

20th Sunday after Pentecost

Mark 10: 5 "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. 6 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'... 14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 I tell you the truth; anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." 16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

A Home Designed by the Lord

Parents Love Each Other

Parents Love Their Children

Introduction: "Tired of your old kitchen? Wake up to whole new home with GE and this Weekend's Remodeling Projects." With the addition of a new Goelzer and the baptism today of another Collien addition, I'm reminded of God's loving design for us, the people he created for paradise and saved from sin. Our families are designed by the Lord to be a blessing for each of us. Due to sin, that hides in the corners of our heart, and accumulates in back closet of our mind, and piles up in the garage of our work week, the great design gets lost. We need to uncover the basic yet elegant design of our Lord. Let's start a weekend remodeling project for our homes that will bring enjoyment throughout our life and into eternal life – Parents that love each other and Parents that love their children.

1) Parents Love Each Other

Jesus traveled for the last time through the countryside toward Jerusalem. He recognized this last trip as his final opportunity to instruct the flocks of people crowding him for help. It's hard for me to breathe easy and sleep at night when I think of St. Luke's 500 souls and the constant attack they are under by the devil and his evil tricks. With Jesus approaching his final showdown with the devil and sin on the cross outside of Jerusalem, he still focused his energy on the sinners in need.

But among those sinners in need are his enemies, the Pharisees, who are not there to learn and be instructed; instead, they are asking questions to trick him, trip him up in his words to discredit him among the people he is trying to help. "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" If Jesus would answer yes, then they could accuse him of being unloving toward women and children – "soft" on divorce. If Jesus answered no, divorce was wrong. Then they would be able to accuse Jesus of contradicting God's Word given to Moses.

Jesus' answer was perfect, as usual. He didn't fall into their trap but instead asked them a penetrating question to shift their view from the legalistic view of the letter of the law to the loving purpose behind God's Will on Marriage. The Pharisees quote from Deuteronomy 24:1, but the context of those words in no way show that God permitted his people to get a divorce. Those passages simply show that God wanted to minimize and cut short the tremendous damage done to a family by sinful selfish people. Jesus sums those passages up quickly by saying – "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this (divorce) law."

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Most Americans apparently believe that an unhappy marriage is worse than no marriage at all and that the best way of ending an unhappy marriage is divorce by mutual consent. "No-fault" divorce originated in the United States in the state of California effective January 1, 1970. By 1977 nine states had adopted no-fault divorce laws and by late 1983, every state but South Dakota and New York had adopted some form of no-fault divorce. Some people think we should make divorce harder, because it is ruining the family. Divorce isn't ruining the family it is the sinful selfishness behind it that ruins God's design for the home. Why do people get divorced? Financial reasons, infidelity, lack of communication, lack of spark? It's selfishness! Even if both husband and wife mutually consent to divorce it is still both of them agreeing to selfishness. God says, "I hate divorce." God hates sin ergo God hates divorce. Where there is divorce there is sin. Love and truth go together. Divorce was started to protect the victims from the unbelieving selfish sinner. God stepped in with the government and with his civil laws because people were so selfish and hard hearted they were ruining the lives and souls in their own family!

Could it be that the problem is that most people enter marriage because of selfish reasons that so many marriages end for selfish reasons? We may say but I love her. I love him. But do we mean, I love the way he makes me feel?" True love, pure love with no additives or preservatives is not self serving or self seeking. True love helps the helpless. True love is seen in what Jesus Christ did for dead filthy sinners. He sacrificed his life for those who hated him, even the ones that nailed him to wooden boards and stripped him naked for all

to see. That's true love. God designed a man and a woman to love each other as he loved them with a pure one sided love that serves the needs of others before its own.

Maybe we all haven't been touched by divorce, but we all have fallen under the devil's trick of selfishness wearing the mask of love in our marriages. Haven't we all used the great gifts of our marriages selfishly? Father forgive us for abusing the gift of our marriages and using each other to please ourselves. Thank you for our forgiveness and give us pure hearts now to love each other as you have loved us –with a one sided love, simply loving and living for you. Help parents, Lord, to love each other as you love them.

2) Parents Love Their Children

You may think that at first glance the next account of Jesus blessing the children has nothing to do with divorce, but they both go hand in hand with God's design for our homes – Parents Love each other and Love their children.

As the disciples were all in an uproar and confused by Jesus' strong words against selfishness in the Christian home and for true love between husband and wife, they were rebuking children and their parents from bothering Jesus.

“Each year, over 1 million American children suffer the divorce of their parents; moreover, half of the children born this year to parents who are married will see their parents divorce before they turn 18. Mounting evidence in social science journals demonstrates that the devastating physical, emotional, and financial effects that divorce is having on these children will last well into adulthood and affect future generations. Among these broad and damaging effects are the following:

- *Children whose parents have divorced are increasingly the victims of abuse. They exhibit more health, behavioral, and emotional problems, are involved more frequently in crime and drug abuse, and have higher rates of suicide.*
- *Children of divorced parents perform more poorly in reading, spelling, and math. They also are more likely to repeat a grade and to have higher drop-out rates and lower rates of college graduation.*
- *Families with children that were not poor before the divorce see their income drop as much as 50 percent. Almost 50 percent of the parents with children that are going through a divorce move into poverty after the divorce.*
- *Religious worship, which has been linked to better health, longer marriages, and better family life, drops after the parents divorce. “*

If that is just what the unbelieving science world says no wonder Jesus was burning mad! At this point in the Bible we have the strongest words of Jesus and here is the only time Jesus is described as indignant or angry. Disciples, parents, teachers, and neighbor, all adults are to bring children to Jesus. Not in anyway hinder them from receiving his blessing. This is the highest responsibility given to the Christian home, namely that father and mother bring their children to the Lord and bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. First, it is the loving thing to do. As parents we want what is best for our children. Of course – we love them. How short sighted and selfish must we be if we do not care for the spiritual need of our children and bring them to the Lord? Especially when we know the enemies of God's family have started attacking them already in the womb – “I was sinful from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” And that our children need to be given faith and forgiveness of sins! “You must be born again to enter the kingdom of God.” Second, it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Jesus' anger burned hot when his disciples kept children from him over a serious conversation about divorce. Don't think that was the olden days of fire and brimstone. Jesus loves his family, his children, he judges sin and sinners. He holds us accountable according to the blessings he has given to us. “Too much is given; much is expected.”

Father forgive us for not loving our children as we should. We are sorry for our mixed up priorities, spending too much time on earthly sports, music, school, TV, and not enough time bringing them to you, hearing your word, receiving your blessing. Help us as parents to truly love our children by speaking your Word to them, using all the means you have given to us – our time, our abilities and our money.

The Lord's loving design for our families is one of Parents loving each other and loving their children. With the Lord's help we can love and forgive each other as we teach and show our children the Lord's love and forgiveness for us all.