

PREPARING AT HOME

October 1-7, 2018

Focus reading: Mark 10:2–16 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=403774011>)

Other lectionary readings: Job 1:1, 2:1–10; Psalm 26; Hebrews 1:1–4; 2:5–12

Theme: Tough Questions along the Way

This week's reading is a difficult one that has been interpreted in ways that divide people of faith. At first glance it appears to define marriage as between a man and a woman and to say that divorce for any reason is not permissible. It is a passage that has been used as a weapon to hurt people for whom a heterosexual lasting marriage is not in the picture, for whatever reason. When we pay attention to context, we see that the Pharisees have raised the question about divorce as a "test" (verse 2) for Jesus. It was a common tactic on their part to try to trick Jesus into saying something that would back him into a corner and expose him as a "lawbreaker." They weren't really interested in what Jesus had to teach about divorce! We also need to remember how marriage and divorce were practiced in this culture. Marriage was often polygamous. Women were property. Only men could ask for a divorce, and the grounds were immaterial. Divorced women had no means of providing for themselves or their children. Divorced women were adulterers; but since women had no rights, men were never guilty of adultery. To hear Jesus say that both men and women were guilty of adultery must have been shocking! Jesus shows concern for women and children and seeks justice for the vulnerable ones of society. Interpreting the text in this way helps to explain why the next story is one in which Jesus embraces a child, the most vulnerable of the culture in which Jesus lived. Jesus embraces those who are pushed down by society.

BLESSING THE CHILDREN

Jesus affirmed and blessed the children who were being turned away. How can you bless your children this week? Do something each day that affirms and blesses them. Explore ways that your family can bless other children, especially those who may be feeling set aside.

CHILDREN AT CHURCH

Jesus' disciples tried to turn children away from Jesus, but he called the children to be with him. How are children welcomed at our church? What else could we do to welcome children in our congregation? Share your ideas with Sunday school teachers, church staff, and other church leaders.

MEDITATION

Spend some quiet time imagining the following:

Hear Jesus calling to you.
Feel Jesus' arms around you.
Jesus loves you.
You are important to him.
Remember that and rejoice!

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