

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday, October 6, 2024. Based on Genesis 2 and Mark 10-2-16. "We are all bone of bone and flesh of flesh".

Relationships are on my mind this weekend after presiding at Joyce Landsverk's funeral on Friday morning and Wil and Alissa Heinz Wedding on Friday night. I witnessed the grief of Joyce's family as they said an official goodbye to Joyce and the joy of two families coming together in the covenant of marriage. But I also saw the hope that our faith gives us when a loved one dies in the faith and when a marriage is Grounded in God's love for us in Jesus Christ.

Relationships are in our lessons for today. They speak of the first humans in Genesis 2 and about Marriage and Divorce, Children in our Gospel from Mark.

In our first lesson from Genesis 2, God saw that the first human was alone and said, this is not good. It's not good for man to be alone. It's true. No one needs to be alone. We all need companionship, partners, helpers, and friends. Someone to talk to and visit with. People who recognize us. I was blessed yesterday by reconnecting with friends from high school at a Badger Tailgate in Madison. Some I haven't seen in 20 years. It felt good to be remembered, to share hugs, and laughter. My one friend said, you look the same. I took that as a compliment.

In the second creation story in Genesis, God, who in God's very essence is community (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) wants community for us humans too. God provided birds and all kinds of animals. And for those pet lovers, we know pets are good companions too. But the man wanted more. So God created the first woman and brought her to the man. The man was ecstatic... "This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken."

This is at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. Let's reflect on that saying for a minute in light of all that is happening in our world right now. We have wars and rumors of wars in the Middle East and Ukraine and Russia to name a few. We have people suffering from one of the worst hurricanes ever in the southern United States. You have people in your own families or neighborhoods who are hurting in their own ways. All humans are bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh. What if we looked at everyone that way?

All those walls that humans build around power differentials, religion, culture, ethnicities, ideologies, color of our skin, political affiliations, etc. would disappear. We are all bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh. And when one of us is hurting among us we should hurt too.

Then in our Gospel, some Pharisees came to test Jesus, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" Jesus almost always responded to a question with a question. "What did the law of Moses say?" In fact it was lawful in the Torah. But only the man could write the certificate of divorce... and for any reason at all. In this text, Jesus acknowledged a women's right to also write a certificate of divorce. Jesus said, this law is there because of your hardness of heart. God's dream is that all marriages work out. Then we wouldn't need divorce. But because of your hardness of heart, Jesus says, because sin is in the world, that law is there. Our selfishness and hardness of heart can cause divorce. People commit adultery. There is abuse.

Debi Thomas in the Journey with Jesus Blog helps me navigate this tough conversation when she writes, "Scripture makes it abundantly clear that God does *not* love any dream more than God loves us. God's dream for marriage is not meant to trap us, wound us, diminish us, or condemn us. Adam's cry at seeing Eve was a cry of pure joy, a cry of ecstatic recognition. But sometimes joy dies. Sometimes the familiar becomes unrecognizable. Sometimes intimacy ends in betrayal. However, When these things happen, there is grace and there is freedom. Always, always, *always*" *she says*.

We know divorce affects all of us and can bring pain to the couple and their families. But God truly wants life giving relationships for all people. God wants abundant life for all. Divorce may be the only reason to keep someone safe who is abused or to restore their wholeness as the person God created them to be. I have seen many couples who are divorced and find love and joy in the gift of marriage again. I believe God wants all our relationships to be life giving and for us to be whole as people.

But like Debi Thomas says, God loves us humans more than any dream God has for marriage. God knows that as humans we will sin and fall short in all of our relationships. When that happens, God wants us to have broken hearts over what we have done and left undone and calls us to repentance. If people can change and show the fruit of repentance, then maybe things can work out. But when it doesn't, and we know many times when that is the case because of Christ and the cross, there is always grace. There are new beginnings. Always, Always, Always. Amen