

## INTRODUCE

Well, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to Matthew chapter 19.
- You can open a phone or a tablet to Matthew 19,
- or you can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
  - under every single chair.
  - You'll find Matthew 19 on page **824**.

## INTRODUCTION: DESTINATION

So, I heard a true story this week about a woman named Anna Marques.

- In the Summer of 2017 Anna was vacationing in Paris.
  - She was having such a great time
  - that she decided to extend her vacation
  - and head to Copenhagen for a couple more weeks.

But on the day of her flight a perfect storm of events occurred.

- She got to the Paris Airport and checked in,
- but they gave her the wrong ticket.

They actually gave her a ticket for a woman named Marie...

- but Anna was so rushed in the airport
- that she didn't even check it too closely...
  - in fact, she didn't even check what
  - the destination on the ticket was for...
- she only looked at the gate number.

Here's her direct quote:

- *"My ticket was made out in another name,*
- *and I didn't have enough time to check it*
- *because I was in a hurry."*

She went on to explain:

- that a gate agent checked her boarding pass and passport,
- but didn't look to see if they matched.
  - She then boarded the plane,
  - fell into a deep sleep,
  - missed all the announcements during the flight,
- and only became aware of the mistake
- after the flight landed,
- when she walked off of the plane,
  - into the terminal,
- and saw an unfamiliar alphabet on the signs.

She had arrived in Athens, Greece...

Not Copenhagen, the DESTINATION she had been planning on.

## **EXPLAIN: DESTINATION**

I find this a fitting parable for so many people I meet and engage with.

- So many people I talk with,
- will often communicate to me...
  - *"The DESTINATION where I've found myself...*
  - *is a completely different DESTINATION...*
  - *than where I thought I would be."*
- This can show up in careers,
- or in socio-economics,
- or in health,
- but sometimes most acutely in relationship status.

It's like we had a ticket to the life we desired...

- but somehow...
  - in a series of unfortunate events...
- we got on the wrong plane...
- going to the wrong destination...
- and we didn't even realize it until we landed.

So for the next two weeks:

- as we continue our journey through the Gospel of Matthew
- we are talking about relationships.
  - Specifically marriage,
  - divorce,
  - remarriage,
  - and singleness.

I know married people who feel like they're in the wrong destination...

And I know single people who feel like they got on the wrong plane.

Now, today I'm taking the text out of order,

- and I'm starting with singleness,
- because it's the last week of our parenting class,
- and so we have a bunch of married people
- in the church basement right now,
- and I don't want them to miss the divorce sermon.

So, I'll circle back to Matthew 19:1-9 next week...

- but today we're going to look at verses 10-12,
- and see what Jesus has to say about singleness.

## **EXPLAIN: DEMOGRAPHICS**

Now, I taught on this about 5 years ago here at Fathom,

- and at that time only 25% of the adults at our church
  - were single people.
- But I looked this week, and that number has changed.
- We are now 43% single adults at Fathom Church!

Which is much closer to the national average

- where almost 50% of adults in the United States are single.
- By the way, that is the highest that number has ever been!

So, one of the reasons why we're talking about singleness...

- is because there are a lot of single people in our midst,
- and that number is statistically growing!

But the MOST important reason why we're talking about singleness...

- is because the Bible does!
  - Jesus' whole approach to teaching on marriage,
  - is grounded in a concept that redefines not only marriage
    - but singleness, too.

## **ILLUSTRATION: BAD THEOLOGY**

Unfortunately, in many Christian circles,

- it is implied,
  - if not explicitly stated,
- that there is something wrong with being single.

As if it's some sort of Junior Varsity status to be looked down upon.

- And there are churches and ministries
  - that intentionally or unintentionally
- function as something of a speed-dating,
- meat market for Christian singles.

I literally used to get dudes leave our church to go to other churches,

- because they want to 'find their spouse',
- and we don't have a "singles ministry."

So, they go...

- and they show up in their ripped jeans and bro tanks...
  - doused in cologne,
- Holding a paper Bible
  - Cause an electronic one isn't spiritual enough...
- And he lifts his hands at the right moment
  - "you are perfect in all of your ways"

And it's like, "Ooo...I bet he'd be a great spiritual leader of the home!"

## TRANSITION

And I'm only kinda joking, ok?

But this is built upon a faulty view of singleness in our Christian culture.

Singleness is sometimes looked down upon in the church.

- But the Biblical view of these things is much, much different.
- So, let's dig into what our Jesus has to say.

Matthew 19 starting in verse 10:

## MATTHEW 19:10-11

[10] The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." [11] But he said to them, "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given."

### EXPLAIN

Now, it feels like we just picked up in the middle of a conversation... because we did!

But let me explain quickly what's happened.

- In verses 1-9 Jesus is teaching against
- the very liberal philosophy on divorce of his day and age...
  - literally a man could divorce his wife for ANY reason...
    - now, the women couldn't do a darn thing...
  - but in this patriarchal society,
  - a man could literally divorce his wife for any reason!
- To that, Jesus says a very firm and lasting NO!
  - Now, we'll get into that in depth next week.

But what the disciples do here:

- is they respond to Jesus' high calling for marriage,
- with an assumption that it would just be better to remain single
  - Typical non-committal dudes!

And to that, Jesus, shockingly, kinda says,

- *"Yeah...it might be..."*
- *not everyone can receive this...*
- *but only those to whom it is given."*

So, it seems that Jesus is neither favoring marriage nor singleness... but calls both...very high callings.

This, by the way, flies in the face of the Evangelical myth that marriage is the ideal.

- After the fall...marriage is NOT God's ideal.
  - Marriage is now ONE OF God's ideals.
  - AND singleness is ONE OF God's ideals, as well.

The Apostle Paul makes the very same point in 1 Corinthians. He says:

### **SLIDE 1 CORINTHIANS 7:6-7**

[6] Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. [7] I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

### **EXPLAIN**

When Paul says,

- I wish that all were as I myself am.
- He's talking about being single.

And for 1500 years,

- really until the Reformation,
- the church tended to view singleness
- as the higher calling than marriage,
  - thus the formation of monasteries
  - and the celibacy of priests, nuns, and monks.

But the crux of Paul is when he says, each has his own gift from God.

And that mirrors Jesus' words only those to whom it is given.

## POINT 1: TEMPORARY GIFT

So, let me make my first point from the text today:

### SLIDE SINGLENES IS A TEMPORARY GIFT

And with each point today, we could say the same of marriage.

- MARRIAGE IS A TEMPORARY GIFT, as well.
  - Elsewhere in the gospels Jesus makes it clear
  - that there will be no need for
  - nor reality of marriage in heaven.

And so it is with singleness. Both are TEMPORARY GIFTS.

So, let me just say this...

- in this life, not everyone is called to be married...
- but everyone is called to be single.
  - Every person in the world is called to be single...
  - at the very least for a season of life.
- Everyone is single for a season.
- Some are single for their whole lives.
- And everyone else will be single again...or die.

I mean, is that too blunt?

Singleness...not marriage...is actually the norm!

See, one mistake we make when talking about singleness

- is that we tend to mean youngish,
- never-been-married,
- single people.

But that's a pretty myopic view of singleness.

- Some are in that stage.
- Others are single for a much longer period of time.



- Others still are single because of a divorce,
  - or the death of a spouse.

So, everyone is single for a season.

Some are single for their whole lives.

And everyone else will be single again...or die.

SINGLENES IS A TEMPORARY GIFT.

### **ILLUSTRATION: MYTH**

I want to use this idea to deal with a deeply held myth in our culture

- one not only believed in our culture,
- but sadly one that we sometimes promote in our churches.

It's the "marriage = completion" myth.

- It assumes that marriage
  - and a nuclear family
- is some kind of ultimate state for mankind:
  - and thus if you don't find that special someone
  - to spend your life with,
  - you have missed out on the essential part
  - of a full and happy life.

It seems that, in general,

- singles are viewed by others...
  - as well as themselves...
- as lacking something.

What happens is,

- as singleness persists,
- people begin to think
- something might be wrong with single people.

And frankly,

- singles can begin to feel as though
- God has robbed them of something
- or forgotten them
- by not bestowing upon them a spouse.

You can hear it in how we try to encourage singles:

- *“Don’t worry...”*
- *“Don’t worry...you’ll get married someday.”*

As if to say,

- *“Poor you...”*
- *“I know it’s hard to be missing such an essential part of life.”*

I mean, it’s the caricature of the sweet little old lady...  
who comes up to the single person at a wedding and says,

- *“Don’t worry...you’ll be next.”*

And I would encourage you to say the exact same thing to those people...

- just do it at funerals,
- “Don’t worry...you’ll be next!”

Or sometimes we tell singles,

- *“God just has to do a little bit of work on you...”*
- *before he brings you that special someone.*
  - *You have to become someone special...*
  - *before God can give you someone special.”*

Which, listen...is just a dumb thing to say.

And I get the sentiment...but that leaves the single person thinking:

- *I'm not special or lovable yet?*

That's not to mention the truly dysfunctional people I see...

- who get married all the time!
- And it's like,
  - *"If God gave marriage as a reward*
  - *to those who had become special and lovable,*
  - *he got the wrong address."*

## TRANSITION

And we can laugh about stories like that.

- But this myth leads to a lot of confusion and pain.
- And Jesus,
  - who was single himself,
- taught explicitly against it.

So strongly, in fact,

- that if you didn't know better,
- you'd be tempted to think he was dissing marriage.

## SINGLENESS IS A TEMPORARY GIFT.

Now, Jesus goes on to elaborate on three "gifts" of singleness.

So, let's keep going. Verse 12:

**BLANK SLIDE**

## MATTHEW 19:12a

[12] For there are eunuchs...

## EXPLAIN: EUNUCHS

Now, you're like, "Woah...that was a weird left turn!"

But follow me here...

- a eunuch was one who was unable to have sexual relations
  - due to a number of reasons...
- but most commentators agree
- that this idea is analogous
- to one who is sexually celibate.

Jesus isn't talking about literal eunuchs...he's talking celibate people...

- And the Bible teaches that sex is only for those
  - in a monogamous,
  - heterosexual,
  - marriage.

Thus, this is referring to single people. Those who are celibate.

So...verse 12:

## MATTHEW 19:12

[12] For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

## SINGLE FROM BIRTH

So, there are three types of this temporary singleness/celibacy gifting.

And the first is those who are **SLIDE SINGLE FROM BIRTH**

- What I think is in view here,
- is those who, from birth,
- will not pursue a sexual relationship...
  - either because of a physical defect,
  - or a mental disability,
  - or maybe they are asexual,
  - or maybe they struggle with same-sex attraction.
- But for whatever reason, they remain single & celibate.

And when you start talking about being single from birth...

- a lot of people will paint this dreary picture...
- of going home to an apartment all by yourself.
  - And it's dim,
  - and you're cooking yourself a microwavable dinner,
  - and there are cats...
  - and it's this kind of drab and weary life.

And yet, that's not the case.

- We have had a number of members of Fathom
- who would fit in this camp,
- and their lives were far from that picture!

Listen to this from a same-sex attracted man who has chosen celibacy.

**SLIDE** *"Is celibacy difficult? Yes (so is marriage; so is grad school; life is pain, princess). Is it frustrating at times? Yes (but watch someone raising toddlers sometime and it may change your perspective on the challenges of celibacy). Have there been times when I wanted to give up? Yes. But is it worth it? Yes. And do I regret it? No."*

So, the first category of single would be SINGLE FROM BIRTH

## DEDICATED SINGLE

The second is the largest group of singles,  
and this is the **SLIDE DEDICATED SINGLES**

Back to the text:

- They have been made single
- by their circumstances.
  - They may have liked to be married,
    - and maybe they still would,
  - but for whatever reason...
  - because of the circumstances of life
  - They have been made un-married at this time...
- And so, they are DEDICATED SINGLES.

This category is what we most often think of when we think about singles.

- These are divorcées,
- widows/widowers,
- and those who I would just call waiting.

Maybe they're hopeful they'll have a spouse one day.

Maybe not...

Maybe they're in a season of healing from a death or a broken marriage.

- But they're in this season...
- where they are DEDICATED to singleness.

## VOWED SINGLES

And then the third type of single...

Jesus adds this category of a more radical singleness,  
which I'll call **SLIDE VOWED SINGLES**

Those who simply renounce marriage because of the kingdom of God.

- They get a sense from the Spirit of God
- that they want to give their life over to the kingdom of God
- and don't want to be distracted with marriage,
- so, they literally VOW singleness for the sake of ministry.

And I'll just say this:

- if you think you might be called to a vow of singleness...
- I really think you should process that with your church...
  - with a pastor or elder...
- This you shouldn't enter into lightly, but in community!

## POINT 2: AWESOME

And this leads me to my second point.

- Point 1: SINGLENES IS A TEMPORARY GIFT
- Point 2: **SLIDE SINGLENES IS AWESOME**
  - Some creepy dude in the back saying...
    - "You know it is!"
  - Yo!...stop...ok?
  - You're freaking us out!

But SINGLENES IS AWESOME.

There are many good things about the temporary gift of being single.

SINGLENES IS AWESOME

- because the Apostle Paul will say
- that there are anxieties
- that come with being married!

- There's responsibility
- and sacrifice
- and hard work
- and there's submission
- and preferring the other person...

And I'm all about marriage!

- But sometimes the church ONLY talks about marriage...
- And wants EVERYONE to get married...
- And, *"here are three tips about how to have a great marriage"*

And I'm not against that stuff, but I just want to say to all the single people:

**BEING SINGLE IS AWESOME!**

I mean, there are beautiful things about both stages of life!

**And you've gotta find the gold in whatever season you're in.**

### **ILLUSTRATION: WHEN I WAS SINGLE**

- Like, when I was single...
  - everything in the house, I owned all of it.
- When I was single,
  - I had hobbies. Lots of them!
    - And now, I've got a whole basement
    - of dusty gear to prove it.
- When I was single, all of my money belonged to me.

Now, I spend my money on things I never knew I needed!

- I have bins of decorations for every single season of the year.



- I have a Spring bin.
  - It has eggs and fake flowers.
- I have a Fall bin.
  - full of artificial gourds.
- I have Christmas bins...that multiply like rabbits.
  - Every year...it's like, "We need more decorations?"

When I was single I had no such bins.

- I had no décor.
  - My apartment was decorated with a theme...
  - the theme was walls.

Now, I am constantly seeing Amazon confirmation emails

- informing me that I have bought so many things
  - I had no idea I needed.

Soap! So much soap!!!

- I've got like a dozen bottles of different soaps in my shower.

I had ONE BAR of soap before I got married.

- and I washed everything with it:
  - my body...
  - my hair...
  - the floor.
    - No...that's not true...
    - I never washed the floor!

And these aren't bad things...no!

- They're just different.
- Things changed when I got married.

Y'all...SINGLENES IS AWESOME!

## APPLICATION

And that is why both Jesus and Paul call marriage AND singleness a gift.

The teaching is that:

- If you're married,
  - then you've been given the GIFT of marriage,
- and if you are single,
  - you have been given the GIFT of singleness.

God is being gracious to you by giving you gifts in your life circumstances.

- Singleness is a gift that allows you to be
- more devoted to God's kingdom!
  - And he might give you that gift for a season...
  - or for a lifetime.

Paige Benton Brown says this:

**SLIDE** *"I am not single because I am too spiritually unstable to deserve a husband or too spiritually mature to need one. I am single because God is good and this is his best for me."*

Isn't that amazing?

## POINT 3: DIFFICULT

- SINGLENESS IS AWESOME, but let's be clear.
- **SLIDE SINGLENESS IS DIFFICULT**, too.

There are difficulties about being single. Let's talk about some of them.

## LONELINESS

One common challenge for single people is LONELINESS.

- You say, *"I don't want to be alone."*

LONELINESS IS a difficulty in singleness.

I'll sometimes hear people say, *"Well, all you need is God."*

- And that sounds really nice and spiritual...
- but it's dumb.

It's dumb 'cause God never says that.

- Go actually said, *"It's NOT good that man should be alone."*
  - He didn't look at Adam the Garden and say,
  - *"You've got me. That's enough."*

God created us with the need for companionship.

- You're NOT supposed to be alone.
  - It's just that marriage is not the only way
  - God takes care of that any more!

Jesus asserts all through the Gospels,

- That all familial relationships...
  - mothers and brothers and children and even spouses...
- are only temporary.

But the relationships you form in the body of Christ are permanent.

- To both single people and married people,
- the challenge of LONELINESS
- is NOT ONLY to be met by family...
- it is meant to be met with the body of Christ...with the church.

## KIDS

Another difficulty...you say, *"I really want to have kids."*

And that is a real difficulty!

But Jesus says in Mark 10 that

- spiritual offspring are much more important,
  - more eternal,
- than even biological offspring.

If you are single,

- get involved in the discipleship ministries of the church...
  - Maybe with kids or youth!
- Spiritual offspring in the Kingdom of God
- are more important than biological offspring.
  - And that's actually what biological parenting is all about.
  - Discipling them into the Kingdom.

## **SEX**

And finally, SEX.

Listen to me:

- The only part of your life
- that will be unfulfilled if you are single
- is sexual.

And that's a legitimate loss and I don't want to minimize that.

But one of the cultural lies that we have largely bought into:

- is that in order to live a full and meaningful life,
- you must sexually express yourself.
  - That in some way,
  - you live a drab and neutered existence
  - if you are unable to be sexually active.

But that's simply not true!

And this idea:

- that your sexuality
  - is linked to your identity
  - and your flourishing
- is more a cultural result of Sigmund Freud
- than a biblical idea.

Ok? It's just not biblical.

But we are bombarded with this cultural message:

- that if you aren't having sex,
- then you are missing out on something vital to your identity.

And I don't want to downplay how strong that cultural message can feel.

But here's the truth:

- You do not need to have sexual experiences
- to be complete and fulfilled as a person.
  - God says he will give you a gift...
    - the Greek word is *charisma*...
    - a spiritual empowerment...
  - for that.

## CONCLUSION

So, let's end with the final words in verse 12:

### MATTHEW 19:12b

Let the one who is able to receive this receive it."

## EXPLAIN: MAKE ROOM

The word translated *receive* there

- is the Greek word *chōreō* (kho-reh'-o)
- which is best translated *to leave space, or to make room*.

Let the one who is able *to make room* for this *make room* for it.

If God has given you the temporary gift of singleness,

- With all its awesomeness...
- And with all its difficulties...
- I want you to **SLIDE W/PADS MAKE ROOM FOR IT**

I want to challenge you to MAKE ROOM FOR IT.

- Don't despise it...
- Don't survive it...
- Don't ignore it...
- MAKE ROOM FOR IT.

How? You ask...three thoughts:

### 1. **SLIDE LEARN WHO GOD IS**

- You need God's grace to make it...
  - as a single or married person...
- So keep going deeper with God!
  - Whatever state you're in, look here first.
    - When the vertical is right,
      - he gives the horizontal supply.
    - When this relationship is broken,
      - these will always suffer.
- Some of you may not like your singleness.
- But God means it for good in your life—
  - to produce a love for Christ in you.

## 2. Second, **SLIDE LEVERAGE YOUR TIME**

- Don't live like you're waiting.
  - Live the most fulfilled,
  - joyful life you can now.
- Even if you don't want to be single,
- be intentional with this gift that God has given you right now.
  - God used men and women
  - all throughout the scriptures
  - who were both married and unmarried.
- Your marital status is not what defines you.
  - So, be intentional.
- Don't waste this season!

## 3. And third, **SLIDE LEAN INTO THE CHURCH**

- Singles, you are a vital part of our community here at Fathom.
  - You are not second best.
  - You are not weird.
  - You are AWESOME!
  - You are vital!
- And hear me...you're not even the minority at this church!
  - You are a gift from God
  - for the building up of his church.
  - And we need you!
- If you are single,
  - you will experience loneliness
    - differently than a married person,
  - but the church family is supposed to be
  - a part of aiding that.

- The church is a family,
  - and as best we can,
  - we need to open up homes to one another,
  - open up our lives to one another,
  - learn from one another,
  - and lean into each other's lives,
    - married couples...
    - and children...
    - and singles.
- This is why Discipleship Groups at Fathom
- have always been mixed age and stage.

If, today, you are single...Jesus' challenge is for you today is to:

**SLIDE MAKE ROOM FOR IT**

You ever feel like you got on the wrong plane?

You ever feel like you're at the wrong destination?

- God's grace is sufficient for that.

**Let the one who is able to make room for this make room for it.**

Let's pray.



## RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – [fathomchurch.org/give](http://fathomchurch.org/give)
- PRAYER - [fathomchurch.org/prayer](http://fathomchurch.org/prayer)
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

## RESOURCES CONSULTED:

- <https://www.cntraveler.com/story/air-france-passenger-gets-on-wrong-flight-ends-up-in-a-different-country>
- Carson, D.A. The Expositor's Bible Commentary. Matthew.
- Greear, J.D. *God's Plan in Singleness*.
- Loritts, Bryan, *Is Marriage Varsity and Singleness JV?*
- Osborne, Grant R. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Matthew.
- Wilkerson Jr., Rich. *Single and Secure*.