

# Sunday Morning Resources

Sunday 6 October 2024 - The Nineteenth Sunday After Trinity

**Lectionary Readings** (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Genesis 2. 18-24; Psalm 8; Hebrews 1.1-4, and 2.5-12; Mark 10.2-16

## Homily

**Today's homily has been written by the Revd Canon Fiona Brampton, Bishop's Advisor for World Mission and Priest in Charge, North Leightonstone**

I wonder what your first thought was as you heard the Gospel being read this morning. Maybe your heart sank – or was full of joy – or maybe, like the Pharisees questioning Jesus, there was a certain amount of glee at 'well, how's this one going to go then?' In some traditions of pondering on God's word, we would go back to the Gospel and 'put ourselves into the scene' – where do you stand? What do you think as you hear Jesus' words? We are going to think about something else today, but nevertheless, it is worth spending a moment or two wondering where you stand as you hear these words – and asking God to open you to hearing them in new ways.

Now we're going to go back a bit to think where these words fit into Mark's telling of the gospel of Jesus. In the first eight chapters of Mark's gospel, Mark is trying to answer the question of who Jesus is. In Chapter 8 (v 28) Jesus asks the disciples 'Who do you say that I am'. Peter immediately answers with 'You are the Messiah' – but the subsequent verses show that Peter and the disciples have no idea just how differently their understanding of Messiahship is to that of Jesus. In the next few chapters, Jesus explains to them that he is the suffering servant Messiah with care for others at the heart of what he is about as he heads to Jerusalem and the ultimate act of love. His kingdom is one of upside-down values.

So, it is with this upside-down vision of Jesus that we approach these verses and take the words about marriage and about children together. This is then viewed as more than a 'blueprint' of marriage and of what God thinks about divorce., it becomes about how we make and maintain loving covenant relationships.

God says in Genesis 2, 'It is not good for Man to be alone' Human beings have been created in the image of God, and God is a dynamic relationship of love between Father, Son and Spirit. Therefore, human beings are created to be in dynamic relationships – a dynamic relationship of love between parent and child, and the dynamic relationship of adults in marriage covenant.

Let's look at the nature of marriage. In God's eyes, it is a lifelong covenantal relationship, mirroring God's eternal covenant with God's people and the eternal relationship between the persons of the Trinity themselves.

The values of God, and God's Suffering Servant Messiah, are different to those of the world, even to those who were God's people. Moses' command to give a certificate of dismissal to the wife, who would always be the more vulnerable partner in the relationship, was given to protect her and to give her some status. By the time of Jesus, it was used to dismiss an unwanted partner. Jesus argues that, in God's eyes, the relationship is a covenant. The partners in marriage move from the relationship of dependence upon parents to mutual dependence on one another. It is a covenantal relationship forever.

But- before you get up and walk out of church, we must remember that covenant involves faithfulness, caring for one another and cherishing one another. Where there are lies, or bullying or any other kind of abuse, the covenant is broken. Jesus' language is often about God's greatest desire for his people, which may not always work out in a broken world. God's greatest desire is that we enjoy those covenantal relationships, but it is not for someone to stay in a relationship that isn't about life in all its fulness, And as the Body of Christ, we may sometimes need to help people make wise and brave choices for themselves and those they love.

We all stand before God as those who have broken our covenant relationship with God at some point. We stand in the mercy of God. God continues to love us and want the best for us, whatever we do. There will be some listening to these words who are aware of ways they have broken their covenant relationship either with God or their spouse. There will be some who long to have a covenant relationship with someone, but this has not happened. We do well to acknowledge and share the pain this causes.

In this passage, Jesus shows that God's kingdom has different values to the world. God's kingdom invites us to look at one another with honour, care and respect, as God looks on us. We are invited to share the best that a relationship based on covenant and promise can offer and this begins with our relationship with God.

This is made clear when Jesus encountered children. Children, particularly poor children, had no status. And Jesus turns this idea upside down. The parents in this story wanted the best for their children, and in this moment the best was to be blessed by Jesus. The disciples tried to stop them. Why should Jesus be bothered by children. Jesus shows us the upside-down kingdom values. These parents care for their children. They are demonstrating the covenantal relationship Jesus was talking about earlier. God loves children – they are also part of his special relationship with the world. Jesus didn't simply say that children should be tolerated. In John's account of the feeding of the five thousand, it is a child who enables God's saving work to happen. Children should be allowed to come to Jesus, to be loved, to know that they are seen and blessed – by God and by the world. This was a real challenge to the disciples.

Not content with including and welcoming the children, Jesus challenged the disciples even further. It's not good enough just to become a servant – those who follow him must become like a child in order to enter God's kingdom.

In these two encounters, Jesus shows us the qualities of his kingdom. It is not the power we have over others that matters, but the quality of our relationships when they are based on covenant, promise, love and faithfulness. For then our relationships mirror God's relationship in the trinity and God's relationship with God's people.

The last section of Mark's gospel, from Chapter 11 and the entry to Jerusalem, tells the story of how Jesus became Messiah. Having looked at today's gospel, we see that the true cost of the suffering servant Messiah would be if the community of the Trinity itself might be broken 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me'. However, when Jesus breathes his last, God's love wins through, and the barrier between God and God's beloved world is broken.

I wonder what will happen, in our life, in the life of our church, in the life of our community, if we all loved each other with the covenant love that Jesus saw as part of the Trinity, and which is also part of us because we are made in God's image.

### ***Suggested intercessions***

Created in the image of God, created to live in love, we pray for our church.

We pray that love may be at the heart of all that we do, so that we reflect God's glory.

We pray that love may be at the heart of every relationship, that we may respect and honour all people.

We pray that love may lead us to reflect the upside down values of the Kingdom of God.

Created in the image of God, created to live in love, we pray for our world.

We pray for those who wish to dominate, to have things 'their way', to see some people and their needs as more important than others. We pray for the upside down values in whose image they are created to break through.

We pray for the very earth itself – that we all might renew a covenanted, faithful relationship to the world that gives us life.

Created in the image of God, created to live in love, we pray for those who feel that they are unlovable, that no one love them.

We pray for those who are in covenanted relationships of love, for the wisdom and grace to continue to care for one another.

And we pray for those who need to find the strength and courage to love themselves as God loves them, and to find places of safety and solace.

Created in the image of God, created to live in love, we pray for all those who are hurting and in pain, in any way at this time. Let them know that the God of love is with them and holding them.

Created in the image of God, created to live in love, we give thanks that love does not end with death. We give thanks for all those whom we love who are now in the fullness of God's love and we rejoice with them that one day we will all fully experience that love which never ends.

Merciful Father,

**accept these prayers for the sake of your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

### **Suggested hymns/songs**

Love is something if you give it away (Magic Penny)

O Lord, all the world belongs to you.

Love divine, all loves excelling

A new commandment I give unto you

Love is his word

Brother, sister, let me serve you

Will you come and follow me

From heaven you came (The servant King)

Meekness and majesty

Breathe on me, breath of God

Through all the changing scenes of life

### **Activities to accompany the service:**

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- [reflectionary.org](https://www.reflectionary.org/) – lectionary-based resources
- [engageworship](https://www.engageworship.org/) – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/>  
(weekly@lectionary resource)