

Proper 22 (18th Sunday after Pentecost)
October 4, a.D. 2009
Mark 10: 2 – 16

In this section of Mark's Gospel, Jesus is teaching us what a disciple is and how life is to be lived by those who are His. Where Jesus is, there is change. The old gone, the new has arrived. The old self which thought it sat upon the throne is removed and now a new Lord has come, one who turns hearts away from self and lives for others, without seeking rewards or looking around to see if anyone notices.

With Jesus ruling as the new Lord, there is no turning back; for if anyone puts his hand to the plow and looks back, he is not worthy of the Kingdom of God. Where Jesus is Lord, there are no negotiations of what sort of life sits well with us and what our terms are as if he should feel himself privileged to have us as his disciples. None of that. He is Lord of all, of all of us!

Now when it comes to earthly kings, rulers and governments, they are the ones given to by their royal subjects and citizens. Kings demand their royal subjects to fight in their army, serve in their courts, and pay taxes. But here is a strange twist with Jesus as the one ruler and king from heaven. He is the one doing all of the giving. As his disciples, we take that very discipleship from Him. Who we are, is gift from Him. We are given to.

Jesus changes everything. He changes our relationship with God. He changes our relationship with our family and with others. With Jesus as the new Lord, his disciples stop thinking about themselves first, they begin to live the life of their new Lord, which is living for others.

So when his enemies tried to trap him about his views on divorce, he returns to God's plan for marriage. God is the great Giver. He gives you a spouse for life until death parts you. He said it wasn't good for the man to be alone so he gave him a helper, made only for him. Male and female he created them from the beginning.

We have the same conversations about divorce. Can a Christian remarry after divorce? Does God permit it? Surely God knows how I am suffering in this marriage and he will understand if I have no other choice but to bail out. I will drown in sorrow if I don't get out of this bad marriage.

What do we become if life is all about survival? When hope reaches only to the point of survival, then our survival becomes the one thing most important. If I had not gone for the divorce, I would not have survived. This way of living affects all of life not just our view on marriage. If I get through today by any means, then I live on. Survival of the fittest. If Darwin's theory of the origin of species becomes our rulebook in life, then what have we become?

We are reduced to animals. Instead of denying self or the old self crucified, the old me is put back on the throne and leaves me unfit for the Kingdom of God.

The disciples didn't want their Lord to have to deal with small children and their mothers and so they shooed them away. When Jesus saw this he was indignant, very upset. Little children are only given to. They simply receive and so they exemplify faith. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Mt. 19:14) Little children were taken up into the Lord's arms and with his hands on their heads, he blessed them and welcomed them into his kingdom.

Disciples are given to. They do not defend themselves against the Lord's gifts. They receive them. Only by receiving the Kingdom as would a child, is our relationship with God changed. Relying on ourselves, we cannot live as God desires it, whether it is as husband, wife or child. When we put on Christ, he gifts us with the ability to live for others.

This same Jesus welcomes little children of all ages through holy baptism. There he has taken off your old clothes and gives you his royal robes of righteousness and holiness to wear as pure gift. At the end of each day, lay your whole life before God and be comforted to know that you still his child and all is made well again in his forgiveness and love.

God restores our families through his Son. Christ Jesus has restored us to God by making us one with him and through his gifts of grace, he restores the oneness between husband and wife, the oneness of broken families and whole communities of faith. He came for us all and opened the Kingdom of God to all believers. His Kingdom as well as discipleship, is all a gift from your gracious Lord.