

# **Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

## **MARRIAGE**

**Mark 10:2-16**

## **Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost Analysis by Peter Keyel**

2 Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" 3 He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" 4 They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her." 5 But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. 6 But 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, 8 and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." 10 Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. 11 He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; 12 and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." 13 People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. 14 But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. 15 Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." 16 And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

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## DIAGNOSIS: Divorced from God

### Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Divorce*

The Pharisees are testing Jesus with this question because it is one that is important to them. They wanted to know how they could live as God desired. The disciples thought so, too, which is why they ask Jesus for clarification of his answer when there are no opponents around. We are also eager to hear what God wills for marriage and sift through our understanding of God's Law and Promise for how to act and what will be faithful to God. Bob Bertram takes up much of this in *The Divorce of Sex and Marriage: Sain Sex*. Much like the Pharisees, though, and likely the disciples, too, we already know the answer: Divorce is wrong. How can something that is morally wrong be enshrined in religious law?

### Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *Hardness of Heart*

Jesus answers the previous question succinctly: It is for our hard hearts that this law exists. In more words, we justify it as being worse in all sorts of ways if we don't go through with the divorce, since it will result in other sins. But those sins, no matter how terrible, don't change the fact that in marriage two were united into one. If divorcees do remarry, they have to contend with the fact that they have previously united with someone else. They will always have the memories and experiences with the previous person. There will be baggage that the first person never had to deal with. Our hearts are hardened from all of this and by both those conditions leading up to the divorce and the divorce itself.

### Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Separated*

None of this is as God intends. God joined together two sinners

for their mutual good, and it is through our own sins that we have turned this to evil. Even in leaving, we sin further and bring more death to the table. In breaking our vows, we have rebelled against God, and earn the fruits of that rebellion. The law—God's good Law—given for the hardness of our heart, brings death to the marriage that we have made sinful. We finally get the death of marriage that we desire, but in so many ways we get more death than we bargained for.

## **PROGNOSIS: Married to Christ**

### **Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Joined Together***

For our hardness of heart, God also does a new thing. God comes into the world, bears the death we all have coming and rises from it. In a world of separation, God Incarnate is separated from life itself—divorced from existence. And, through the cross, he joins us to his Christ. What God has joined together, we cannot separate!

### **Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *One Flesh***

Joined now to Christ, new things happen. Our separation from God is healed. We are one flesh with Christ. Living as forgiven sinners, we no longer need to harden our hearts to survive, nor do we need to get out. Our hearts are healed into one flesh, and we are joined together with all of God's creation. We no longer have to harden our hearts against the pain and the problems. We don't have to live in fear of what the divorce or the previous relationship has done to us. We've been made new!

### **Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Marriage***

This newness also frees us to live, not as we have before, but trusting in our connectedness to Christ. We can live out our one flesh union with God, consummated in Communion, in our daily lives. We can proclaim the cure for our rebellion against God that underlies our hard hearts and drives divorce. Not just through being with and loving those trapped in similar

situations, but telling all people, in word and deed, what God has done for us in Christ Jesus.