

Reflection - Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost (Ordinary 27)  
06-10-2024

St Cuthbert's Anglican Church – Tweed Heads

Job 1:1, 2:1-10      Job suffered, but didn't curse God

Psalms 26              Lord, I have done your will, save me.

Hebrews 1:1-4, 2: 5-12      God speaks through Jesus  
Jesus died for everyone

Mark 10: 2-16          Jesus teaches about Marriage and Divorce  
Jesus blesses the little Children

### Introduction

In the readings we have heard from the bible this morning, the first three from Job, the Psalms and Hebrews focus on our relationship with God, whilst the Gospel reading focuses on the relationships we have with others.

I believe that if our relationship with God is on solid ground, then it will help us immensely in our relationship with others.

Today I would like to look at the two relationship issues Jesus addressed in the gospel reading. Firstly, that of marriage and divorce, and secondly how we treat children.

### Marriage and Divorce

Let's begin by looking at Marriage and Divorce. This is a subject that I have often avoided preaching on. I have been reluctant, mostly for fear of offending someone, but it is a very important part of who we are as human beings, so I would like to look at what Jesus has to say about it today.

Firstly, this teaching comes from the Pharisee's trying to set a trap for Jesus. They had procedures for divorce based on bad interpretations of the book of Deuteronomy, whereas Jesus takes them back to the creation story in Genesis.

They were looking at it as a legal contract they could get in or out of depending on how it suited them. Jesus wanted to teach about the significance of marriage on a much higher level. Marriage is not just a legal contract, but also a spiritual joining together, where two become one.

They may have been looking for Jesus to support them, and their procedures, but if he didn't, they could possibly have been angling to get Jesus in trouble with King Herod, as John had been put in prison for lecturing Herod on adultery.

I believe Jesus was trying to get across to the Pharisee's that the ideal of marriage is that of permanence and mutual support.

I believe Jesus gives us the ideal of marriage in Mark 10:6-9:-

<sup>6</sup> But from the beginning of creation, "God made them male and female." <sup>7</sup> "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, <sup>8</sup> and the two shall become one flesh." So they are no longer two, but one flesh. <sup>9</sup> Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'

I know there are people in the congregation today who will not be in this ideal that Jesus has outlined today, and I do not want you to think, that I am thinking any less of you. God loves each and every one of us. We are all human beings, and all face different situations in life. Within the Anglican Communion there are many differing views on how the church sees marriage and divorce.

I have seen examples where divorce could possibly have been avoided, and other examples where divorce was probably the best outcome.

I hope first and foremost, in all of our relationships, that there would be honesty and integrity, and a willingness to give of ourselves rather than to just be selfish.

I would like to close with a sentence from a "Doctrine Commission" Paper on Marriage, where the participants disagreed but remained brothers and sisters in Christ:-

Perhaps when we die, that will be how Christ first judges us – on our love for one another, more than whether our thinking was correct"

(For further details please see <https://anglican.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Marriage-Doctrine-Essays-Final.pdf>)

If you would like to, please make a time to come and see me, if you feel there is anything from what I have said, that you would like to discuss.

## Jesus Blesses Little Children

Let us now explore how Jesus blesses the little children. I believe there are two parts to what Jesus is trying to teach us here.

Firstly, that children are important and should be treated well.

In the ancient world, children were pretty much like second class citizens. Children were valued in that they would grow up to be functioning and productive adults. We hear today how Jesus' own disciples were chasing the children away.

Jesus rebukes the disciples and blesses the children. In the same way we are to nurture and care for the children in our midst.

Secondly, Jesus is saying that unless we accept him like little children, we will not enter the Kingdom of God.

So, what is a little child like? Well, they often trust adults implicitly, because they have too. I can recall going to the local swimming pool with our children, when they were quite young. They would allow me to throw them into the air and have all sorts of fun. They didn't question whether it might be a bit dangerous. Our son once jumped into the pool, when I wasn't quite paying attention, and I had to quickly get in, to grab him from going under. He trusted that I was there for him. But children can also be silly and naughty and have short attention spans.

And how are adults different to children? Well, as adults we can often make our own decisions and be a lot more independent than children.

Is Jesus saying we need to be silly, or mindless? I don't think so.

I think Jesus by saying we need to accept him, like a child accepts adults. Jesus is saying that we need to trust implicitly like a child does. Children must trust adults to look after them, they don't have a choice. We need to trust Jesus like that!

Not because we don't have a choice, but because we know it is the best choice we can make for our lives.

And when we trust Jesus like that, we'll be better enabled to live our lives as his followers.

## Conclusion

Today's Gospel reading is all about human relationships. Jesus is talking about how marriage is to be respected and embraced as important. Jesus is also talking about treating children well, as they too, belong to God.

But the most important relationship we can ever have, is a relationship with the God who created us.

I believe it is only when we acknowledge what Jesus has done for us, and the relationship he seeks to have with us, that we will truly be able to live well in the relationships we have with others.

The challenge for us from the readings today, is to look at our relationships, and look not at what we are getting out of them, but rather at what we are putting into them.

How are we seeking to accept Jesus like a little child, so that we can live and take our part in God's Kingdom?

Amen.