

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Sunday, October 3rd, Pentecost XIX
Job 1:1, 2:1-10, Psalm 26, Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12, Mark 10:2-16

Often when we look at a passage like the Gospel today we look at one word in the question and forget to look at the whole question and the context and who is asking and why.

We tend to focus solely on the word divorce, and miss that the Pharisees came to test Jesus and use the word lawful. Jesus responds by asking; "What did Moses command you?" When they answered that Moses had allowed for a man to divorce his wife, Jesus said that this is because of hardness of heart.

Therefore the intention is for a couple to stay together, but we don't live in a perfect world and there are good reasons why some couples shouldn't stay together.

I have heard it lamented by men, that the divorce rate went up when women began going out to work. True, but it also was a way to give a balance of power. Previously women had no way of leaving an abusive marriage, so had to stay and put up with it.

So divorce is allowable but should be the exception and there are consequences.

Jesus then is not pleased the disciples are keeping the children from coming to him.

This follows that marriage and divorce are not just between the couple themselves alone but about the families coming together and children in particular.

So we can be forgiven, but still have to live with the consequences, and so do others affected by our decisions and actions.

I am reminded of the time I was involved with the Pioneer camp at the Church camp in Quebec. An 11 or 12 year old girl came to the camp from Little Burgundy, a tough part of Montreal. I thought she would enjoy getting out of the city and be able to relax in the open air of the camp.

She became homesick, and a relative came and brought her home before the end of the camp session. For the longest time I could not figure out why she wouldn't want to stay and enjoy being out of the inner city. Until I realized what her view of the world would be. That the world would be a dark and dangerous place, and she had learned how to survive and cope in the inner city, but did not know the rules for how to act and how to cope in the open space of the camp.

So instead of being less stressful and being able to relax, this new environment gave her more stress.

Therefore today's passage is another reminder that what we say and do may have consequences, not only for ourselves, but family members and others we come in contact with.

That all of us have more power than we realize and what we say and do really does matter.

I don't say this to cause us to be so afraid of making a mistake and upsetting others that we are paralyzed and don't move. And we don't have to please everyone all the time because we won't and can't.

When I came to a previous parish, they had a fundraising dinner at a nice restaurant, and the seating was such that it meant people eating on two floors of the restaurant one night and another two groups the second night.

I thought it would be better if the four groups all ate together and socialized together and we could have entertainment. So we found a place to do this, but some people complained because they wanted to eat with their own table group at that restaurant.

Sometimes we have to make decisions for the benefit of others that we don't want to make for ourselves, and sometimes have to make decisions and face the consequences,

That is where discernment comes into play perhaps.

Amen