

October 22, 2006  
Pentecost 20

*"Jesus Talks to Us about Marriage and Children"*

---

### **MARK 10:2-16**

---

**S**ome Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" <sup>3</sup>"What did Moses command you?" he replied. <sup>4</sup>They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." <sup>5</sup>"It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. <sup>6</sup>"But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' [a] <sup>7</sup>'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, [b] <sup>8</sup>and the two will become one flesh. [c] So they are no longer two, but one. <sup>9</sup>Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." <sup>10</sup>When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. <sup>11</sup>He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. <sup>12</sup>And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

On the front cover of your bulletin for this morning you see two little girls happily pulling a wagon through a field of flowers. What makes the children happy and puts smiles on their faces? One word answers that question. It is a little word, only four letters. It begins with the letter "L." It is "Love."

In the words just read to you Jesus talks about love and commitment in marriage. He also shows us his love for children who were brought to him by taking them in his arms, putting his hands on them and blessing them. Jesus has strong words for those who want to destroy marriage through divorce and for people who do not care much about the needs of little children.

In a survey taken of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders, the question was asked: "What makes you sad?" The three things that were mentioned most often were, "My parents getting a divorce." "My parents fight and arguing." "My parents not spending enough time with me." Kids want to see their parents close to each other and they want to be close to their parents.

A well-known Bible teacher once wrote about what he wanted to be remembered for by his children. It was not the books he had written, or the large crowds that came to hear him speak, or the radio programs heard across the nation. He wrote in one of his books that he wanted to be remembered by his children for that hot summer day when he playfully pushed their mother into the swimming pool fully clothed, and actually lived to tell about it.

Children long to see their parents demonstrate love to each other. Come this morning with us as we sit down and listen to what Jesus tells us about marriage and children. Just imagine what would happen if people followed these words of Jesus in all our churches or even in our nation. We would have a little bit of heaven already here on this earth.

**Jesus wants us to follow his plan for marriage**

Jesus wants husbands and wives to follow his plan for marriage not the models for marriage given to us by the society we see on television or hear about in songs. Even the people of Jesus' time did not always have a healthy view of marriage. They came to Jesus with the question, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" Some of the religious leaders were saying it was only right to divorce if there was indecency or unfaithfulness in marriage. Others were saying it was OK to divorce if a man didn't like his wife and they couldn't get along. If she became too demanding, lost her girlish figure, or kept a poor house, it was out the door. Sounds like today doesn't it? California even has something called "No fault" divorce where people split just because they cannot get along and can't stand to be in the same house with each other.

Jesus did not take the bait that was set before him. He did not want to be put into a position where he gives his opinion on what was right or wrong the way other rabbis of his time had done or attorneys might do today. Jesus goes back to the Old Testament authority of Moses by asking, "What did Moses command you?" They knew what Moses said. "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." They false assumed that because Moses provided a legal document to announce divorce that he also sanctioned divorce. Jesus was quick to point out that this was done not because it was OK but because their hearts were hard and they did not want to do what God wanted them to do. You might compare this certificate to the County of Santa Barbara putting up signs after a big storm that certain beaches are polluted. The certificate Moses wrote out simply announced that a marriage had been polluted and broken by sinful actions of people. It did not sanction the divorce just as sign at the beach would not cause the pollution.

Now notice how Jesus takes the people back into the Scriptures to show them what marriage was all about. "Jesus replied, 'But at the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.'" God made people male and female not just to have children but to be attracted to each other. I am holding two magnets in my hand. The opposite sides of the magnets actually attract each other. Even though human males and females are different from each other, they are drawn to each other. That is the way God has designed it to be. The two became one flesh.

What happens when two become one in marriage? Listen to what Jesus says:

"So they are no longer two but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." We still use these words in our marriage ceremonies today. You hear them at almost every Christian marriage ceremony. "By their promises John and Jane have bound themselves together in marriage before God and these witnesses. Therefore I declare that they are husband and wife in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Those whom God has joined together, let no one separate."

Have you ever heard marriage described as "tying the knot?" What kind of knot do you want in your marriage? Do you want a knot that slips like this knot? (Give example) or do you want a knot like this knot? (Give example of knot that does not slip. What God has joined together, let man not separate.

The disciples were so caught up with the words of Jesus about marriage that they wanted

to learn more when they were alone with Jesus. Jesus told them more about divorce and marriage with these words, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces another man, she commits adultery." What does a man do when he divorces his wife and it is not for marital unfaithfulness? He commits adultery against her. He makes her look like she has been unfaithful to him in marriage when the real reason for the divorce was the man's selfishness and unwillingness to commit himself to the marriage. The same is true when a woman divorces a man and there are no biblical grounds for the divorces such as unfaithfulness or desertion. She makes the man look like an adulterer even though that is not the reason for the divorce. Almost every time there is a divorce, there is suspicion that says, "I wonder who was unfaithful."

God's ways are always the best ways. Children want to see what God wants to see. They want to see mom and dad staying together, working it out, overcoming their difficulties and differences. They don't want to see the knot slip. Our Father in heaven wants husbands to love their wives as much as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. He wants wives to respect their husbands as their heads the way the church looks up to Christ as its head. There are no perfect marriages, only successful marriages.

We fall so short of God's glory. What a humbling thing it is to be married and see how sinful and selfish we are. We see sin in our marriages. We see it everywhere, not in some black and white fuzzy screen, but brilliant high definition color that shows us the truth of who we are. Marriage leads us to confess daily, "Have mercy on me O God according to your unfailing love, according to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquities."

There it is! There it is in a Christian marriage, the blood of Jesus, intertwined between husband and wife with full pardon and peace. There it is! The blessing of baptism that allows us to say, "I am baptized. I must be the first to take responsibility to make things better." In Jesus and only in him do we find the hope of being forgiven and having peace with God and strength to change our lives. In Jesus we have a third strand in our marriage, this red rope, (show red rope) a strand that makes the marriage bond even stronger.

### **Jesus wants the children to come to him**

We have seen how much Jesus loves marriage and family by the words that he has spoken to us this morning. Now we want to see from his example and words how much he loves the children. People were bringing little children to Jesus that he might bless them. The disciples did not value the little ones as Jesus did. It says that the disciples rebuked the parents who brought the children to Jesus. That is a strong word. They did not want the parents bothering Jesus so they told them to take their children away. Jesus became indignant, not a sinful anger, but a righteous and holy anger. "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

Children need to have an important place in our lives. Christian parents will eagerly provide that place for their kids. They will want to carve out important places and times in their lives to be alone with the kids, away from the television, the computer, the video games and all the other distractions. Just as little birds need a nest to keep them safe, children

need to find that nest in God's Word as they come to worship and hear the Word. They need that time in the nest as they listen to their parents reading the Bible to them and praying with them. We want time to bring God's Word to our children in home when we gather together for meals or close the day by spending some time praying and reading the Bible to them. The church needs to search for ways to encourage the parents to bring them to Jesus, and also to bring Jesus to the children through Sunday school and other Bible teaching programs.

Children are precious to Jesus. He tells Christians of every age. "Let the children come to me for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." He wants adults to have the simple trusting faith that is found in children.

I am holding in my hands a picture of Jesus blessing the children. Perhaps an even better picture would be Jesus welcoming all people, the moms and dads, the grandparents, the single people, the widows. A man was dying. In his last days of life he was led to put his trust in Jesus for his salvation. One night, shortly before he died, the devil made one last attempt to pull him away. He worried that his new faith in Jesus was not real and he did not have peace in Jesus. Then a song came to him, sung by his little grand daughter. Over and over that night he heard her singing, "Jesus loves me this I know. For the Bible tells me so." He woke up in the morning totally at peace, secure in the love that Jesus had for him. May Jesus take each of us up in his arms, bless us in his love, and bless our families. Amen.