

Church of the Divine Love

PROPER 22

OCTOBER 3, 2021

10:15 A.M.

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn #376 – Joyful, joyful, we adore thee

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (S-280 in hymnal) page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Genesis 2:18-24**

Psalm 8

Second Lesson: **Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12**

Gradual Hymn #495 – Hail, thou once despised Jesus!

Gospel: **Mark 10: 2-16**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze

Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form VI page 392

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn – **Children of the Heavenly Father** vs. 1;2;3;5 (insert)

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

Eucharistic Prayer A page 361

Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal) page 362

The Lord's Prayer	page 364
The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer	page 337
The Communion of the People	
Communion Hymn – #448 – O love, how deep, how broad	
Post Communion Prayer	page 365
Prayer for Peace – on back of bulletin	
Prayer of St. Francis	page 833
Dismissal Hymn #679 – Surely it is God who saves me	

Sermon Sunday October 3, 2021

Genesis 2: 18-24; Psalm 8; Hebrews 1: 1-4: 2: 5-12; Mark 10: 2-16

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, oh Lord, my rock, and my redeemer! Amen!

Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" Divorce is a question that affects all of us. Some of us have dealt with it in our own lives and marriages. Some of us have known the pain of our parents' or child's divorce. All of us, I suspect, know someone who is divorced or has been affected by divorce. It is a reality of our lives and our world. Sometimes divorce is necessary. Other times it comes too quickly and too easily, an escape from the hard work of being in relationship. Always, it is a spiritual and emotional tragedy with profound and lasting consequences for all involved.

This process has been a test, the same kind of test the Pharisees set before Jesus in today's gospel (Mark 10:2-16). "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" Is it lawful for Republicans and Democrats to divorce each other? Is it lawful for me to say of another, I have no need of or concern for you? The questions may be different, but the test is the same. Today's gospel isn't really even about divorce. From the start Mark says this is a test. It is not a pastoral question about divorce. The Pharisees are not inquiring about a woman in an abusive or dangerous situation. They aren't asking about a young couple who through illusion, immaturity, or being naïve made a mistake in choosing to marry. They are not dealing with a marriage that has become spiritually dead, not only devoid of life but destructive of life. They are not focusing on the spiritual or emotional wellbeing of the couple.

They want to know Jesus' view on the state of the law. Is it lawful? Can this be done? Jesus is clear, however, that this isn't about the state of the law but the state of their hearts. The Pharisees tell Jesus that Moses allowed for a certificate of dismissal, a divorce. And that, Jesus says, was "because of the hardness of your heart. "Just as he did last week and the week before Jesus is deepening and moving the conversation inward. The issue in today's gospel is not divorce, it is hard heartedness. Hard

heartedness lives in an economy of right and wrong, and its currency is self-justification, defensiveness, privilege, blame, name calling, and finger pointing. We read and see that every day. Bipartisanship is not the answer to what is happening in our country. That's just another transaction. You get this, and I get that. You can do this, and I can do that. We might balance the books, but hearts are not changed, a new day does not dawn, a new life is not lived.

Let's not settle for a reconciliation of what has happened; either within ourselves or between each other. Reconciliation is nothing more than the final decree of divorce, the terms under which we agree to continue living unchanged, hard heartedly. It still leaves us divided and the two still have not become one flesh. We need the dawn of a new day, a new way, a new life. We need the possibility of the impossible. We need forgiveness. Reconciliation is a negotiation and settlement of the past. Forgiveness, however, releases us from the past. Forgiveness repairs the past not by undoing it, but by letting us step into a new day, a new way, a new life.

I am not talking about a forgiveness that says, I will forgive only when you have confessed, feel bad about what you have done, made restitution, and resolved to never do this again. That's just another transaction, another balancing of the books, another reconciliation. I am talking about forgiveness as unconditional, as pure gift, as an act of love. We write off the debt. We wipe away the offense. We release the other to go in peace. This kind of forgiveness is sheer madness. It means forgiving even when the offender has not confessed, or continues to sin, or is not deserving of forgiveness. What if we did not view change or repentance as the prerequisite for forgiveness, but understood forgiveness to be a gift of love that offers another the freedom to change and repent? This kind of love, this kind of forgiveness, will always overcome the economy of right and wrong. It sounds crazy to even consider this. It makes no sense and it's not the usual way of thinking about forgiveness. It's not the usual way most of us offer forgiveness. But it is Jesus' way of forgiveness. Unconditional forgiveness received lets me become like a child. Unconditional forgiveness given lets another become like a child. This child, like the children that Jesus takes into his arms in today's gospel, is representative of a new beginning, a new life, a new possibility. "It is too such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."

Divorce happens in all those relationships in which we or another have become hard hearted. Hardness of heart is not simply a marital issue. It is a spiritual issue. It separates humanity from divinity. It divides husbands and wives, parent and child, brother, and sister, Republican and Democrat, liberal and conservative, black, and white, rich, and poor, Christian, and Muslim, Palestinian and Israeli. Hard heartedness is not simply about having differences. It's about having no need of the other. Divorce is a symptom of heart disease. Wherever there is division and separation there is hardness of heart, our own or another's. It is the reason the disciples tried to keep the children from Jesus. It is the reason the Pharisees could even ask their question to test Jesus. Before divorce ever happens between us it happens within us. We begin to live isolated, closed, and fragmented lives. We become fearful, defensive, and lonely.

We can all give reasons for our many divorces. We can describe the fights, pain, fear, abuse, incompatibility, and differences of opinions, values, and dreams. We can name the failures and disappointments. We can recall what she said or what he did. They are real but they only justify the legality of our divorce. The reasons leave us stuck. They offer neither life nor healing but only survival. God offers and desires more for us than mere survival. The life and healing we desire is found in living with a soft heart. That's a vulnerable and risky place to live. It's the place and way in which Christ lived.

As we examine and soften our hearts, we discover that we have become “one flesh” with God. God has joined us to himself, and no one can separate what God has joined together. There is no divorce that can separate us from the love, life, and presence of God. Divine grace fills all our relationships. It deepens our gratitude and joy in the relationships that are most intimate and life-giving. It gives us courage and perseverance to work on the ones that are broken. It offers us wisdom and strength when it is necessary to find a holy life separate from another. In each of these relationships Christ opens his arms to us and invites us to receive his blessing. The challenge of today’s gospel is neither marriage nor divorce. It is the work of examining our own heart; to name the places of hardness, to be open and vulnerable, to be willing to change and be changed. **Amen!**

Our Thrift Shop will be closed this week. Re-opening on Thursday, October 14th.

19 PENTECOST

10:15 AM HOLY EUCHARIST, II (also on zoom)

MONDAY

8:00 AM AA MEETING

WEDNESDAY

7:00 PM AL-ANON MEETING

THURSDAY

8:00 PM AA MEETING

SUNDAY – 20 PENTECOST

BISHOP’S VISITATION

10:15 AM HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II (also on zoom)

SUPPORT THE FOOD DRIVE – DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Give to all who suffer the refreshing waters of your compassion and healing. Make them dwell in the safety of your care even in the midst of all that troubles them. Especially we remember before you:

Girard Bishop	Chrissy Neville	Dorothy
Nathan Treadwell	John LoubengeigerDel	
Chris Dickson	Kate Jones	Julia
Michael Echevarria	John Rocco	James
Martinisi Family	Michael & Family	Warren
Charlotte H.	Bernie Walther	Sylvia
Mo (Rachael)	Bill Conklin Sr.	Laura
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Taylor
Ciara	Gabriel	Aidan
Elodie	Victims of Natural Disasters	
Victims of Terrorism	People of Haiti	
Edward Lent & Family	Christopher & Family	

Help us to speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them. Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions and glory, now and for ever. Amen. *BCP Page 815*