

Sermon Notes – October 6, 2024
The Holy Gospel of St. Mark 10: 2-16
Peace Lutheran Church
“Receiving the Kingdom as a Child.”

In a context in which divorce is as common as we experience in our country today, it would be difficult to read the first part of today's gospel text and not preach on it. A single sermon, however, simply could not juggle the complexities raised by this seemingly simple and straight forward, yet difficult teaching. Where do repentance and new life fit in? How does violence or abandonment affect the case? How do we deal with situations where sin subverts God's original intention, turning a blessing into a curse? These are matters for study, prayer, counseling, and catechesis, and not a single sermon-although preachers might lift up the complexity in a way that makes it clear that they are not simply evading a painful word from Jesus.

With the weight of Jesus' words on divorce in the first part of this gospel lesson, the second half of the lesson is easily overlooked, or given short shrift at best. It is a lesson imparting, not that one is welcomed because one is pure or innocent - children of that time were considered neither, and parents of today continue to know all too well - but that the welcome to know Jesus is freely given; it is inescapably obvious that children cannot know of or pay for it in any way.

The Genesis reading pertaining to this lesson, from which Jesus quotes in the gospel text, is not relegated to the telling of only a creation story, but a story explaining why one's new family at marriage takes precedence over one's family of origin. “Helper” does not mean assistant, but rather more like one's rescuer. Apart from the woman here, only God is referred to by this word in the Old Testament. And note that the man names every animal except for himself - he is named by God. Part of the offense of the builders of

the tower of Babel might well have been that they did it to “make a name for [them]selves” (Gen. 11: 4).

The second reading begins for us several weeks in the book of Hebrews. This book was written primarily to encourage Christians (probably Jewish Christians) who were weary with the end times' delay. In coming chapters the author will give many examples of people who held on to faith and hope in much worse situations, but he begins with the prime example: Jesus himself.

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