

## 20th Sunday after Pentecost    October 7 , 2018

19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after the Trinity    Proper 22 (27)

Year B – the Gospel of Mark

**LUTHERAN**

# LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY

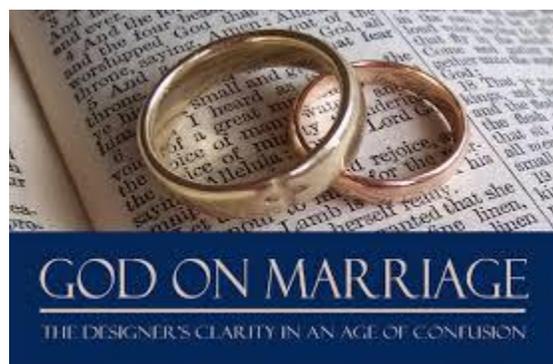
*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.  
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the  
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

### Available on line at:

- ✦ [www.bethlehemplutheranchurchparma.com/biblestudies](http://www.bethlehemplutheranchurchparma.com/biblestudies)
- ✦ Through [www.Facebook.com](http://www.Facebook.com) at “Living the Lutheran Lectionary”, “Bethlehem Lutheran Church Parma”, or “Harold Weseloh”
- ✦ All links in this on-line copy are active and can be reached using Ctrl+Click

### Gather and be blessed:

- ✦ **Thursdays at 10 AM:** Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134
- ✦ **Fridays at 7 PM in a house church setting:** For details, contact Harold Weseloh at [puritaspastor@hotmail.com](mailto:puritaspastor@hotmail.com)
- ✦ **First Sunday of the month at 11 AM:** St. Philip Lutheran Church, 11315 Regalia Ave., Cleveland, OH 44104



<http://stmarypncc.ca/>

### Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 863    The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) Not Listed

“Our Father, by Whose name“

Tucker, Francis Bland. (Norfolk, Virginia, January 6, 1895-- ). The son of a bishop and brother of a Presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, he was educated at the University of Virginia, B.A., 1914, and at Virginia Theological Seminary, B.D., 1920; D.D., 1944. He was ordained deacon in 1918, priest in 1920, after having served as a private in Evacuation Hospital No.15 of the American Expeditionary Forces in France during World War I...

he served on the Theological Committee which reviewed material for the successor to *The Hymnal 1940*. There his poetic talent was most adept at providing new phrases in older hymns where the original lines were too obsolete or sexist for late-twentieth-century users of the hymnal.

Several of the hymns which he wrote for *The Hymnal 1940* have been adopted by hymnals of other denominations throughout the English-speaking world...

--Leonard Ellinwood, DNAH Archives

- [https://hymnary.org/text/our\\_father\\_by\\_whose\\_name](https://hymnary.org/text/our_father_by_whose_name)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPMscOg\\_Mt8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPMscOg_Mt8) Electronic piano. [KaizerDFT](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drLsWWR9few> Listen carefully to the words. Did they change more than the first line? [Grace United Church](#)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MimsQtU-ccQ> "Cathy Thirsk Stevens "Bland Tucker was a priest in our diocese. When I was very young and didn't know who he was, I had the pleasure of having lunch with him at a diocesan convention. Little did I know what a prolific writer he was of hymns."

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

*"This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator."*

- <https://bible.org/seriespage/hebrews-2> Bob Utely

*Any thoughts on this approach to Biblical Interpretation? Read more about this person on page 12.*

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

**Genesis 2:18-25; Revised Common Lectionary, (RCL), Genesis 2:18-24 or Job 1:1, 2:1-10** (Next week: Amos 5:6-7, 10-15; RCL, the same reading from Amos or Job 23:1-9, 16-17)

### **"Being Lonely: Not Good!**

In Genesis 1, God had repeatedly said that everything was "good." In Genesis 2, God surveys his emerging horticultural experiment in Eden and senses something is "not good." God observes, "It's not good that the man should be alone" (2:18). God's discovery highlights what is fundamental to human nature and human flourishing: humans are social creatures who thrive in close and intimate relationships with others. Thus, God resolves to make for the single

human "a helper [Hebrew: ezer] as his partner." A "helper" in the Old Testament is not a subordinate but one who may be an equal or sometimes even a superior to the one who is being helped. In fact, God is often called a "helper" to humans in need (Psalm 10:14; 54:4)... (continued after the reading)

<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for<sup>[a]</sup> him." <sup>19</sup> Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed<sup>[b]</sup> every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam<sup>[c]</sup> there was not found a helper fit for him. <sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made<sup>[d]</sup> into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man."<sup>[e]</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. <sup>25</sup> And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

- a. [Genesis 2:18](#) Or *corresponding to*; also verse [20](#)
- b. [Genesis 2:19](#) Or *And out of the ground the Lord God formed*
- c. [Genesis 2:20](#) Or *the man*
- d. [Genesis 2:22](#) Hebrew *built*
- e. [Genesis 2:23](#) The Hebrew words for *woman (ishshah)* and *man (ish)* sound alike

God's first experimental attempt to resolve this deficit of community is to create an array of wild animals, birds, and domestic animals as possible soul mates for the human. God marches the colorful parade of diverse wild life before the human and invites him to give names to the various creatures (2:18-20). Elephant, condor, dog, cat, kangaroo, what have you. The act of naming in the ancient world was a means of defining and shaping the character and essence of the one named. By naming the animals, the human participates with God as a co-creation, but sadly this first experiment does not work. The animals are interesting, but none of the animals fully resolves the ache and void of human loneliness...

So God embarks on another experiment. God assumes the role of chief surgeon and anesthetizes the man into a deep sleep. This new attempt at finding a "helper as his partner" will not involve human co-creation this time. It will all be God's doing, a gift from God alone. God surgically removes a rib from the man's side and lovingly shapes the rib into a second

human being who is "like" the man but also "opposite" him, like two puzzle pieces that fit together. The animal-as-full-partner experiment had been a bust, but this time God gets it oh so right! The man awakes and instantly recognizes the fulfillment of his deep longing in the eyes of the new "other," the woman...

"At last," the search is over. The imagery of being "bone of my bones" and "flesh of my flesh" speaks of a bond between the man and woman so strong that to sever it would be as if to rip out a physical part of one's own body. The man's lyric response is the Bible's first example of love poetry but not its last. The Bible's other great celebration of human love and passion is the Old Testament book, the Song of Songs, a commentary and sequel to Genesis 2..."

- [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=400](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=400) Dennis Olson  
Charles T. Haley Professor of Old Testament Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary,  
Princeton, NJ



**Psalm 128; RCL, Psalm 8 or Psalm 26 (Psalm 90:12-17; RCL, Psalm 90:12-17, or Psalm 22:1-15)**

*"...TITLE. A Song of Degrees. There is an evident ascent from the last Psalm: that did but hint at the way in which a house may be built up, but this draws a picture of that house built, and adorned with domestic bliss through the Lord's own benediction. There is clearly an advance in age, for here we go beyond children to children's children; and also a progress in happiness, for children which in the last Psalm were arrows are here Olive plants, and instead of speaking "with the enemies in the gate" we done with "peace upon Israel." Thus we rise step by step, and sing as we ascend.*

***SUBJECT.** It is a family hymn, a song for a marriage, or a birth, or for any day in which a happy household has met to praise the Lord. Like all the songs of degrees, it has an eye to Zion and Jerusalem, which are both expressly mentioned, and it closes like Psalms 125, 130, and 131, with an allusion to Israel. It is a short Psalm, but exceedingly full and suggestive. Its poetry is of the highest order..."*

- <https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary.php?com=spur&b=19&c=128>  
Charles H. Spurgeon

## **Blessed Is Everyone Who Feels the LORD**

### ***A Song of Ascents.***

128 Blessed is everyone who fears the LORD,  
who walks in his ways!

<sup>2</sup> You shall eat the fruit of the labor of your hands;  
you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.

<sup>3</sup> Your wife will be like a fruitful vine  
within your house;  
your children will be like olive shoots  
around your table.

<sup>4</sup> Behold, thus shall the man be blessed  
who fears the LORD.

<sup>5</sup> The LORD bless you from Zion!  
May you see the prosperity of Jerusalem  
all the days of your life!

<sup>6</sup> May you see your children's children!  
Peace be upon Israel!

### “...The story of Psalm 128

A family tree is a list of all the people in your family: your grandparents, your parents, your husband or wife, your children and your grandchildren. Also people that lived before and after them all. People who are \*in awe of the \*LORD will see part of their family tree! This psalm teaches us that. They will live at \*peace in Jerusalem. For many Christians, Jerusalem means where they live. Psalm 87 and some of Paul’s letters tell us that the Jerusalem on the earth is a picture of the Jerusalem in heaven. Heaven is the home of God. We do not know where it is.

#### What Psalm 128 means

**Verse 1:** "In awe" means "a bit afraid of someone that you love". People are "in awe" of God because he is so great. They love him. But they know that he is very powerful. "\*LORD" is a special name for God. It is his covenant name. A covenant is when people agree to do something. Here, God agrees to send his people help. His people agree to love and obey him. "Walk in his ways" is a \*Jewish way to say "obey his rules".

**Verse 3:** Both word-pictures mean that you will have many children. You will if you "walk in his ways"! A vine is a tree. It grows a fruit called the grape. An \*olive tree grows a fruit called the olive. An \*olive tree has many branches.

**Verse 4:** "Does good things to you" in verse 4 is "blesses you" in many Bible translations. This is a good example of the word "bless". It means "have many children". It can also mean that your animals will have many young animals. And your plants will have many fruits on them. If you obey God, good things will happen to you! Good things will come from your work (verse 2). And good things will happen to your family (verse 3) and to Jerusalem (verse 5).

**Verse 5:** The \*Jews believed that God lived in Jerusalem. God is "the \*LORD of \*Zion". \*Zion is the hill in the middle of Jerusalem. Solomon built God’s house, the \*temple, on the hill of \*Zion. For many Christians, Jerusalem is like a picture of the Church or a picture of \*heaven.

**Verse 6:** "\*Peace" is when people do not fight each other. Jesus taught us that there is a special \*peace. Only Jesus can give it to us. It means that we are friends with God. And we always obey him. Also, God does not hurt us because we have not obeyed him. Israel, like Jerusalem in verse 5, is a picture of God’s people. For \*Jews, it means \*Jews; for Christians it means Christians...”

➤ <https://www.easyenglish.bible/psalms/psalm128-taw.htm>

**Hebrews 2:1-13 (14-18); RCL, Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12 (Hebrews 3:12-19; RCL, Hebrews 4:12-16)**

Both the Lutheran Lectionary and the Revised Common Lectionary begin a cycle of readings from Hebrews this week. The Lutheran Lectionary has five readings compared to the RCL which has six. The two main differences are which verses are assigned for a given week and the Lutheran Lectionary skipping a week to include Reformation Day. The Revised Common Lectionary reading for this week includes chapter 1:1-4 which is a helpful introduction:

### The Supremacy of God's Son

1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup>He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup>having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

*"...Though connections might be made through Psalm 8 (it is quoted in the Hebrews' text), it is perhaps best simply to note that this is the first selection from Hebrews in the RCL Sunday readings of "Year B" that will continue for seven consecutive weeks, through Proper 28. This period represents the highest concentration of texts from Hebrews in the 3-year RCL. In Year C there is a 4-week run that oddly finishes out the reading of Epistle begun this year in next year's Propers 14-17 (in late summer/early fall). If a parish were interested in spending some time with the Epistle to Hebrews in focused Bible study, the weeks ahead provide the natural time to do so. The first four verses of Hebrews also provide the second lesson for Christmas Day (III) for all three years of the RCL. Additional commentary may be found in the text study of that festive day of the church year..."*

- [https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2276](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2276) Erik Heen John H.P. Reumann Professor Emeritus in Biblical Studies, The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

*"Read the chapter in one sitting... Paragraphing is not inspired but it is the key to following the original author's intent which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject..."*

#### **CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS**

**A.** Chapters one and two are a literary unit. It continues the superiority of Jesus over the OT revelation (cf. 1:1-3) and Jesus' superiority over the angels (cf. 1:4-2:18).

**B.** The new emphasis of chapter two is Jesus' connection with His people (cf. 2:10-18). Jesus is truly identified with them and they, as a result, share in His glory. The purpose of a superior covenant is that fallen mankind is restored (cf. 2:9-11,14-18) to his place of pre-eminence in creation (cf. [Ps. 8](#)). Jesus is the ideal human, our perfect example..."

- <https://bible.org/seriespage/hebrews-2> Bob Utely <https://bible.org/users/bob-utley>

## Warning Against Neglecting Salvation

2 Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. <sup>2</sup> For since the message declared by angels proved to be reliable, and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, <sup>3</sup> how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard, <sup>4</sup> while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

## The Founder of Salvation

<sup>5</sup> For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. <sup>6</sup> It has been testified somewhere,

“What is man, that you are mindful of him,  
or the son of man, that you care for him?”

<sup>7</sup> You made him for a little while lower than the angels;  
you have crowned him with glory and honor,<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>8</sup> putting everything in subjection under his feet.” [Cited from Ps. 8:4-6](#)

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. <sup>9</sup> But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

<sup>10</sup> For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. <sup>11</sup> For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source.<sup>[b]</sup> That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers,<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>12</sup> saying,

“I will tell of your name to my brothers;  
in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.” [Cited from Ps. 22:22](#)

<sup>13</sup> And again,

“I will put my trust in him.” [\[Ps. 18:2; Isa. 8:17; 12:2\]](#)

And again,

“Behold, I and the children God has given me.” [Cited from Isa. 8:18](#)

*<sup>14</sup> Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup> and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. <sup>16</sup> For surely it is not angels that he helps,*

*but he helps the offspring of Abraham. <sup>17</sup> Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.*

- a. [Hebrews 2:7](#) Some manuscripts insert *and set him over the works of your hands*
- b. [Hebrews 2:11](#) Greek *all are of one*
- c. [Hebrews 2:11](#) Or *brothers and sisters*. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, the plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) may refer either to *brothers* or to *brothers and sisters*; also verse [12](#)

Preachers do well to recognize that Hebrews itself is not only a possible *basis* for a sermon. Hebrews actually *is* a sermon. To be sure, it is frequently called an epistle or letter because of the final verses of Hebrews 13. But the opening lines of Hebrews 1, which are part of this week’s reading, have little in common with the other New Testament letters.

Where ancient letters begin by identifying the author, intended recipients, and offering a greeting, Hebrews begins with eloquent and intricately woven lines that are designed to capture the imagination of the hearers. The author says nothing about his own identity, and no amount of scholarly research has been able to overcome the anonymity. As Origen said, the identity of the person who wrote Hebrews is known to God alone.

The opening lines focus instead on how God has spoken in the past through the prophets and again in a singular way through the Son. There are no initial humorous anecdotes or ruminations about the lectionary. Instead, listeners are brought directly to an encounter with the God who speaks. And that intense focus raises questions as to why the writer starts there. Why was that focus on the God who speaks so important for the listeners?...

- [https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=3790](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3790) Craig R. Koester

Professor and Asher O. and Carrie Nasby Chair of New Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

“... Heb 2:10-18 uses a collage of images to show who Jesus is and what it means to follow him. There are four pictures in this collage. Each one helps us think about where we have been, where we are, and where we might be going.

First, Hebrews pictures Jesus as the pioneer of salvation (2:10). Central to the image is that a pioneer makes a way forward for others. .. Hebrews pictures Jesus as the pioneer who opens the way to God. This is indeed a vision of a better life. Hebrews even says that it is "glory." But at the center of this glory is God, the Creator of us all. This is what God wants, namely, us to be in relationship with him. That is what Jesus the pioneer does, he opens the way to life with God.

A pioneer often suffers along the journey through rugged terrain, and Jesus the pioneer indeed suffers on his journey. Hebrews says that Jesus was made "perfect" through sufferings. The word for "perfect" is based on the Greek word *teleioo*, which has to do with reaching a goal. The idea is that Jesus reaches the goal through sufferings... His suffering is not the end but is part of the way to God. His suffering is unique in that it is done on our behalf, since it conveys

the love and grace that create a relationship with God. And his suffering also provides assurance that even though those who follow the Pioneer will also encounter suffering, it is not God's final word. Jesus has made a future for his followers...

Second, Hebrews adds a picture: Jesus is our brother (2:12-13). Rather than depicting us as people seeking life in a new future, it refers to those who need a place to belong in the family. Jesus is not "ashamed" to call us his brothers and sisters... So if Jesus calls us his brothers and sisters, it is not because we are so impressive. Being called one of his siblings is an act of grace. It offers us a sense of dignity and fellowship in the family.

A third picture is that of Jesus as a liberator (2:14-16)...Here Jesus intrudes into the situation to bring deliverance. The weapon he uses against the force of evil is the love of God, which he conveys through his own suffering and death. Jesus' crucifixion is confrontational. It shows that God is not willing to let the world remain under the dominion of other powers. In the crucified and risen Christ, God confronts evil with love and deception with truth. This is what sets people free.

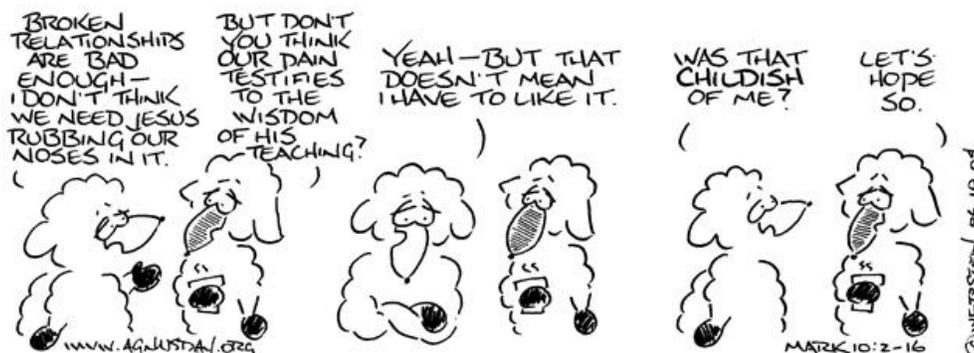
The fourth image in the collage is of Jesus the high priest (2:17-18). Here people are pictured as sinners in need of atonement. By his suffering and death, Jesus conveys the sacrificial love that restores people in relationship to God... And the reason Jesus offers himself is to convey to us the love that can bring us back into relationship with God.

This passage offers four ways of looking at Jesus and ourselves. When preaching, ask who you are preaching to: people in need of a future, people in need of belonging, people held captive by powers beyond themselves or sinners in need of atonement? In any congregation, all of these people will be present. It is easy for a preacher to fall into the habit of addressing only one situation. But this Scripture passage gives us a number of ways to look at ourselves and at Jesus. Each addresses different aspects of life. Scripture gives us the gospel in multiple dimensions. Good preaching will do the same."

➤ [http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=20](http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=20) *Craig R. Koester*  
Professor and Asher O. and Carrie Nasby Chair of New Testament, Luther Seminary' Saint Paul, Minn.

### **Mark 10:2-16; RCL, the same reading (Mark 10:17-22; RCL, Mark 10:17-31)**

*Readings from Mark will be continuous through the rest of Pentecost. Two exceptions may occur. All Saints Day is November 4, which is not a Sunday this year and may have alternative readings in congregations observing it on the following Sunday, November 11. The second is November 25, the last Sunday in the church year which is observed by some as Christ the King Sunday.*



*“Mark's original readers probably found Jesus' uncompromising statements about divorce and remarriage as challenging and counter-cultural as we do today.*

*Divorce in the first century was a generally accepted part of life, both among Jews and perhaps more so within wider Greco-Roman culture. Some writers and public leaders spoke against divorce as bad for society, but for the most part people debated only details of its legal basis. Among Jewish legal experts, Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was a key text, one that assumes divorce will occur and proscribes procedures for carrying it out. But other scriptures call the permissibility of divorce into question (see Malachi 2:13-16; Genesis 2:24)...”*

➤ [https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=401](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=401) [Matt Skinner](#)  
Professor of New Testament, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn.

## The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 10th Chapter”

<sup>2</sup> And Pharisees came up and in order to test 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 divorce and to send her away.” <sup>5</sup> And Jesus said to them, ***“Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. <sup>6</sup> But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ <sup>7</sup> ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife,<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>8</sup> and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. <sup>9</sup> What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”***

<sup>10</sup> And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. <sup>11</sup> And 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.”***

### Let the Children Come to Me

<sup>13</sup> And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup> But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, ***“Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. <sup>15</sup> Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”*** <sup>16</sup> And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

a. [Mark 10:7](#) Some manuscripts omit *and hold fast to his wife*

## “This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

“...So why is the question posed by the Pharisees to Jesus regarding divorce a “test”? (10:2) Since Moses stated a “commandment” regarding divorce, there really wasn’t a question whether it was lawful or not. The real issue is what constituted appropriate grounds for divorce...

“Here in Mark’s gospel, however, Jesus expresses an even more restrictive view. Divorce is simply a symptom of human failure that is contrary to God’s intentions in creation, so, Jesus says, “What God joined together, let no human separate.” Is this a blanket prohibition against divorce? What about the abusive or destructive relationships of which we are painfully aware? Should a corollary to Jesus’ pronouncement be just as true: What humans wrongly joined together, let God rightly separate?

As we should expect, God’s commands are not arbitrary but have a principle that motivates them. In a patriarchal Jewish society where only husbands had the prerogative of divorcing their wives, a prohibition of divorce provided a safeguard for women who could be left seriously disadvantaged after a divorce. Further, as Jesus spells out to the disciples in 10:10-12, in situations where either party could initiate a divorce, it’s the faithful partner that is harmed when his or her spouse divorces in order to marry someone else. Committing adultery is not an abstract, moral sin. It is a real, hurtful action against one’s God-joined partner.

This concern for those who are vulnerable carries over into verses 13-16 regarding the children brought to Jesus. We should first note that this section actually has a narrative function in connection to Mark 9:33-37. There the disciples had argued about who was the greatest, and Jesus asserted that “whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” By way of example, Jesus took a child in his arms and said, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.” (9:37) When parents bring their children to Jesus a mere 25 verses later, the attentive reader knows that the proper response is indeed to welcome them. When the disciples, however, scold them, the reader can naturally become indignant, and when we are then told that Jesus became indignant (10:14), we discover that we have been guided into the proper, Jesus-like response of a true disciple.

The second thing to note, I would argue, is that experiencing the dominion of God is like welcoming a child, not becoming like a child. The NRSV renders verse 15 as: “Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child (*paidion*) will never enter it.” That *paidion* can be understood in two ways in the Greek. As a nominative case noun, it would mean, “Welcome the kingdom like a child welcomes it.” As such, this saying has often generated sentimental reflections on the importance of a simple, child-like faith. Really? In my experience, children are much better with “Why?” and “No!” than they are with quiet assent. If *paidion* is understood as an accusative case noun, however, then it means, “Welcome the kingdom like you would welcome a child.” This latter reading certainly fits the immediate context better, and it serves as a clear reiteration of what Jesus said in 9:37.

Why is this significant? In the culture of Jesus’ time where honor and shame were decisive factors in determining behavior, people would be very eager to welcome someone of high status whose company could increase one’s own honor. Children, however, were of very low status. There was no perceptible value in hosting a banquet for a child. (Birthday parties for children are a quite modern invention.) So when Jesus says that the reception of God’s dominion is like embracing a child, he is asserting again that God is not experienced in power but in weakness. Entering God’s dominion is not a way to become first or great but a way to identify with the least and to serve simply for Jesus’ sake.

For a selfish and self-centered person, it makes no sense to welcome children or remain faithful in a relationship when temptation beckons. From the very beginning, however, God has embraced us and remained faithful, and that's good news."

[https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary\\_id=2638](https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2638) [Mark G. Vitalis Hoffman](#) Glatfelter Professor of Biblical Studies, United Lutheran Seminary, Gettysburg, Penn.



*Agnus Day appears with the permission of <https://www.agnusday.org/>*

### Biblical Interpretation

Bob (Utely) was born in 1947 in Houston, Texas... He has earned degrees from East Texas Baptist College, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and has done post-graduate work at Baylor University, Wycliffe Bible Translators' Summer Institute of Linguistics, and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School... Those who have heard Bob's teaching find it refreshing and inspiring. He approaches Bible teaching from an exegetical, verse-by-verse, historical-grammatical point of view. In addition, great effort is made to remove his, and our, social, cultural, experiential, and denominational biases. Bob tries to support his interpretation from the biblical text in one of six ways: **(1)** literary context; **(2)** historical setting of the biblical author; **(3)** word studies; **(4)** grammatical relationships; **(5)** parallel biblical passages; and **(6)** literary genres.

The Lutheran Study Bible uses this approach: "Lutherans read the Bible, or hear it read at church, because they believe that through the Holy Scripture God answers essential questions about life, death, and eternal life. They believe that God works through the message of Scripture to call them to repentance and take away their sins..."

1. The Lord works through His Word, 2. Scripture interprets Scripture, and 3. The Holy Spirit blesses the use of God's Word through faith.