

Genesis 2:18-24

Mark 10:2-16

Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

“Oh Lord, our God, how majestic  
is your name in all the earth!” AMEN!

The warning signs are flashing!

Beware of approaching texts from the Bible.

Right, now I see why many preachers  
choose October to be their stewardship  
sermon series month!

It's a good excuse to break away  
from the assigned texts and make some  
simpler Bible selections that talk  
about the benefits of giving  
to the church. :-)

Apparently the fear of talking about money is  
not as great as the pitfalls that are present  
when talking about divorce. :-)

Just the mention of the word “divorce”  
leads some to write the sermon in their  
own head or recall past sermons that  
caused more hurt than anything else.

Chances are you have heard the

Genesis section of chapter two  
used to defend gender norms and  
binary regulations to be  
“ordained by God.”

And, if so, you’ve heard men quote  
the section here about women being created  
as “helpers” and therefore subordinate.

While sermons that explain original language  
and past customs are rarely inspiring,  
it is sometimes necessary to debunk  
those conclusions by looking at the facts.

You see, in the Hebrew text, the word  
from where we have translated “man”  
is *ha-adam*.

What God created in chapter 2:7,  
was not simply a man, but a human creature  
or human being.

A *ha-adam* is one that may have  
been without gender, or of both genders,  
or even fluid in gender.

A separation of the genders will occur,  
but it is not until after the human being  
goes to sleep and God utilizes part of

their side (or sometimes  
translated as “rib”)  
to create another human being.

It is only after that divine surgery that  
there is any hint of distinction between  
the human beings.

And that distinction doesn't come from God  
but out of the mouth of *ha-adam*.

And while this origin tale of how humanity  
began leads us to consider our own current  
questions about sex and gender  
understanding today,

we can focus on the truth that  
the first human being God  
created was non-sex, non-gender,  
or (most likely) all-gender.

Since we focus on that here,  
we can open up space to ponder  
the relationships that human beings can  
have today with one other and  
with the world around them.

We are able to understand that when God said,  
“It is NOT good that the human being

(the *ha-adam*) should be alone,”

then we'll know that this is the  
most important feature of the text,  
and often the least noticed.

The human being doesn't need a “helper,”  
the created animals could do that,  
the human being needed an equal and  
fitting partner.

When we ask, “What are you teaching  
us in this text, God?”

The answer is not “This is God's lesson about gender.”

No, the lesson here is that God recognized  
that being alone or isolated, is not intrinsic  
to our well being.

It's not good to be always alone and isolated.

They are serious problems for humanity,  
and we find that it's the  
first “problem” God tackled.

And God does so by creating  
an equal and fitting partner for the one  
that's alone. (Pause)

But, since we are human beings,  
a little below God, it is going to be  
impossible to avoid conflict with our equal  
and fitting partner, and

sometimes that will lead to a split or a divorce.

Which makes the decent connection into  
what we read in the Gospel of Mark this morning.

Again, we have a selection that's been  
preached in ways that segregate us from  
one another and God.

Some may preach this section  
as if this was a critical thing that  
Jesus permitted or rejected.

This text has been used falsely to  
keep couples married when it was/is clear  
that the relationship is  
no longer equal or fitting.

It has been used to guilt people into staying  
in abusive relationships by taking Jesus's  
word out of context and interpreting them  
so literally that Jesus must be  
rejecting divorce without question.

We may have heard that sermon before,  
but let's study this section to learn  
who Jesus was talking to and  
what his words might mean  
for us today? (Pause)

You have heard the saying:

In real estate...

it is...

location, location, location. :-)

When it comes to the Bible,

the saying is...

in interpretation... it is...

context, context, context.

When the Bible is taken out of context

then unnecessary hurt is created and false  
stumbling blocks are formed that keep  
people from knowing God's  
unconditional love.

So let's take chapter 10 of Mark in context.

Jesus and the disciples are still on  
their way to Jerusalem.

We've been fortunate that the last few weeks  
have given us a sequential timeline.

Jesus gave his second passion prediction;  
he'd be handed over to be  
killed in the Holy City;

the disciples didn't understand,  
but were afraid to ask;

they weren't afraid to argue with one  
another about who was the greatest, though;

Jesus taught them about being last and  
servant of all, if they want to be first;

then Jesus placed a child in their midst and  
told them (and us) that when one  
welcomes a child, they welcome Jesus,  
and when they welcome Jesus,  
they welcome God.

It all begins with welcoming children.

All that happened... and then they went on  
their way to Jerusalem and Jesus began  
to teach the crowd that formed.

It was in this moment that the Pharisees

came to “test” Jesus with their question.

Literally they were seeking to trick him into saying the wrong thing publicly.

The conversation did not begin in good faith; it began as a way to shame Jesus.

Did they hope he’d say something against Herod Antipas for marrying Herodias?

Maybe, it was after all, what got John the baptizer executed.

So, this was not a serious question from the Pharisees in hope that Jesus might open their mind.

And as Jesus often does to forestall a question, he answered the question with a question.

“What did Moses command you?”

It was asked to see if the Pharisees (who were trying to trick Jesus) would keep the scripture rule in context.

They failed because they took the very real, and complex, issue like divorce and

simplified it to a single statement:

“Moses allowed a man to write  
a certificate of divorce.”

The law in Deuteronomy stated clearly  
that there are reasons for divorce.

When something is done that’s “objectionable,”  
or other translations say  
“something obnoxious is found” or  
“a naked thing is discovered.”

These things imply that a public, lewd activity  
occurred and it was not simply that dinner  
was put on the table late.

All this is to say that the passage in  
Deuteronomy was an item in the law  
to address a specific problem.

It was not something that was meant  
to be used universally or literally for all marriages.

God wants us to work through disagreements  
and marital problems, and remain united.

But the fact remains, divorce happens  
and sometimes it is necessary.

So then what?

Well, that's the part that comes next. (Pause)

“People were bringing little children  
to Jesus in order that He might touch them.”

This is probably a familiar passage to you all, too.

The bringing of the children.

What we might have not ever considered is:  
*Who* brought the children?

Pretty sure, that 95% of those who brought  
the children were single mothers.

Mothers trying to eek out a living after  
a man signed a certificate of divorce and  
left them destitute.

Children and women who were suffering.

These groups were often exploited and  
made to live on the margins because  
they were seen more as property than  
human beings.

This is the emphasis here.

Not to make people that divorced and  
remarried today feel guilty, but to point  
to the injustice that divorce

without good reason puts upon  
people who are vulnerable in society.

Jesus here, again, showed that he was  
still worrying about the exploitation  
he was seeing people put upon other people.

Especially children.

So isn't God telling us that the real point of  
this lesson from Jesus is how to navigate  
committed relationships?

Doesn't it make more sense to see  
these lessons to be teaching us about  
what it means to be in love and  
then teach us how to live together and  
be in committed relationship  
with well-fitting partners?

That's very clear, if you ask me.

No one should go into a marriage thinking,

“Well, if this doesn’t work out I’m outta here.”

But, there are also abusers and users,  
who want to dominate their partner.

There are tyrants and low-life’s that want to  
drag down others into the mess  
they’ve created.

There are real reasons for divorce.

But most of all, if we believe in death and resurrection,  
then the death of divorce should lead  
to hope and new life.

And that’s something the church  
should be stewarding in.

That’s what we call Good News.

AMEN!