

PENTECOST 20                      YEAR B  
GENESIS 2:18-24  
HEBREWS 1:1-4, 2:5-12  
MARK 10:2-12  
OCTOBER 6, 7, 2018

The topic of divorce was a difficult one in the time of Jesus as it is in our own time. There might some here today who know someone or yourself who has been divorced but did not marry again. Others have divorced and married again. There may be come that are thinking of divorcing. Into our reality comes the words of Jesus. We cannot dismiss these words as being relevant for Jesus but not for us because divorces continue to happen. We read in Genesis that God created the man and the woman to become one flesh. God created marriage to be fulfilling. God intended that marriage and the family would bring joy. As we know, families can be a challenge and marriages are sometimes not fulfilling. Into the ideal plan of God for marriages and families comes human nature and people whose lives are anything but ideal. The words of our Lord seem to be words of judgment but I believe our Lord also shares words of hope, love and protection.

**Mark 10:2-4                      Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” <sup>3</sup>He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” <sup>4</sup>They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.”**

As we look at these verses we must remember that the Pharisees were trying to test Jesus in order to discredit him. The Pharisees knew that the Law of Moses permitted a man to divorce his wife. One group said that a man could divorce his wife if he found some objection with her. This could have been as little as a wife burning the toast or spilling a couple of drops of wine. The other group said divorce was permissible if she committed adultery. The Pharisees interpretation of the law did not allow for a woman to obtain a divorce from her husband. The woman had little or no power in the home. The Pharisees asked Jesus about divorce

not because they wanted the Lord's interpretation but because they wanted Jesus to say the wrong thing.

If we read the creation stories in Genesis 1 and 2 we discover that God created men and women to be equal. God create the man and the woman to be together in the family and together in love. The primary reason for marriage among the Jews was not love and fulfillment. The most important part of marriage was the contract. The contract was not between a man and a woman but between a father and his daughter's husband. A father gave authority for his daughter to the daughter's husband. The marriage was not about fulfillment but about making sure a man had an heir. Marriage was about property and status. Women were of little value. Their place was to bear children and keep the house orderly.

**Mark 10:7-9 For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, <sup>8</sup>and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. <sup>9</sup>Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."**

Jesus took the Pharisees' question about divorce and turned it into a teaching about marriage. He teaches them about God's intent for marriage and the family. He says that marriage is about fulfillment and the relationship. He says marriage is about mutual trust and it is about honor between the man and the woman. Jesus teaches that God's intent for marriage was that a husband and wife would become one throughout eternity. What God has joined together should not be separated.

Jesus may be talking about those that seek a divorce just to marry someone else. He is talking about seeking a divorce because one has become tired of the other and is ready to move on. This seems to have been the case among the laws cited by the Pharisees. It is true in our

time. How many seek a divorce because they have fallen in love with someone else?

Where does that leave those that have been divorced? What is their relationship with God? Is their salvation thrown out the window? Our Lord Jesus says that divorce is a symptom of human failure. Divorce is against God's intentions in creation. Jesus says, "What God joined together, let no human separate." Is Jesus, then, saying there should not be divorce? What would Jesus say about abusive or destructive relationships? Since this reading is about men that see women as property would Jesus say that women should stay with men that treat them as property or to be treated as a man wants? Maybe Jesus is also saying, "What humans wrongly joined together, let God rightly separate?" Our Lord does not regard women as being property to be thrown out. He does not see a woman as fair game for any man that would take advantage no matter who that man is. Jesus lifted women to a higher place. Jesus quoted from Genesis 1 proclaiming that the man and the woman are equal in status and equally valuable to God. Jesus would also see children in the same way.

**Mark 10:14** But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.

Many were bringing their children to Jesus. The disciples failed to understand the words of our Lord as he lifted those most vulnerable. Women and children were regarded as property but Jesus taught that women and children belong to the kingdom of God. When the disciples blocked the way Jesus became angry. Our Lord embraced the children and blessed them. For Jesus, children were not to be seen and not heard. They were not to be hidden away but to be where Jesus is. This is why we invite our kids to children's sermons and to the communion

table. This is why we want our kids among the worshipping community. We do not worry that they might make a bit of noise because that is what little kids do. This is not a license for our older kids to be disrespectful or otherwise disruptive. Our older kids need to put the cell phones away and be part of the community that gathers for worship.

Jesus wants our children to be here. I want the children to be here. As people of God we work for justice for women and children. We speak out in favor of those that are sexually abused or abused in other ways. As men, we do not count it as our right to do whatever we please with our wives, our sons and our daughters. As supervisors in the work place, we have no right to inappropriate relationships with those that work for us. Teachers have no right to abuse their students.

The family is most important to Jesus. God blesses marriage and families are to be fulfilling, loving and honorable. You and I are created in God's image. We are to love and honor our spouses and our children. We enter into good relationships with those around us. We seek to protect the family. The sixth commandment says that we keep marriage pure and honorable. AMEN.