

Mark 10: 1-12

Jesus left that place and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan. And crowds again gathered around him; and, as was his custom, he again taught them.

2 Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' ³He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' ⁴They said, 'Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.' ⁵But Jesus said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. ⁶But from the beginning of creation, "God made them male and female." ⁷"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸and the two shall become one flesh." So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'

10 Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. ¹¹He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; ¹²and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'

Meditation: Like all passages of scripture, context is everything. Sadly, too much scripture has been and continues to be misinterpreted and misapplied because context has not been adequately understood. Jesus is addressing marriage and divorce in a context where: 1) divorce is much more permissible legally and morally than in our context today, and 2) women have few rights in comparison to men and easily left destitute when a husband decides to walk away from the marriage.

What Jesus is arguing for is greater commitment and responsibility regardless of gender. But more than that, Jesus imagines relationships of beautiful intimacy, fidelity and care. He quotes Genesis 2:24: the two becoming one flesh. What a beautiful possibility. Two human beings coming together to become one flesh. This is metaphor, of course, but it speaks about an incredible possibility in human relationship.

Of course, in this time of Covid-19, we have become aware of two things: 1) How precious is human flesh to flesh contact when there's so much restriction all around, and 2) how difficult it is for women, in particular, in abusive and loveless relationships at home. The wonderful possibilities of body-mind-spirit union between two human beings are greatest where the risk for betrayal, abuse and traumatic hurt are also the greatest. And when stress, dissatisfaction, loss of purpose and disorientation are worse, as it is in such times, the pressure on relationships where intimacy is the expectation can be destructive. May God's mercy, grace and gentleness wrap around us and between us like a warm shawl.

Prayer: You have created us, O God, with a wonderful capacity and need for flesh-to-flesh connection. But in these days all physical contact, from hugs to handshakes to strokes of kindness and intimacy are severely restricted. The cost on our emotional and spiritual health are greater than we may imagine. Fill us with the balm of your peace, O God. May we be more gentle with ourselves and each other. May we find our ground again and again in your larger embrace, surrounding us all in and through this time... Amen.