Just because we fail to be mindful of God does not mean that God is not mindful of us ([Psalm 8](#)). God remains mindful of the particularity that is each human being, even when we forget that we are created in love for love. God’s love for us does not end when we forget that we are made in God’s image or that our spouse or neighbors are as well. Jesus has made us his brothers and sisters so that we will claim all our neighbors as God’s beloved children. Learning to love is a process that takes a lifetime. We haven’t learned how to love one another just yet, but that doesn’t mean we aren’t set aside for this sacred purpose. Nor does it mean that Jesus was wrong about who we are.

Abundant God, your love for us is unbreakable. Give strength and support to those dealing with the pain of divorce and help us all to build whole, healthy relationships in our lives. May your love for us be reflected in the way we treat others. Amen.

² www.google.com/search?q=johnny+cash+one+lyrics