

## **Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family**

**Title: A View of Love**

**Lesson: Mark 10:2-16 NRSV**

I prepared today's sermon based on Mark 10:2-16 while praying a lot because some people may feel uncomfortable hearing these words. It's a hard topic to preach on the issue of divorce because there are more people who are divorced around us than we think. However, I had to choose today's gospel because it was a lectionary for today.

In the past, Korean society was patriarchal and conservative so the issue of divorce tended to be taboo, and many women were silent about domestic violence by their husbands. However, as women's social rights increased, women began to open their mouths. And the rate of divorce has continued to increase. These days it has become relatively common. For example, one of my aunts got a divorce. Like this we can often find divorce in families close to us.

In today's verses some Pharisees came and to test Jesus they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" (2) He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" (3)

At that time, divorce was one-sided by men because their society was patriarchal, and men led the society. Sometimes men one-sided made excuses for their wives and divorced them.

By the way, the Pharisees' question is a bit out of the blue. Why did they ask Jesus such a question?

There were two opposing groups among the Pharisees regarding the Law at that time. One group argued that it should be applied strictly, and the other argued that it could be applied loosely. Perhaps the Pharisees asked this question as if to a temptation to understand Jesus' political support. So their question was like asking, 'Which group do you support?'

Also, the divorce issue at the time was a political hot potato because the place where Jesus and the Pharisees were was the district controlled by Herod. John the Baptist accused Herod of taking Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Philip, and lost his life in accusing him of remarriage.

The Pharisees' questions were political, and their questions were not about the ethics of divorce, but rather about which group Jesus supported, what Jesus thought of Herod's actions, and even a plan to accuse and kill Jesus if he criticized Herod.

The Pharisees' question was simple: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" Looking at the conversation, we can see that their focus and Jesus' focus are completely different. The Pharisees speak of a man's power to divorce his wife. According to their law, only men can file for divorce.

But Jesus concentrates on the sin and pain of women who get divorced one-sidedly. It was inevitable that Moses allowed the divorce because it was a social protection to protect divorced women, and to prevent people from treating divorced women rudely. Jesus' position was that one's life shouldn't be abandoned according to a man's desire. Jesus refers to Genesis: "God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen 1:27 NRSV) Thus, men and women are equal. Genesis 2:24 says that "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh."

The Pharisees interpreted the law in a male-centered way, but Jesus interpreted the law as love. Jesus' concern was the will of God. The Bible describes the marriage relationship like the relationship between "God and the people of Israel" or "Jesus Christ and the church."

Jesus said to the Pharisees, Love is the most important than anything in the world. In fact, it is the wrong question to start with discussing the right and wrong of divorce because everyone's situation is different. Domestic violence has been an issue in Korea since the past. There are cases and situations in which a divorce system is necessary.

It's great to see a couple living happily together. However, it is not always easy for a couple to have a good relationship. There are many reasons for a divorce, but one of the reasons is that they do not care for their obligations of love to each other. The Bible says that God created male and female from the time of creation. Men and women are very different. In the book titled "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus," John Gray describes the fundamental differences between men and women in personality and temperament.

The Bible says that "And the two shall become one flesh, so they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate." (8-9) This is not to say that divorce is wrong, but rather a criticism of the one-sided divorce that was male-dominated at the time. In Korea, there is a saying that "marital disputes never last long", but couples often quarrel. My wife and I sometimes argue. Couples sometimes quarrel over trivial words and sometimes hurt each other. Even the smallest things can cause big quarrels.

There are five things women need when they get older. They are money, health, a daughter, a friend, and a dog. And, there are five things men need when they are retired: wife, spouse, partner, mate, and better half.

To become a healthy and harmonious couple, we should open our heart to God's will. When we accept God's will, we can understand that love. God loves us unconditionally. Anyone who is open to accepting God's unconditional love can share it with their spouse, family, and friends. Jesus used a child as an example. A child is a

being who opens himself up to God. At that time young children were treated as an weak, not valued, and not very welcomed. However, Jesus says that the kingdom of God is for the children.

Children are not bound by the law. They don't even have anything to brag about. Because of this, the Pharisees and the adults at that time did not take children seriously. Even the disciples of Jesus did not regard children as important. But parents loved and cared for their children and brought them to Jesus. They wanted Jesus to pat their children. When the disciples stopped the parents and children, Jesus said: "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." (14) "Jesus took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them." (16).

Jesus didn't judge the young children. Rather, he focused on their pure hearts. Above all, he said that the kingdom of God is for theirs saying, "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it" (15) Because children are those who have pure hearts truly believing in God and are ready to receive God's gifts. This is because, unlike adults, they completely rely on God. Children are willing to accept God's gift.

May husbands love their wives, wives love their husbands, parents love their children, and children love their parents, just as God loves us unconditionally. Amen.