

Text: Mark 10:2-16  
Theme: "Dealing with our Brokenness"  
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Well, here we are again. Those who are trying to trap Jesus into making an error of judgement that would get Him in trouble are back to their old tricks. This time their deceitful schemes are about the topic of divorce. It's a text and topic preachers dread because it is so emotionally charged.

So what does Jesus say about divorce? What do we, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have to say about divorce? It's still a very highly—emotionally charged issue. It's also one that virtually every family has had to deal with.

Jesus started out talking about God's desire for us which has been from the beginning of creation: that we would live happy, meaningful lives. "From the beginning of Creation God made them male and female..." Jesus said. God intended that man and woman would have the companionship and joy that can be found together sharing their lives, becoming one.

But Jesus also talked about something dark and dangerous: sin. Jesus said it was because of sin (hardness of heart) that Moses allowed for divorce. It wasn't God's intention when God created us male and female. The over-arching idea is that it is God's will that we, God's children, find

someone with whom we can share our lives. Sin came into the world shortly after Creation bringing with it the hurt, pain, chaos, and brokenness that is found weaving its way throughout our human existence.

Marriage was a strong institution in Jesus' Day. In a Patriarchal Society it was a chief means of providing for the safety of women and children as well as the security of the elderly. Marriage also ensured the economic stability of the family. In a world where one's very survival meant being a part of a family, a woman and children without a husband could be in great danger physically, economically, and socially. Jesus' teaching on divorce then, has in mind the well-being of the vulnerable, which may be one reason Mark brings in Jesus blessing of the children. Children were the most vulnerable in society and still are today.

God's gift of marriage is intended to bring joy to humanity and cause it to flourish. When a family works together to bring joy and meaning to their lives they find the purpose of marriage as given by our Creator. When this is broken, the intense love and joy of a family is undermined and the result is painful and destructive.

The promises of marriage are vows; vows to stay together in spite of all the changes of time and place and personality. The core of the Marriage Service is a promise. There are good reasons for breaking the

promise of marriage—such as when a spouse is abusive verbally or physically, or is a danger to the health of others, and when one is unfaithful.

One of the reasons divorce is so painful for so many who are involved, not just the couple, is that divorce isn't what God intended. The root cause is sin and the brokenness of humanity. These are things that are often out of our control.

As a pastor there have been times when I believe ending of a marriage was the best option for a couple. It's no less painful, difficult, or challenging when seen as the only good option. It is painful no matter what the reasons.

But we must always, always realize that God never gives up on us. It is not God's plan that we remain in a state of pain, hurt, or being alone. God doesn't quit loving us, and God never quits forgiving us. God is at work in Christ to bring healing and wholeness out of pain and brokenness. God wants only good for us and as such some of the most rewarding times for me as a pastor who has seen someone go through divorce is to see the healing that takes place. Jesus has given His life for us and Jesus is always at work reconciling the world and His children to Him. Jesus loves us dearly and rejoices with us when we have come through the difficult times in our lives to find hope and healing on the other side.

For me, officiating at a remarriage is a powerful event. It is our reminder that God is always making us new and renewing us in His love. Finding healing from the pain and then finding love again is amazing to witness. There is pure joy mixed with reality and commitment when someone finds someone else to share life with. It is a witness to God's intent for us all.

What Jesus says here about divorce is not an all-inclusive, once-and-for-all final word. Rather, it is a response to a question that was put to Him by His critics who were hoping to trip Jesus up. And what Jesus does is not to once-and-for-all condemn divorced persons, but to come down clearly on the side of the weak, the vulnerable, the demoralized, the broken in spirit, the abused, the ones who are being used or hurt in the relationship. This includes men, women, and children. Destructive actions by either spouse make the other vulnerable, hurt, or abused.

As a family of Christ, it is our responsibility to love and care for all whose marriages and relationships are broken. We are the hands and feet of Christ in this world, and we are called to love, support, and care for those whose lives are torn apart by marital problems or divorce. It is not our role to judge or chastise, but to bring love and healing in Christ. Partners in a new marriage can witness to the continuing love of God in our lives. It is

not God's intention that we live in broken, hurtful relationships, and God can bless us again with someone who can love and cherish us. God also blesses persons who choose to be single. Single persons can have fulfilling and joyful lives and many people choose to remain single following a divorce or the death of a spouse. There is no one formula for a fulfilling, happy life blessed by God.

It is always God's intention that marriages last and be places of love, fidelity, trust, and support. If you are experiencing problems in your marriage, there is help available. When there is trust and both persons are willing to work to rebuild a relationship, it is possible to restore the love and joy in a marriage. I have witnessed this in others who have worked through problems and have had their relationships restored and revitalized. There is always hope when people work together. But in all things, even when divorce is the only option, Jesus is with us to bring healing and wholeness to shattered lives.

AMEN

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