

Mark 10:2-16
October 7, 2018 – 20th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Who Do You Say I AM? *The Lover of Family*

- ✦ **Joining couples together (vv.2-12)**
- ✦ **Blessing the children (vv.13-16)**

In the Name of Jesus, *The Lover of Family*, dearly redeemed brothers and sisters in Christ:

Have you ever talked to a reporter about your faith? Out of several interviews before our first worship service in this building September 30, 1990, one sticks in my memory because of my eldest daughter Katie's picture with me at age 5 ½. The reporterette kept asking me critical questions for which she already had her answers. Her article wasn't over-the-top terrible, but certainly not the welcome-to-the-community we received from smaller local weeklies. You've know people like that too – *Mind's made up....Don't bother me with the facts....I already know I don't like you.* Any wonder our Lord Jesus encountered testy, critical questions from self-righteous Pharisees? They felt no need to repent and deeply resented Jesus' calls to trust in Him as their Savior. Everything was about tripping Him up to look bad in front of the crowds, absolutely certain He was not who He said He was. "***But what about you,***" Jesus asks us again today in our series, "***Who do you say I AM?***" Meet *The Lover of Family*....

✦ **Joining couples together (vv.2-12)**

"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"¹ We might ask, "*Is there such a thing as no-fault divorce?*" The way Jesus answers the Pharisees shows He does not suffer from our problem as WELS members and pastors. We seem to think we always have to come up with the right answer, the right Bible passage, the right doctrinal point. What does Jesus do? He answers with a question to let His critics say what's really on their minds. Jesus replied, "***What did Moses command you?***" As true God, Jesus could read their mind. He knew where they were going with this. But He wants to draw them out, a tactic we need to copy because we can't read minds. We need to listen more, even share people's pain.

They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." It was true. Moses acting as a civil leader in their 40-year wilderness journey needed to know who was married, who was responsible for the women and children. Law and order for sure, but there was more to it.

Jesus told them, "He wrote this command for you because of your hard hearts." This is similar to our own Supreme Court redefining marriage because some hard hearted citizens demanded it. If the people were squared away with God on marriage, the question would never come up. By nature we prove ourselves as out of touch with God as the ancient Jews. Jesus goes on: ***From the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. ⁷For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh. ⁹Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate."***¹⁰***In the house his disciples asked him about this again. ¹¹He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. ¹²If she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."***

The way our pastor said it in our wedding sermon, 5/31/1981: "It was not chance that brought you two together." Our kind Creator who took the woman from the man and made her for the man to be treasured for life knows that true love can only thrive in a secure relationship. According to God's divine design, one man and one woman "glued together" for life is a union of body and soul that replaces our

¹ EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version* (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2017. NPH: 800-662-6022; also Amazon-Kindle.

childhood relationship with Mom and Dad. There's nothing like marriage. God designed this blessed estate to make us one in body and mind and heart with our spouse for a super awesome reason. He is *The Lover of Family*. Did you catch that in our Second Lesson? *"It was fitting for God (the one for whom and through whom everything exists), in leading many sons to glory, to bring the author of their salvation to his goal through sufferings. ¹¹For he who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified all have one Father. For that reason, he is not ashamed to call them brothers."* (Hebrews 2:9-11 EHV)

Can you see it? God wanted a family so He sent His Son Jesus to build one. And Jesus wanted to win our hearts the way a loving bridegroom wants to woo his bride. Only in our case the marriage is so unequal, something spectacular had to happen. You can savor this refreshing thought in our Christian Marriage service which quotes Ephesians 5 about God's boundless love for you as seen in "the intimate union of Christ and his church." Jesus makes it easy for us to submit to Him because He willingly sacrificed Himself to make us His holy bride. The Holy Spirit calls Christians in general to *"submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."* He applies that same beautiful word to God-fearing women, literally, *"Wives to your own husbands as to the Lord...as the church submits to Christ..."* More of God's words are directed to us men: *"Husbands, love your wives, in the same way as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶to make her holy, by cleansing her with the washing of water in connection with the Word. ²⁷He did this so that he could present her to himself as a glorious church, having no stain or wrinkle or any such thing, but so that she would be holy and blameless."* God's way of making a beautiful bride is by being a selfless, wife-honoring husband, cleansing away our guilt and sin. There is no *Lover of Family* like Jesus the Lover of your soul, your heavenly Bridegroom.

✦ **Blessing the children (vv.13-16)**

Don't you wish we could all live in marriage like that? Singles would be blessed by good examples while nephews and nieces would be well loved in the home. It breaks your heart when couples you know and love fall to arguing. Divorce by men or women always has someone at fault. I'm convinced it takes three to make a happy marriage: a God-fearing man + a God-fearing woman + God. It only takes one to ruin it, and God will never be the divorcing party. He calls divorce "violence." (Malachi 2:16) And most of us have been hurt in some way by divorce. But can you sense God's deep desire here?

Sometimes our best intentions can go so wrong. Like the couple arguing about custody of their child at Christmas in the airport back in the day when everyone was crammed together in the baggage claim. Their daughter was crying her eyes out with embarrassment and grief. That's emotional violence.

Didn't the disciples realize their destructive actions? Parents came with children for Jesus to bless with His touch. Why did *"the disciples rebuke them"*? Did they think they were right as parents who deny their children infant baptism even though our Lord Jesus commanded baptism for all people? (Matthew 28:18-20) Best intentions fail. One sports team was proactive. Parents agreed that the second last to pick up would stay until the last parents came. No room for temptation or accusation of coach or kids.

We need to catch the fire in Jesus' eye when He rebukes us for carelessness toward our children or worse. But even when Jesus is *"indignant,"* upset, scolding, He still is working to win our hearts out of the purest love for you and everyone you hold dear. *"He died for all..."* (2 Corinthians 5:15) Correcting but always kind to His disciples: *"Let the little children come to me! Do not hinder them, because the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵Amen I tell you: Whoever will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."* ¹⁶*And he took the little children in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them."* God's *kingdom* is His gracious rule in our hearts. We trust Jesus' command and promise: *"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."* True happiness warms our hearts when adults believe like children. Let God's love and forgiveness rule your heart as easily as taking a little child in your arms. So close and kind God's heart of love is for you. *"Who do you say I AM?"* Thank-you, Jesus, for letting us treasure you as *The Lover of Family* – our family, your family, richly blessed by God with new life in Christ. Amen.

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