

Mark 10:2-16

Proper 22

October 5, 2003

It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper as his partner.

God's words. "It is not good that a human should be alone"

So God created dogs and cats and horses and boa constrictors and not one of them was found by God to be the kind of partner God had hoped for for the man.

Then God created the woman and brought her to the man. The man was delighted.

But it has never been quite that easy since.

One man, one woman – one made for the other – wouldn't the world be wonderful if that were the way it always was. If every person loved one other, and was loved, and there was no death to come and take a loved one, and no unfaithfulness, and no angry words, and no disappointments. And no mental illnesses, and no drug abuse and no physical abuse and no laziness, and no drunkenness. No sarcastic words, no minds that failed, no physical disabilities.

But it is not that way.

Jesus, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?

Is it lawful? What is the boundary? What is okay?

Not divorce, said Jesus. Divorce never was God's intention – never will be. God's intention is two becoming one flesh, remaining one flesh. And when it is so there is cause for singing. When husband and wife love and are faithful in the face of mental illness, and angry words and through physical failing and failing minds all of heaven must sing.

But what if one loves and the other does not? What if one is carrying all the burdens and the other becoming more and more irresponsible, or unfaithful or lazy? What if threat and blame and accusation are the only words heard day after day, or embraces replaced by injuring blows? Does Jesus say, "No divorce!"?

Jesus said, Through the hardness of human hearts God has allowed divorce. But divorce is not God's will, not God's intention, not God's hope. No more than when God created the world did God hope to see the day when Jesus would die on the cross. But that is where sin led. To the cross. To divorces. What then?

When all was darkness and life was no more God raised Jesus from the dead. And a new day dawned. Through the years here I have rejoiced to see tears and bitterness turned into joy. New life. Many who have been divorced have had a new beginning. Jesus' words to his disciples do not seem to allow for that, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her and if she divorces her husband and marries another she commits adultery." Jesus seems to say, "One marriage – that is it" Yet when he met the woman at the well who had had five husbands and was living with a man she was not married to Jesus invited her to receive the living water and told her that he was the Messiah.

So what is the rule? What is permitted? What are we to do?

People were bringing little children to him. The disciples spoke sternly to them. Jesus became indignant and said, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."

Such as these. The ones not important enough in disciples eyes. Such as these. Whose only claim was their need of Jesus.

That woman at the well needed Jesus. Nothing else mattered for him.

Do you need Jesus? If you do there is room in his arms for you. No matter what you have been or done or failed to do there is room in his arms for you.

But if you do not come to Jesus like a child who need his love but as an adult who deserves Jesus' attention that could be a problem. Listen: Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.

If you try to drag all your worthiness and accomplishments and all your judgements about how you are more worthy than some other there will be no room in Jesus arms for all of these and you as well.

Best to come only with your need for his love. Always.