

#60

February 10, 2019

Mark 10:1-12

Good news: God's Grace to the most vulnerable

10 Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them.

<sup>2</sup> Some 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.'<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>7</sup> 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>8</sup> and the two will become one flesh.'<sup>[c]</sup> So they are no longer two, but one flesh. <sup>9</sup> Therefore what God has joined together, let no one 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."

Love is in the air. We recognized today the longest married couple, just married couple and a couple who have the biggest different age. Today we sing about love. We are uplifted and our hearts are warmed by that love.

There is something endearing about watching a newlywed couple driving off with "Just Married" written on the back window, tin cans tied to the back of the car and ribbons flowing as they head off to face the future.

Since we have been studying Mark I was excited to see that Mark also has something to say about love and marriage, but when I read the passage I thought to myself... maybe not. I read and re-read this passage. I kept thinking there are so many beautiful verses about love in the Bible I should choose maybe Corinthians, maybe a Psalm or anything else.

These words of Jesus in Mark 10 are tough and not easy to preach. I even called Kathy and suggested that it would be a good idea to change the reading. Praise God for her wisdom. We should not just pick the verses we like. If that were the case my preaching would be from a very small selection.

While I was in the seminary I understood the importance to be faithful in preaching the whole Bible and not avoid the topics that I dislike or that hurt. One of the titles Jesus gave to the Holy Spirit is Counselor. Let us pray that our eyes and ears may be opened so that we may be guided in our thinking and living today.

As most of you know my parents divorced when I was six years old. I am so grateful they did. My mother would not be with us today if they had not. Mom had broken ribs, many bruises and had lived in fear. She never knew what to expect from her drunk husband. If anyone needed a safe home for abused women, it was she.

In any case, divorce brings so much pain.

A rock thrown into a quiet pond causes ripples. The circle goes further and further out disturbing the surface along the way seemingly with no end.

Marriage is not just between two people. There are families involved. Mutual friends are affected. Many times there are children who are involved in a divorce. There is a history between the two people that will always stay.

I will never forget the scene when my father that my mom applied for divorce. We came home and all we found was empty walls. All the furniture was gone. Everything was moved out. Everything! To this day I can see our home. The only thing left was one bed and a little Donald Duck wall lamp. After that things got not better, but worse. I do not have to continue to tell you what a high price we paid for the divorce. We all desperately needed healing.

Let's start by carefully studying about what happens and what we can learn about God's love from Jesus' teaching in today's reading. Jesus arrives in the area of Judea. Some Pharisees came and asked a question to test him. That is important to notice. It is not that they really wanted to know what to do. It is not really that are concerned whether a couple should divorce or not. It is not a sincere question seeking help from somebody to make a better decision.

A few days ago I was talking to Emma. We talked about everything and nothing at the same time. Suddenly from nowhere Emma asks me a question: "Which of these two of my classmates would you choose to adopt?" She told me the names and I looked at her and tried to run away from a straight answer. I said, "Well, are they in danger of losing their parents? Is there anything I can do to help them?" Emma insisted that I make a choice. It was not a real situation. It was just to check out my feelings toward her friends?



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Listen to that question. It is not: Can a man get a divorce? They want to know what are the right reasons for a man to divorce his wife.

For Jews divorce was allowed. There was no question about it. **In Deuteronomy 24:1 “Suppose a man marries a woman but she does not please him. Having discovered something wrong with her, he writes a document of divorce, hands it to her, and sends her away from his house”.**

Wow, if Andrew is displeased with my dinner, and you do not have to wait too long to find that out about my cooking abilities, he can send me away with a divorce document in my hand...How is that scenario? It does not fit our day and our culture.

In Jesus' time, wives were regarded as the property of their husbands. The husband needed only to find "something objectionable" to write a divorce paper.

Marriages were not based on love between two persons but on property, status, and honor considerations between two families. Look at how Isaac ended up marrying Rebecca. Abraham's servant found a woman who was thoughtful and hard working – good property to have.

My father-in-law used to live in Africa. According to him some African men want as many wives as possible so the women can do the farming. The more wives you have the bigger your farm can be.

Jacob worked for 14 years to own Rachel. He ended up with two wives out of the deal.

Proverbs 31 describes the ideal wife. "An excellent wife, who can find. For her worth is far above precious jewels." It goes on to say all the things she does to bring honor to her husband.

The prophet Hosea was told by God to marry a prostitute to demonstrate how God keeps loving the people of Israel even though he has all the rights to divorce and dispose of them.

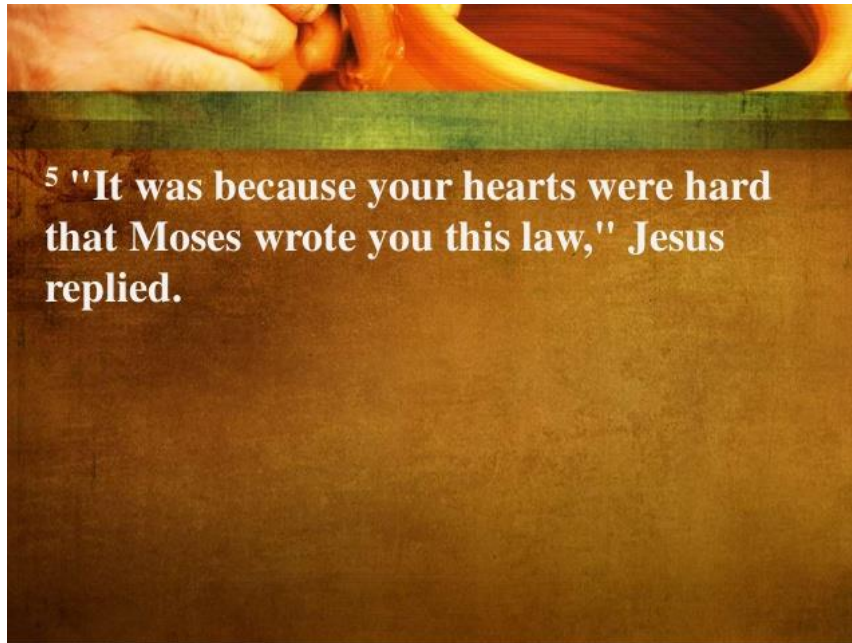
Following a divorce, guess who will remain with no protection, with no status, no employment and no possessions.

Joseph was deeply troubled when he found out Mary was pregnant and not by him. He knew the consequences that Mary would have to face if he broke off the relationship which was perfectly within his rights.

1 Peter 3 is a drastic challenge to the culture of the day. Yes, it says wives should submit to their husbands. Then it says men be careful how you treat your wives or your prayers will not be answered. Your wife is a "fellow heir of the grace of God." Treat her that way. Men should be willing to lay down their lives just as Jesus Christ laid down his life for all of us.

In the context of Biblical times, who becomes the most vulnerable? ... A woman. God's design means to provide wholeness and protection for those who are vulnerable. It is no coincidence that Mark next tells a story about Jesus blessing children (10:13-15).

Jesus asks a question back: "What did Moses command you?" Notice, how Pharisees asked: Is it lawful for a man? Jesus says, "Let's not talk about a man. Let's talk about YOU. What did Moses Command you?" Easy enough to answer: They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." The Pharisees just cannot and will not look at their own hearts.



Jesus always looks deeper into the root of our questions, the root of our sinfulness, and speaks not to some obscure man or woman. He tells you and me: "It was because of the hardness of **your hearts** that Moses wrote this law for **you**."

Jesus refers back to the creation. Let's see what was God's intention from the very beginning. "**At the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'**"<sup>7</sup> "**'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,<sup>8</sup> and the two will become one flesh.'** So they are no longer two, but one **flesh.**"



Let me tell you a most beautiful picture I have of Trinity. It is a family. Man and woman become one. One flesh literally means one. They are united physically, emotionally, spiritually. They are still two people, two individual persons, but they are one. There is a bond that unites them and makes them one. Out of this beautiful unity of two is created a third person. So these three units are three separate people. They are one flesh. They are united. They are one. They share meals, they share thoughts, laughs and tears, they are one. Yes, they are very different, but beautifully one.

We do not know what the Pharisees said or how they reacted. However, we know what Jesus said to his disciples. 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

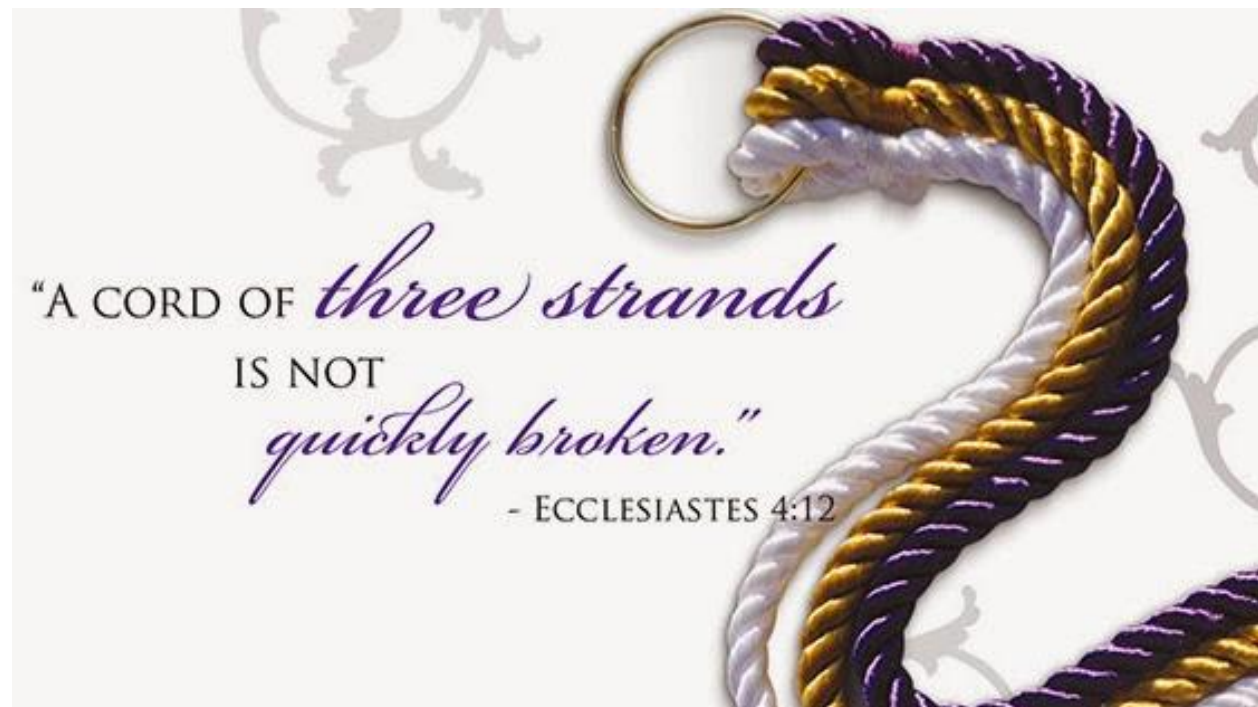
another woman commits adultery against her. <sup>12</sup> And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.””

Rather than allowing these words to turn us off, let us seek to understand. I believe what Jesus is saying that we should very carefully consider divorce. I cannot simply trade my old husband to a just newer model. I cannot base my divorce just on feeling. I cannot just divorce because I fell in love with somebody else.

Sadly, there are times when divorce is the only recourse. It is a reality we must face.

There is an old saying: “The family that prays together, stays together.”

I cannot tell you enough, how important it is for you and your spouse to pray together, to read Bible together to learn communicate and serve each other.



*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help. Again, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone? And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. **A threefold cord is not quickly broken.** (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)*

What is that third cord? It is your mutual faith in God.

According to Gary Thomas, "The purpose of our marriage is not just to make us *happy* but to make us *holy*".

Interestingly Jesus is saying the street goes both ways. Either one can file for divorce.

What is most shocking to me is that Jesus says: "And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery." Wow, Jesus, didn't you know women cannot divorce a man. A man can never commit adultery against his wife, no matter what he did. Jesus recognized the right of a woman to divorce her husband, a right not recognized in Judaism.

God always shows a special care and concern for the most vulnerable people. Jesus wants to protect and prevent the pain and hurt. God shows grace to all who are hurt, abused, abandoned, lonely and have nobody to protect them. God's love and grace is what matters the most.

We all are sinners. We all are vulnerable. The good news is that God sees us through His Sinless Son and sees us as His dearly loved children.

I never know what might or could happen in the future to me or to my marriage. I do not know what the future holds but I know who holds the future and he holds it in the palm of his hand.

I cannot change my past. I am forgiven for my most deep and shameful sins. I know God is my Redeemer. All we have to offer Him is brokenness and strife. He makes something very beautiful out of something ugly. He gives grace upon grace to those who love and forgive. All we have is this moment and God's love for each one of us. God's table is open for all who believe, repent and are seeking to live a life in holiness and love. All are welcomed to receive God's love.