

**Northwest Presbyterian Church**  
**Pastor Elizabeth Coleman**

**Overview of Mark 10**

This chapter begins with Jesus teaching about family relationships: the original intent for marriage and respect for children. When a rich man arrives, Jesus gives him an opportunity to choose either his wealth or the life of a disciple. Jesus tells his disciples, privately, that he will be mocked and killed, and that he will rise again after three days. James and John ask for prominent positions in heaven, and Jesus informs them of the cost of such honor. Bartimaeus, a blind man, calls out to Jesus until he is heard and summoned. He asks for his sight and receives it.

**Mark 10:1-16**

When Jesus was teaching the crowds that had gathered around him in Judea, some Pharisees asked him if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife. This was an attempt to test him relative to his interpretation of the law of Moses. Jesus perceived their intent, and he asked them what Moses had commanded them to do. This completely disarmed the Pharisee's intent, because they expected Jesus to express a new and different interpretation of the law as he had done before.

The Pharisees resorted to the most lenient of Moses' interpretation of the commandment that forbade adultery: the use of a certificate of dismissal to effect a divorce.

Jesus acknowledges the rules of the law that Moses interpreted for the Israelites, but harkens back to the beginning of creation to give a clearer interpretation of God's original intent for the marriage relationship. Jesus speaks as one who has been alive since the beginning of creation, and from that perspective he speaks to the original intent of God.

Unlike anyone else present, Jesus can call upon his eternal memory and his knowledge of how human beings were created. This is a significant passage for our day, because Jesus stands at an important juncture in the history of civilization, and makes an assertion that will set the standard for marriage for all who would come after, if they choose to follow him. Marriage is based upon the fact that God created humans to be male and female. Jesus does not bite his tongue or make exceptions about what really happened at the time of the creation of humanity. Jesus said, "But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female." (Mark 10:6)

Jesus had the historical insight to know that it was because of the hardness of the hearts of the Israelites that Moses allowed them to divorce. In the beginning, the coming together of a male and a female in marriage joined them into one being. Since they were as one, it was impossible to separate them. This is the point that Jesus is making. When a new family is formed by a man leaving his father and mother and joining himself to a woman, there is a spiritual joining of the two souls in such a way that cannot be reversed, except by death. They remain a part of each other. They are one.

Divorce was a “grace” that was granted in order to accommodate human obstinance. In God’s mercy, God allowed human beings to break their vows without public punishment under the law of Moses. Jesus makes it clear that this grace does not change the fact that those joined in marriage remain joined spiritually (until death separates them). Because of this condition, one who is divorced is not advised to marry someone else. To marry someone else is to bring a third party into a marriage, thus committing adultery. The divorced person is permitted to remarry the same person. (It is then a re-affirmation of a condition that already exists.)

(Paul speaks about this issue in 1 Cor. 7:39.)

In today’s world, we see a vast array of relationships that call themselves marriages. Yet, if we take a cue from Jesus, we would go back to the beginning of creation to learn what God intended when he created man and woman.

In spite of the variations that now proliferate, we are called not to judge others. We are to seek God’s truth and stand on it, but we are not to judge others for their current perspective. Since we do not know their past nor their future, it is best to simply pray privately for those who appear to have strayed from God’s intention, in our opinion. We are to speak the truth in love, but we are not to judge or condemn others. That is God’s right alone.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. What is marriage?
2. How can we be helpful to those that appear to have strayed from God’s intention for us in a marriage relationship?
3. How can we be supportive of Christian families who have a member who believes that he or she is of a different gender than his/her physical body?
4. How can we best support people who are going through a divorce or have recently been divorced?

5. What role does empathy play in ministering to divorced people?

### **Children**

Children in First Century Palestine, who seemed to have been commonly overlooked or disciplined to keep silence in the presence of adults were given a more respectable status by Jesus. He showed interest in them and valued spending time with them.

What does this tell us about the role of children in the Christian community?

Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven has children there. Childlike faith (a humble spirit, a respectful attitude) that receives Jesus unconditionally is how we prepare ourselves to be acceptable in God's kingdom.

1. How we treat children in the church (and elsewhere) is important, and can affect how that child will view Christianity for the rest of his/her life. In what ways can we follow Jesus' example?
2. Are there roles in the church that children can effectively execute?
3. How can we be more welcoming of children at Northwest PC?
4. How does a childlike faith look in action?

**Next week, we will discuss Part 2: "Wealth and Salvation."**