

“Lessons from Jesus: Citizens of God’s Kingdom”

Mark 10:2-16

10/6/2024

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¹³ People were bringing children to Jesus so that he would bless them. But the disciples scolded them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he grew angry and said to them, "Allow the children to come to me. Don't forbid them, because God's kingdom belongs to people like these children. ¹⁵ I assure you that whoever doesn't welcome God's kingdom like a child will never enter it."

– Mark 10:13-15

Back in August I made a big mistake.
I probably made a bunch of them,
But the one I’m thinking about happened
at the Classic Iron Tractor Drive

I gave a really short sermon.

I warned everyone there not to tell the people
at the United Methodist church
that I know how to give short sermons
Because if the people at this church ever found this out
They might expect a short sermon from me from time to time.
But unfortunately,
there were a couple people from church at the Tractor Drive,
So the cat’s out of the bag

We have much to celebrate today,
So I hate to disappoint you all
But it needs to be a short sermon day

Yet, there are two important things that I want to lift up
From this passage about Jesus teaching the crowds
And more importantly, his disciples

We hear about divorce and who enters God’s kingdom
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² Some Pharisees came and, trying to test him, they asked, "Does the Law allow a man to divorce his wife?"

³ Jesus answered, "What did Moses command you?"

I hope you noticed that Jesus **didn't** say
What did Moses command **people getting divorced**?

"What did Moses command **you**?"

Jesus is getting personal with these Pharisees
who are testing to see what Jesus says
and is drawing them **into** the question
and **challenging** them to truly think about it

Anyone here have any family members who are divorced?
Maybe the question to ask is if anyone here
Doesn't know any family or friends who
have gone through a divorce

I think that it has been easy in our society to be tempted
To judge people who have experienced broken relationships

But Jesus tells the Pharisees that the rules
that are in the Law given to Moses are there
because God knows that our hearts can be hard and unyielding

Jesus goes on to say that when people marry,
They are joined together as one entity
And it is not good or desirable for **us** to rip apart
What **God** has put together and has blessed

Again, is going through a divorce a painful thing?

Later when they are alone,
the disciples want more insight about this,
And Jesus responds by saying that it is comparable to adultery

The phraseology that Jesus uses here
has been used to be less-than-kind over the years
To persons who have gone through the pain of divorce

We hear in the Law given to Moses
That if a man or a women commit adultery
They must be executed (Leviticus 20)
Even in the case of rape (Deuteronomy 22)

As Jesus is teaching his disciples in the house,
I don't think he is advocating for people to be executed
Rather I think Jesus is talking about the deep pain
that comes through not being faithful to one's spouse,
regardless of being married or divorced

Jesus is not talking about capital punishment,
But instead, about the reality of the heartbreak of God
(Show Title Slide)

And then,
¹³ People were bringing children to Jesus so that he would bless
them. But the disciples scolded them.
– Mark 10:13

This encounter highlights a very deep
but simple truth of God's love
In the language of Jesus's day,
children were not boys or girls, but things
They were at the bottom of society

No wonder the disciples mistakenly thought
That Jesus' important attention
shouldn't be taken up by such **things**

¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he grew angry and said to them, "Allow the
children to come to me. Don't forbid them, because God's kingdom
belongs to people like these children. ¹⁵ I assure you that whoever
doesn't welcome God's kingdom like a child will never enter it."

Who are the citizens of God's kingdom?
Only important people?
Only people who have done great things?
Only people who have done the right things?

No

To come before God,
We have to realize that God loves us because we are us
God loves you because you are you

(Show Jesus and many children Slide)

And isn't this what we are celebrating with little Feliz Dee today?
Felix hasn't won any awards that I'm aware of
He hasn't helped anyone affected by Hurricane Helene
He hasn't even confessed out loud that Jesus is his Savior
Or promised to serve Jesus as his Lord

Yet we are celebrating Felix's baptism
Because God already loves Felix
How does that line go?

*We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation and given
new birth through water and the Spirit.*

All this is God's gift, offered to us without price.

– UMC Baptismal Covenant

God love us – as a grace-filled, unearned gift
God loves **you** – as a grace-filled, unearned gift

Even if we don't think that's the way it should be

Grace is not about us and what **we** do,
Grace is all about **God** and what God does for us

*"Allow the children to come to me. Don't forbid them, because
God's kingdom belongs to people like these children. ¹⁵ I assure you
that whoever doesn't welcome God's kingdom like a child will never
enter it." ¹⁶ Then he hugged the children and blessed them.*

(Show Norman Rockwell "Golden Rule" Slide)

Let's celebrate a kingdom where all have a place at God's Table
Let's celebrate a place where we all belong
A place where everyone belongs

(Baptismal Covenant II)

UM Hymnal pp. 39-43)

