

Pentecost 19, Year B, [Take Care](#)

3rd October, 2021

Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12 NIV / Mark 10:2-16 NRSV

Prelude (Video)

[*Come, Now is the Time to Worship*](#)

written by Brian Doerksen,

played by Annie Center

(Used and reported under CCLI Streaming License 20261246)

Welcoming Announcements

Pass the Peace

Call to Worship (Responsive)

Leader: Bring your hearts and your minds to worship!

People: It's time to learn about God and ourselves

All: Because we trust the Lord, we will look at what really matters.

Leader: God is love! God is truth!

People: We need God's help to love truth and love truly.

All: We stand on solid ground. Let us praise the Lord together.

Invocation

Eternal and ever-loving God, We gather in praise and worship as Your people believing that when two or more gather in Your name, You are there in the midst of them. We seek Your presence with us this day, for Your presence brings transformation, peace and joy. It is our desire to stand before You in worship and adoration. We are incredibly grateful that we are able to approach You with confidence; that we are able to stand before You and know You. We join with the Psalmist in saying we seek out Your face, living God. Do not turn away from us, but accept our sacrifice of worship today. Look upon us with favor, God, for we know that we find our purpose and value in You. It amazes us that You delight in our coming to You, and as we contemplate who You are, we know that we are exactly where we should be. Draw near to us in this time of worship, that we might know You more. Enrich our faith and our worship through the provision of Your Holy Spirit. Draw near to us as we draw near to You.

God, open our ears and hearts to what You would have us hear this day. Inspire us through Your spirit, that our worship may not finish in this building, but that we may worship You in the everyday moments of our lives. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Opening Music (Lyric Video)

[Here In This Place](#)

written by Marty Haugen,
performed by the Virtual Choir of the
Ferryhill Parish Church, Aberdeen, Scotland

Epistle Reading **Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12 NIV**

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,

but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.

It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking.

But there is a place where someone has testified: "What is mankind that you are mindful of them, a son of man that you care for him?

You made them a little lower than the angels; you crowned them with glory and honor

and put everything under their feet." In putting everything under them, God left nothing that is not subject to them. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to them.

But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered.

Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.

He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises."

Hymn (Lyric Video) ["There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"](#)
posted to YouTube by John Wesley Slider

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

We thank You, God, for everything we delight in – sunlight in autumn days, colour in nature and art, rhythm in poetry and music; human achievement and family success; good humour; work well done; love and friendship and all your gifts to body and soul.

Most of all we delight in Your salvation, the knowledge of Your love, the assurance of eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

We commend to You those who work in harsh conditions, and those who have no work; those whose lives are drab and grey; those whose poor health takes away delight in living; those who are lonely; those who have no home of their own.

Grant them the human help and comfort which they need, and the spiritual encouragement which will enable them to live with hope and courage, for the sake of Jesus Christ who leads us to salvation.

We pray for the elderly, asking for them clear faith and human support.

We pray for those in middle years, asking for them wisdom in their choices. and the recovery of a sense of wonder.

We pray for the young, asking for them good opportunities, and that their ambitions include the desire to serve.

May we all continue to seek the God of every age, made known in Jesus Christ, the greatest friend of all.

We bless You, God, space-maker, cloud-rider, earth-lover. We bless You for the great company of saints who have gone before us and now delight in Your presence. Amen.

Gospel Reading **Mark 10:2-16 NRSV**

Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

He answered them, "What did Moses command you?"

They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.”

But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you.

But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’

‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife,^[a] 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.”

Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter.

He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her;

and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them.

But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.

Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”

And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Message – Take Care

When we think of this book, what is it that comes to mind? Certainly common wisdom would say the primary sacred writings of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The majority of those who follow those faiths would agree that this book represents, in some fashion, the divinely-inspired guidance expressed by writers and scribes throughout the history of these traditions, But the bigger question is what do these scriptures mean to us? Do we see them as divinely-inspired, and if so, what does that mean for our lives?

Throughout the centuries, these words have been interpreted in a multitude of ways that reflect the great diversity and variety exhibited in the style and content they contain. There are epic stories, poetry, songs, and philosophical and ethical codes, just to name a few of the genres reflected. Portions have served as the basis for religious and even civil law at

various times in various cultures. These various documents assembled together represent the literature styles relevant over the centuries, covering a wide swath of historical periods and cultures. Likewise the way people have chosen to apply them to their own lives has been just as varied. But one commonality running through that interpretation is the belief that, for the most part, these writings in some way give us a glimpse into who God is, and what God's intentions are.

The first book contains stories to explain God's actions and intentions in creating the universe, and the creatures contained in that creation. Then we get to the creation of God's chosen people, and God's rules to guide them in their lives as individuals, And just as importantly, as a community. These rules covered everything a society forming 2500 years ago would need to know. It tells them how to prepare their food safely, how to fairly trade with one another and resolve disputes, how to live lives of integrity and ethics, what not to do and what not to wear so they aren't confused with the pagan religions around them, and most importantly, how to ensure everyone in that male-dominated, patriarchal society was cared for. These rules and laws served that culture well initially. The problem occurred, when over time, they began to focus more on the written laws while losing the original intention behind them. As with any set of well-intentioned rules or laws, those with power can use those edicts in ways that deviate from their intended purpose, to maintain and increase their own power and dominance.

This is where we enter our Gospel lesson this morning. Jesus is put on the spot to see which side of an argument among two rabbinical schools he favors. The topic in dispute is when a man may divorce his wife, based on a phrase in Deuteronomy 24:1 which said that a man could divorce "because he has found her indecent in anything." The School of Shammai said that a man may not divorce his wife unless he has found unchastity in her. The School of Hillel, based on that same snippet of Deuteronomical law, argued that he can divorce her if she in any way displeased him, or if he found one fairer than her. This dispute is a classic example of using the law in ways that completely lose sight of their original intent. In the patriarchal culture when this was written, which had not become anymore liberated in the 500 odd years between then and the time of Christ, women had no power or ability to sustain themselves on their own. They were completely dependent on either their husbands, male offspring, or their own birth families for their support.

As the story of Ruth illustrates, to lose those support systems put women in dire circumstances. If a man divorced his wife, and she was not able to find a new husband and had no family to care for her, she was destitute on the street. Women couldn't operate businesses independently and there was really no wage labor to speak of for women. As is the usual case for Jesus, he doesn't get involved in the legal arguments of the Pharisees and Scribes. Instead he, as the fulfillment of the Law, pulls them back to its original intent, all the way back to the creation story in Genesis 1:27 and 2:24. Humans are created in God's image, and when they marry, they cease to be individuals and become one flesh.

This reminds us that God recognized the value of not being alone, to have companionship and support of a partner, to be in community and not lead a solitary life. As such, the commitment people made to live into God's intentions was something to be taken very seriously. The law had been twisted to allow men to have the power to disregard that commitment lightly, and to follow their lusts and desire to the detriment not only of their spouse's well-being, but their own integrity and wholeness as well. Jesus reminds them, and us, that God's intentions were for a compassionate and caring union of two people, committed to each other's best interests. He reinforces the seriousness of that commitment, by reinforcing that the casual legal dismissal of a spouse for another, was no better than cheating on another.

But this is a passage of scripture that needs to be handled very carefully. Like with the Pharisees of Jesus' day, it can be all too easy to become legalistic and lose sight of the intent of Christ's argument, as well as the intent of the original laws in question. God intended marriage to be a mutually beneficial and supportive union, where both spouses complemented and cared for each other. Unfortunately, then as now, not all unions were, as they say, "*made in heaven.*" Sometimes people marry who are not compatible, whose union is fraught with strife and discord. On occasion, one spouse or both can become abusive and hurtful. This is not the companionship God intended. Certainly there are those disputes and differences in a relationship that have the capacity to be worked through, or overlooked. That's just part of the nature of a committed relationship.

There's a story of a married couple who on their 50th wedding anniversary, summed up the reason for their long and happy marriage. The husband said, "I have tried never to be selfish. After all, there is no 'I' in the word 'marriage.'" The wife said, "For my part, I have never corrected my husband's spelling."

But how tempted are we to become legalistic like the Pharisees, and unfortunately the Church in many cases, makes Christ's argument a legalistic, arbitrary law and force people to suffer in unhealthy unions, or deny some people the very possibility of a meaningful, committed and blessed relationship at all? It's important to remember that bad relationships don't just affect the two people involved. The effects ripple out to the family as well. Medical studies show that children of dysfunctional relationships are 25-30 percent more likely to be ill, and actually tend to have a shorter lifespan. God sees the value in sharing one's journey with a partner that makes one whole and complete. What's important is that we value and honor that relationship when we find it, regardless of its appearance and make-up.

We also need to realize that we are human, and sometimes make errors in judgment in making commitments to partners who are not the ones to make us whole and of one flesh. It all gets back to how we view the contents of this book, and how we see God's intentions

and motivations in those words. Do we see them as portraying a loving, nurturing, grace-filled God, reflected in Jesus, who wants us to live full meaningful lives of caring companionship and community? Or do we see God reflected in scripture as an enforcer of arbitrary laws and edicts, without grace or compassion?

At the end of our gospel reading today, Jesus instructs his followers that they should receive the kin-dom of God as children, for the kin-dom belongs to such as these. Do we let God guide and mentor us as children? Or do we try to figure it out on our own? This book is full of wisdom and lessons to be learned, lessons that take on new meaning in new situations. We have the choice to make this just a book of static rules and laws, or to dig a little deeper, to discern the intent of the message to the audience it was written for and try to translate that meaning to our context, in this time and place. A good question to ask ourselves is, what does my interpretation reveal about God? Does it reveal a caring, nurturing celestial parent, or a bitter, vengeful deity full of wrath and violence? Is Christ reflected in our understanding, or does his perspective just not fit into our take on things?

In our epistle reading today, we're told that Jesus is happy to welcome us as brothers and sisters in that holy family if we are willing to seek the loving guidance of God which leads to lives of meaningful connections and compassion, full of care for our brothers and sisters. We are created in God's image, like Adam and Eve, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. As we prepare today to share in communion with our risen Savior, let us seek the will and guidance of God, through scripture, to being the compassionate, care-full children of God that we are called to be. May it be so. Amen

Service of Communion

Words of Preparation (resources)

The Invitation (in bulletin)

(resources)

All of us who are in love and fellowship in the family of God, regardless of who you are or where you've come from, are welcome to partake of this sacred meal.

The Bread and the Cup (in bulletin)

Leader: First, God created one person.

Congregation: But it was not right for that one person to be alone.

Leader: So God made another person, an equal, someone to share with, and talk with. God created relationship. God created communion.

Congregation: This at last is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh!

Leader: And then God took it one step further. God looked at the many people living in relationship with one another and decided to join the community! God came to be with us as one of us, and his human family called him Jesus.

Congregation: This at last is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh!

Leader: And one night, when Jesus sat with his community, he took bread, and broke it, and blessed it, saying, "This is my body." Then he took the cup, saying, "This is my blood." (*Break the bread and lift the cup*)

Congregation: This at last is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh!

Leader: Come, Holy Spirit, and make us one body of Christ.

Congregation: This at last is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh!

Leader: Bone of our bone; flesh of our flesh: one with each other and all humanity: the Body of Christ. I invite you to share in the bread and the cup together, As you eat of the bread and drink of the cup, reflect on what it means to share the body of Christ together,

“Bone of our bone; Flesh of our flesh: The Body of Christ!”

Video Interlude [*It is Well With My Soul*](#)

played by Annie Center

Prayer of Thanksgiving

O God, you are never far from us. Your reach out and touch us through your Spirit, through symbols, and through the hands of those we love. We are deeply grateful to have a place at your table and to share in this sacred food. By your grace may we continue on our pilgrimage, carrying into life the saving love of Christ, in whose name we pray, Amen.

HYMN (Lyric Video) [*Bless'd Be The Tie That Binds*](#)

posted to YouTube by Pastor Amor

Benediction

God calls us all to be children of God. You are known by name and you are loved, exactly as you are. God is nudging you lovingly in the right direction. Embrace God's love and correction of course in your life, and know that you are forgiven, loved, and restored. Go and share the good news. Amen.

Postlude [*You Are My All in All*](#)

written by Dennis Jernigan,
played by Annie Center

(Used and reported under CCLI Streaming License 20261246)