



TOUCH POINT

## The Assunder Blunder – Touchpoint for October 2, 2024

### Mark 10:2-16 (NRSVUE) Be Opened: Jesus' Call to Freedom and Compassion

<sup>2</sup> Some,<sup>[a]</sup> testing him, asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” <sup>3</sup> He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” <sup>4</sup> They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.” <sup>5</sup> But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. <sup>6</sup> But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ <sup>7</sup> ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>8</sup> and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. <sup>9</sup> Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

<sup>10</sup> Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. <sup>11</sup> He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, <sup>12</sup> and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

<sup>13</sup> People were bringing children to him in order that he might touch them, and the disciples spoke sternly to them. <sup>14</sup> 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. <sup>15</sup> Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” <sup>16</sup> And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

*“Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.”*

As touchpoint creators, we can choose the topic of divorce or the value of children. But what if this declaration from Genesis is the lens we use to bring them together? In other words, could we have inadvertently separated pieces of scripture and see only a glimpse of the big picture? It sure is easier to carry the weight of one topic at a time! But what if we combined the gravity of these two topics and many others that break the heart of God? Maybe the combined weight would break through our propensity to ask and debate ridiculous self-serving questions.

#### The Value of Children in Jesus' Teachings

Earlier in Mark, Jesus said, don't you dare deceive children and take them another way. He said the perpetrators would be better off to have a heavy stone tied around their neck and thrown into the sea. Isn't that touchstone heavy enough for us to get the message?

#### The Theme of Separation in Scripture

It appears that separating people, especially children, means more to Jesus than being a law-and-order guy. He was and is about life and its oneness and valuing life at the conscious level of our practices. Jesus held the lives of people so close to his heart that he broke the Sabbath, healed in the temple, resisted temptation, had a tarnished image, picked wheat, and was accused of all matters of sorcery.

#### Breaking the Oneness: A Stumbling Block

It was always the keeper of the laws that questioned Jesus. Their very livelihood depended on having others keep the law. Jesus's livelihood was doing the love business of his heavenly parent. God's business for Jesus was bringing the news we are all one and God is not separate from us? Jesus once described us as, I in you, you in me, we in them, and them in me. What a glorious mess of oneness! It is a message for us to receive this unbelievable truth, soak in it, and soak in some more!

## Pharisees and Legalism

Why were the Pharisees resistant?

Maybe the Pharisees were trying to discredit Jesus, but perhaps they were also providing a stumbling block for his followers. The minute the Pharisees publicly questioned Jesus on the law, everyone listening became God's little ones, and so were the disciples. The disciples were in their fragile stage as followers. Focusing on the law seemed like just the ticket to trip him up, but it was a stumbling block to others.

Perhaps some Pharisees were intrigued by what he was saying but weren't so sure they could accept the consequences. Maybe one of the Pharisees wanted to divorce his wife. Jesus appeared to play loose with the laws to them, and they simply wanted the go-ahead. I mean, it would be worth it if you want to get out of a marriage to follow a seemingly permissive way of Jesus. Jesus's response was vintage Jesus. The question is moot! Divorce with anyone is wrong!

## Oneness in Marriage and Spirit

So, where do we find commonality in Jesus's words on divorce and children?

In marriage, one is giving themselves to another. In the second concerning children, Jesus is receiving them unto himself. Both bring Oneness

Another similarity of these interactions in Mark is to never put what God has joined asunder. Or don't push or send away. Asunder means to push away.

## Immigration and Separation: A Spiritual View

In today's discussion on immigration, what would Jesus say about the separation of adults and children when he clearly speaks of receiving them? Don't push people away!

Could this be what Jesus was referring to when he spoke of not putting a stumbling block in front of someone?

By receiving the children, is Jesus simply allowing them to exist or patronizing their existence? God have mercy. He is saying, "Take them in your arms, receive them, and bring them to me to be blessed." The children found Jesus with welcoming love and ran to him. So did their parents.

Jesus is saying they are a part of you. Little children don't know what it means to be a citizen, but they know what it means to be pushed away and separated. I believe Jesus felt it, and the Spirit felt it, too.

## Jesus' Compassion for the Vulnerable

Jesus isn't welcoming orphaned children alone; he is speaking to pharisee parents.

They honestly had to be told this? We must be told to give children the highest value? These people must have created a vast separation between groups of people! How far gone are we still?

In a civil agreement, it doesn't mean you've become one in spirit. Jesus quotes Genesis, saying we are one in flesh when married. Flesh is flesh, and spirit is spirit. It is an earthly agreement made sacred. It means giving and receiving of flesh to each other and represents the oneness of all humanity. God has given God's self to us with no pause in fidelity. Perhaps marriage is becoming one in flesh on earth but always one in Spirit. One Spirit, One hope, One love.

## A Call to Value Life and Unity

Maybe the hardness of heart is also the reasoning for marriage licenses, just like the letter of divorce.

So, this conversation about marriage with the Pharisees is really a very silly one, but Jesus indulges them.

At a time when Jesus was facing the cross, they were asking these questions. The questions paled in comparison to the reality of the suffering to come to Jesus. Yet he answered, "It wasn't always this way." The question is moot.

Jesus is saying the most egregious sin is to divorce ourselves from each other and especially to push away little children.

George Macdonald says that he does not believe in a man's Christianity if the children are never to be found playing around his door. This little, precious quote sheds light on the human Jesus was.

### **Oneness and Compassion**

What about children coming across the border?

We try to educate God daily about big people's problems like immigration.

"God, I know you wouldn't understand this, but we have a real migrant problem here. There are people wanting to come in our country, some with good reason. But some are just bringing bad stuff in. Moreover, there are just too many phreaking people coming! We need to send a message to them that if they come, they will be pushed away, the children separated; it's just the law that must be made and enforced.

"Wait, do you mean like put asunder?" Separating what God, who has no borders, joined together?"

"What else can we do? Nothing seems to keep them out. And the people here aren't doing anything about it." "We tried razor wire, shooting a few, talking nasty to them... nothing."

It makes me wonder what Jesus would say of our political angst and cries about the cost of eggs, the wars, the oil, and Wall Street as we asunder each other.

How often do we talk about children with one compassionate voice? We argue about ways to educate, ways to feed hungry children, ways to make them safer, and we do little about implementation. Why? Perhaps because we want to win the how and make little changes. We are wallowing in questions like the Pharisees.

Isn't Jesus saying we are asking the wrong questions in these two stories? "Hey guys, I know you have a lot of great questions about permission to divorce and crap, but stop shooing the children away! Can't a Rabbi give a blessing to some children?" I'm not pushing you away, I'm asking you to bring them to me!"

Let no one put asunder, separate, show contempt, or disregard for anything God has blessed and declared as One. In as much as you have done this to the little ones, you have done it unto me.

Let's remember others. Let's recognize that we are all the body of Christ, and when one hurts, the whole body hurts. One Faith, One Hope, One Love, One Body, One Spirit. May we choose to remember what God has joined together as One.

**Amen**

## Opening Songs

### **Be Still**

(The London Fox Taizé Choir)

Be still, know that I am God

### **Calm Me, Lord**

(Margaret Rizza)

Calm me Lord as you calmed the storm. Still me Lord, keep me from harm.  
Let all the tumult within me cease. Enfold me Lord, in your peace.

## Bible Passage

*(A passage takes us from one place to another)*

## Touchpoint

*(Where God's story touches our life story)*

### **Healer of Our Every Ill**

(Marty Haugen)

Healer of our every ill, light of each tomorrow.  
Give us peace beyond our fear, and hope beyond our sorrow.  
You who know our fears and sadness. Grace us with your peace and gladness.  
Spirit of all comfort, fill our hearts. *Refrain*  
In the pain and joy beholding, how your grace is still unfolding  
Give us all your vision God of love. *Refrain*

## The Meal

### **The Lord's Prayer**

(Monastery Choir of St. John of San Francisco)

## **Benediction**

### **Gaelic Blessing/Deep Peace**

(John Rutter, The Cambridge Singers)

Deep peace of the running wave to you. Deep peace of the flowing air to you.

Deep peace of the quiet earth to you. Deep peace of the shining stars to you.

Deep peace of the gentle night to you. Moon and stars pour their healing light on you.

Deep peace of Christ, of Christ the light of the world to you.

Deep peace of Christ to you.