



This week's Revd. Morris' message: **Love and Marriage ... what happens when it goes off the rails?**



In today's Gospel, we see Jesus being again confronted by some Pharisees who were seeking to trap him. Perhaps they had heard of his allegedly 'anti-family' statements and were trying to paint him as being 'family unfriendly'? [e.g. see Mark 3:31ff where Jesus apparently deprioritises his mother and brothers in favour of his 'faith family'. Family loyalty was the bedrock of Jewish identity and to be so dismissive was scandalous in the extreme.] Or, perhaps, as divorce was already such a fraught topic amongst the

various Jewish interpreters of the Mosaic Law, the Pharisees believed that whatever Jesus answered, and, thus, whatever side of the various legal debates he adopted, his answer would be his undoing with many who held opposing views. At that time, many such scholars believed that a woman was not permitted to initiate a divorce at all under any circumstances, whilst others believed that men could do so upon a whim [e.g. see Deuteronomy 24:1-4 where it states that a man may divorce his wife if *'he doesn't like something about her'*] Further, others permitted divorce only if one party had committed adultery and the divorce was initiated by the 'innocent' party.

So what does Jesus do? He ignores the detailed legal arguments about when divorce is permitted entirely and goes straight to what God had planned for humanity by marriage - a union of 2 "equals" in mutual love and respect - and also living together in union with God. Later, alone with his disciples, Jesus provides further detail criticising divorce where it is undertaken simply to enable the satisfaction of one party's desires. In summary then, Jesus redirects the point of Pharisaical attack - from divorce [and where are the loopholes for men] towards God's intention for marriage itself.

Well, what does this mean for us today?

Jesus's teachings are as fraught with difficulty, anti cultural and shocking today as they were when they were first uttered. Marriage was often an arranged family property transaction in first century Palestine and divorce would leave a woman with children exposed reputationally, emotionally and economically. We still see today how divorce can be so damaging in all these ways to all involved.



But a note of warning. Jesus rightly put emphasis upon God's beautiful plan of union in creating a new couple and family to live before Him in unity and love. But, almost all of us



have been impacted by divorce, or family violence, in some way within our own lives or that of our family or friends. These readings have been used by some to wound and exclude those who are suffering .. or keeping those without power in harmful predatory relationships. Jesus would have us reach out in love to all who are in need of healing and support as a result of these issues - and for us not to respond in censorious judgement.

Perhaps there is a further lesson from this reading? We may be being invited to eschew following a legalistic Pharisaical approach concerning when divorce is acceptable ... but rather encouraged to reach out to offer Christ's healing and nonjudgemental support to those who need it as they seek

God's will for them in the midst of a difficult or unravelling relationship.

Gospel reading: Mark 10:2-16. Some resources to dig deeper: <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/ordinary-27-2/commentary-on-mark-102-16-2> ; <https://cepreaching.org/commentary/2021-09-27/mark-102-16-3/> ; <https://jdshankles.wordpress.com/2012/10/15/sunday-october-7-2012-sermon-on-mark-102-16/>

Upcoming Parish Activities: Midweek service : Wednesday 10:30 a.m Meditation 6:30 p.m ; **Every Sunday Guitars and Ukulele lessons** at 3 p.m; **Bible Study** Wednesday at 7 pm and Friday at 10:30 am;

Readings for Next Sunday: Job 23:1-9,16+17; Ps 22:1-15; Hebrews 4:12-16; Mark 10:17-31

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Parish Private Facebook site : <https://www.facebook.com/groups/292308270851142> ; **Public Site:** <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61556418523933> ; **Tipper's Treasure's Facebook site:** [https://](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61559040358754)

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY:

We acknowledge and pay respect to the Turrbal and Jagera Peoples, the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we gather today. We acknowledge their continued spiritual connection to country and surrounding land, sky and water. We pay our respect to their Elders, past present and emerging and pray that we may continue to learn from and nurture one another in the spirit of Reconciliation.

Our Raffle results : 1st Prize - 2016 Penfolds Bin 128 : Nari ; 2nd Prize - Elderflower Cordial and \$50 gift card - Judith; 3rd Prize: 'Swanning around Pamper Hamper' - Margaret Macksey; 4th Prize - Heather Walker. Thanks to our prize donors Margaret, Patricia, Colleen, Tim and Ruth and to all those who bought tickets. We raised \$370.00 which will be applied towards our AV upgrade. *Our next raffle will follow a Christmas theme so all prize donations to Randal will be welcomed!*