

# Coffee to Go | Proper 22 | Year B

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Jesus, Gospel of Mark, hardness of heart.

## SPEAKERS

Karin Peter, Blake Smith

### **Karin Peter** 00:20

Karen, welcome to Coffee to Go where we center ourselves in the scriptures, seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition. I'm Karin Peter, and I'm here with Blake Smith, and we welcome you on the journey. So where are we with Jesus this week? So, for our listeners that have been following for some time, you know we were we are still in what's called ordinary time, or in some traditions, it's called the season after Pentecost, and it's the time where we spend time with Jesus as he's teaching the disciples and others. And here on the 22nd week of Ordinary Time, we see some a little bit of trickery going on, a little bit of trying to trick Jesus. So, let's hear what's happening here in the Gospel of Mark.

### **Blake Smith** 01:19

Alright. Well, our passage today is in the Gospel of Mark, the 10th chapter, and it is the 2nd through the 16th verse. And in some versions, it's titled, "The teaching on marriage." We'll pick up on that a little bit.

Some testing him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her". But Jesus said to them, "because of your hardness of heart, he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate." Then, in the house, the disciples asked Him again about this matter. He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

People were bringing children to Him in order that he might touch them. And the disciples spoke sternly to them, but when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me. Do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs truly. I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Why does this matter? Well, first, let's deal with this pattern and format that we see happen a number of times in Jesus' encounters with others. There was obviously very much an attempt to get Jesus to speak about divorce and align himself with John the Baptist, who, if we remember, was quite vocal in his opposition to Herod divorcing his wife, which ended in John's beheading, ultimately, and so by

pushing Jesus in this way, they could trick Jesus into also speaking about Herod, and hopefully Herod would take care of this problem for them. We've seen this pattern before, though, in this interaction, the disciples come or individuals come to Jesus and ask a question like, Lord, what is the greatest commandment? And Jesus says, what is in the law? Do Christians pay taxes? Jesus says, What is the law render under Caesar? What is Caesar's the same thing happens here. And again, he turns it back to the law. They're asking him, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? And rather than answering directly, he says, "What did Moses say?" It's kind of pointing to the fact that they already know the answer. So, he's on to their trickery, and he makes a point here, which really is critical to understanding this passage. We get caught up in some other things, which I'll talk about in a minute. But what's important here, he says, And, oh by the way, that law, that Jesus, that Moses gave, came about because you, the men, the hard heartedness of men, and because men were behaving badly. [Yeah.] Now, you know, there is in the passage an equality where it's very clear to say, well, if a woman divorces her husband, she should do the same thing. But he does make it clear that, you know, and we say sometimes, well, we have a law because somebody attempted to do something. So there's a reason why we now have to have a regulation. And Jesus says, the reason you have that is because of your hard heartedness. And so, he goes on to make some comments about marriage relationships that are different in God's reign. To vote to divorce just so that you can remarry another is a breach of trust and covenant, and therefore it is adultery. I want to note here, though, that this passage, and I probably don't even need to note it, but anybody who's been paying attention in this world would know that this passage has been used against women and against the LGBTQ community. Well, it says marriage is a man and a woman. It says this. And, men also seem to have ultimate authority. But this passage isn't meant to abuse others. We need to remember that marriage at the time that this was written, was not about love, it was about property, and the ownership of property, typically women by men, and so marriages were arranged, and women had their value only in as much as they were the wife and could produce male children for the husband. What Jesus presents is a commentary on how the powerless have been abused by the powerful, and he's trying to set a more equal standard here and to hold up the covenant relationship that needs to take place between persons. What Jesus lays out is the importance of equal treatment under marriage laws, as well as the protection of the most vulnerable, which in this case would be women and children who would encounter extreme suffering if they were cast aside. So, if a man can just toss out a woman and she's then unmarriageable because she has no certificate of divorce, there's no reason. She and her children are all that much more vulnerable. And these were what the ones who encountered extreme suffering. So, it's important that we strive for healthy and equal relationships. And, we have some divine counsel in Community of Christ. Doctrine and Covenants, section 164, six, A, that is really appropriate here for us to understand what we believe Jesus was getting at. So let me read that. "As revealed in Christ, God, the Creator of all, ultimately is concerned about behaviors and relationships that uphold the worth and giftedness of all people and that protect the most vulnerable. Such relationships are to be rooted in the principles of Christ-like love, mutual respect, responsibility, justice, covenant and faithfulness, against which there is no law." That applies to all covenant relationships. It's very helpful for us as we seek to understand more deeply what is right and wrong as it relates to how we treat one another and how we live in community and covenant with one another. So finally, I just want to say that Mark's passage ends with a book end, and this is very common in the Gospel of Mark, but it's important for us to note here, so that we remember what is the point here, and that is that he gives another reminder of the hard heartedness of men, the reason

we're having this discussion, and that is portrayed in this when the disciples are trying to keep children from coming to Jesus, the hard heartedness...

**Karin Peter** 09:23

Blake, and we talked about this before. It isn't that Jesus is saying all men are hardhearted, it's that the hard heartedness has to do with the power that men had and used incorrectly towards women or children. That's what is being highlighted here. Moses gave a law because men have the power to treat women unjustly, and we're doing so. And then at the end, we have this example of men using their power as men to hardheartedly keep children from Jesus. So, I think you had brought that up earlier. I think that's just important to say out loud so that people don't think we're like man bashing here. Well, podcast episode, you'll listen to the Hebrew episode on David, I do a little man bashing there, but,

**Blake Smith** 10:23

Well, no, I appreciate that. And I'm not saying I'm never hard hearted, but I, you know [we all are at times]. We all have those moments. It's interesting here. Just what made me think of is that when we think about all of the stories throughout Mark, throughout the Gospels, the ones who are usually turned away are the ones who represent the marginalized. So, the beggar, the child, the woman, when the rich young ruler comes, the disciples don't say, hey, get away from Jesus.

**Karin Peter** 10:58

No, they usher him on in.

**Blake Smith** 11:01

Yeah. Very interesting. So anyway, so how about some questions that we might ask ourselves this week. We might ask, Where do I see unequal treatment under the law today? Another is, do I treat people differently because of gender or gender identity?

**Karin Peter** 11:22

That's such a good question when we're reading this passage, if we read it correctly, about power and power in community. Yeah.

**Blake Smith** 11:31

Absolutely., Finally, how well do my own relationships embody this Christ-like love, mutual respect, responsibility, justice, covenant and faithfulness, against which there is no law, that we read in Doctrine and Covenants. 164:6a.

**Karin Peter** 11:54

Yeah, that's quite a metric to apply to all of our relationships, familial, friendship, romantic, all of them. Yeah, so thinking about that, let's, let's take a look ahead on how we can live in this scripture this week. I think one way to do it would be to pick a relationship to work on. It could be a good relationship. It can be a not so hot relationship. We all need to work on our relationships to keep them healthy and affirming. So, pick one with a friend, a spouse, a co-worker, and send a note or make a make an affirming comment, or spend time with that individual just in presence. But do some things to work on relationships this week, to be intentional about working on relationships, and if it goes well, you know,

keep it up. It's a good spiritual practice to be intentional about those, those principles of healthy relationships in our lives.

**Blake Smith** 13:01

Alright, well, our blessing today comes from "For Falling in Love," by Ray Simpson, and it is part of the *Celtic Prayers for Everyday Life*. I like the title itself, "For Falling in Love," which is, I think, a right and a privilege for everyone. It is not limited to those who follow us, as John might say, but for everyone. Bless this thing that sparks like lightning, that burns like fire, that radiates like the inside of the first moment of the cosmos in this awakening love. May there always be courtesy and respect, tenderness and truth. Take from it all that destroys and is willful, give to it all that lasts and is selfless, that the one may wither and the other may grow strong and shine forever.

**Karin Peter** 14:04

That's an amen at the end of that one!

**Blake Smith** 14:07

Amen. So, thanks for being with us again here this week at Coffee to Go, we invite you to join us next time for the next part of our journey through the liturgical seasons and holy days of the Christian tradition.