

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, WA  
June 17, 2012**

**"Celebrate the Family" Sunday**

**Mark 10:2-16**

**Praise God for Giving Us Families!**

- 1. Families provide lifelong companionship for spouses**
- 2. Families provide love and stability for children**

**Hymns: 502 – 505 – Distribution: "Oh Give Us Homes," 500 – Closing: 506**

All Scripture quotations from the NIV 1984

**Mark 10:2-16 –**

***Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"***

***"What did Moses command you?" he replied. They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."***

***"It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."***

***When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."***

***People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. 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. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.***

People have had some interesting things to say about families down through the years. Listen to some wise(?) words from the past. About marriage:

- Love is blind, but marriage restores its sight. (G.C. Lichtenberg)
- All marriages are happy. It's the living together afterwards that causes all the trouble.
- If you marry in a hurry, you will repent for a long time.
- The honeymoon is the period between "I do" and "You'd better."

About children:

- If anything makes a child thirstier than going to bed, it's knowing that his parents have gone to bed, too.
- At age 6 children have all the questions. At age 16 they have all the answers.

About brothers:

- My little brother was sent to us from heaven – they must like it quiet up there.

Obviously, those people have seen the lighter side of family life. However, it is not humorous to see how the family unit has suffered in recent times. Indications of this are:

- News accounts of domestic violence – People physically hurting their spouses
- Accounts of parents doing unspeakable things to their children
- Accounts of children doing terrible, even violent, things to their parents
- Statistics of rising numbers of single parents struggling to do the work of raising children
- Broken marriages where spouses deserting their husband or wife, perhaps even their children too
- Many of us have seen firsthand the death of a marriage in divorce

Sadly, the family has indeed taken a beating in our times. Therefore, on this Father's Day let's take the opportunity to review what the Lord tells us about marriage and families today as we focus on Jesus' words in Mark 10. And let's praise him for his goodness in giving our world, and us, the family unit.

A couple side notes as we begin:

- First, we should note that God's Word does not command everyone to marry. In fact, the Bible commends a person who prefers the single life also. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7 that it is good to stay unmarried and it is good to get married – No right or wrong exists here. Single people also are not left out of our message today. You grew up in a family unit and can reflect on those blessings. Also, who knows what God has in store for you in finding a partner in the future?
- A second side note is that as we focus on Mark 10 today, we may be vulnerable to some sad thoughts. Perhaps your own family had unfortunate family happenings, or your present family unit is struggling, even breaking. But let's not let that stop us today, for the Lord has brought about blessings through the family unit that are worth reviewing.

## 1. Families provide lifelong companionship for spouses

Our text said, ***"Some Pharisees came and tested (Jesus) by asking, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' "*** This question came not as an eager request to gain wisdom, but from deceitful hearts trying to trap and trick Jesus. The question came from a religious group called the Pharisees, who opposed Jesus our Savior when he came into the world. The Pharisees themselves were divided on this question. One of their prominent teachers led a movement that claimed that divorce could be sought if the wife had done anything to displease her husband, even something like burning his supper. Another prominent teacher of the Pharisees taught that divorce should only be sought if she were guilty of indecency. What would Jesus say? Would he take a side? Would he be "soft" on divorce?

We read, ***"What did Moses command you?" (Jesus) replied. They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together,***

***let man not separate."*** Jesus goes back to the original intent of marriage and the ideal situation between married people. The basics of marriage are clear:

1. It is between 1 man and 1 woman – He made them "male and female." (Nowadays we have to emphasize this!)
2. It is a bonding and uniting of these 2 people into 1 entity. In fact, the word used for "join together" here literally means "to yoke." It's interesting that Jesus would use this picture here! Think about the partners that are yoked together. They must work together rather closely. They must certainly cooperate. But don't forget that they are also able to share the load and to converse together to lighten the load!
3. It is a lifelong union. Jesus emphasizes this and takes neither side in the Pharisees' disagreement. A review of the marriage vow that spouses here have taken show this quite clearly:
  - For richer or for poorer
  - In sickness and in health
  - In good times and bad
  - Till death do you part

Another side note is worth mentioning here. Many of you probably know the two specific reasons when a Christian can rightfully seek a divorce.

1. Marital unfaithfulness (Matthew 19:9)
2. Malicious desertion on the part of an unbeliever (1 Corinthians 7:15)

The wronged party can rightfully be released from their bond of marriage in those cases if they choose. We must recognize that. However, realize that those are exceptions. They are not the way God designed marriage to be and are far from the mind of anyone on their wedding day!

Why would the Lord give mankind the setup of a marriage? We simply have to look back at the first man created, Adam, as Jesus did and see what the Lord said about his situation: ***"It is not good for the man to be alone."*** Companionship is the first blessing that God gave Adam. Many people today have felt this same way and have chosen to unite themselves in marriage with a companion who will

be their closest friend throughout life – A person who asks how your day was, who has the light on when you come home, who goes through the daily details of living with you to cheer your way. Someone once said, “In marriage, you are to be the president of your spouse’s fan club.” We all need this love and support from our marriage partner!

Husbands, here is a place where some words need to be said. I find it fascinating that the word “husbandman” is related to the word husband. A husbandman is an old fashioned word for a person who works a vineyard or a farm. He grew things! Perhaps a modern day husbandman could be the owner of a beautiful garden such as the one pictured on the screen up front. For those of you who have done the work of owning and tending a plot like that, you know the effort that goes into it. Constant observation, daily attention, constant care, giving the plants what they need in water, fertilizer, pruning, etc. Much work is involved! What would happen without such care? It would result in the garden looking like this second picture on the screen.

Husbands, have you ever complained about the condition of your “garden?” I’m speaking about your relationship with your wife, of course. If so, the question must come back to you, husbandman, of how well you have been observing, tending, and caring for your garden. Have you been nurturing your marriage? If not, don’t complain about your garden! If you don’t know what to do to nurture your relationship with your wife, learn! (Your pastors can point you to good Christian counsel on that)

A word to wives is in order here too. Proverbs 14 says, *“The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.”* What does that mean? Would there really be a wife who would tear her own house down? Yes, and she can do it quite effectively if she wants. How? By her attitude, by her demeanor, by her negligence, by her words, and so on. The home can quickly have an unpleasant and unbearable atmosphere if she wants.

Jesus also says that the “two will become one flesh,” undoubtedly including a reference to the second blessing of marriage, the intimacy that is only to be a blessing to those rightfully married. Outside the marriage vow and bond, sharing sexual

intimacy is a sin. Yet how many Christian couples who aren’t married have told God:

- “I think I know better”
- I want to make my own rules”
- “I know what’s right for me”
- “I think I should have that blessing any time I want”

Dear friends, for the times we have not held marriage in high regard, for the times we have not nurtured our marriage, for the times we have been content to tear our house down for a time, for the times we have chafed or protested under God’s guidelines for immorality, we need to flee to the cross today. We need to confess those sins and leave them there where Jesus has paid for them in full. And we can thank God that the death of Christ on the cross has covered them and washed us clean in God’s sight. Through Christ you are forgiven!

We can also thank God that this news gives us the resolve to change our sinful ways and to appreciate God’s design for a husband and a wife. This news leads us to honor marriage, to nurture our own marriages, and to speak highly of God’s design in marriage.

May we pray for the estate of marriage in the world and for all the married couples in our congregation!

## 2. Families provide love and stability for children

Jesus has a few more thoughts for us today at the end of this account in Mark. The situation has to do with children.

We hear that parents were bringing little children to Jesus to have him lay his hands on them and bless them. His disciples, perhaps because they didn’t want to “waste Jesus’ time,” or because they didn’t see the value in him spending time with children, tried to prevent them from coming. **But Jesus tells them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.** He regarded these children as very valuable and as blessings!

Children a blessing? Always? This is not the attitude everyone in our world has toward children!

Many today feel:

- Children will cramp my life – They hold me back
- Once you have children, your life is over
- Children are too expensive

Look at what Jesus says:

1. He stresses to his disciples that children are important as members of the kingdom of God. They need to come to Jesus too.
2. He even stresses that the faith of a child – trusting, unwavering – is the type of faith that adults need to strive for!

Another good section of Scripture to keep in mind is Psalm 127: ***“Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are sons born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when their enemies contend with them.”*** Children are your lasting heritage. We could quote plenty of verses today that stress that you are mortal and will not be here in this world long – as a breath –you’re your children that you have named and raised will be your lasting memory.

Indeed, children are a blessing from God! Remember also that they are blessing that not every married couple has, perhaps for some reason known only to God.

After having some children of my own, I think that in the “rush and crush” of parenting, we can sometimes forget this! Many times the ones who realize what a blessing children really are, are the grandparents who have moved through that stage of life and are seeing the blessings the second time around!

As we praise God today for children (or grandchildren) that you may have been blessed with, we can realize how wise the Lord has been in ordaining the family for their good also. The Lord has been wise in doing this because children have basic needs to be provided for. One of the basic needs we see simply in the way Jesus treated them. They need to be loved and touched and hugged. They need to be taken into our arms and cared for. In fact, practically speaking, a critical thing that all children need from their parents is unconditional

love. This means that, whether they are hitting home runs or striking out every time, they know they have someone they can go to who doesn’t ultimately base their love on those things, but loves them unconditionally. This love naturally will lead parents also to provide for their children all the good things they need for their life, whether it’s warm clothes for winter, wholesome entertainment options, or breakfast before school.

Spiritually speaking, it is wise that God provide parents for their children also. Children need to be brought to Jesus! An infant will be brought to Holy Baptism by their parents. Parents of young children will not have the mindset: “I can’t bring my baby or toddler to church until they learn how to be perfectly quiet.” They need to bring them to Jesus. If noise becomes an issue, we have a room equipped to help. Besides, we have an understanding church membership who knows that some noise goes with the territory in that stage of life and is happy to put up with it because these children are learning how to go to God’s house.

It will also carry over in the training and discipline that happens in the home. Fathers and mothers will inject devotions, prayer, spiritual discussions, and a godly atmosphere into their home.

Finally, as we close our look at the family today, two observations:

1. We have only scratched the surface! In this short time today we have only begun the discussion on marriage and the family. Continue your education and learning on these blessings and take the time and effort – with God’s help and guidance – to foster the love of your marriages and children.
2. Continue to thank God for what we’ve seen today. Can you imagine what the world would be like without these things? What kind of world would it be if people were not united in a commitment of marriage, but rather floated around from partner to partner in uncertainty? What would the world be like if the next generation simply popped out of a factory, apart from any involvement from you?

How blessed we are to have these blessings from God. On this Father’s Day, may we praise him for them and continue to pray for the family! Amen.