

October 10th 2021, Mark Chapter 10 verses 1 to 12 – Menai-Illawong.

Welcome to worship.

“Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in his ways. You will eat the fruit of your labour; blessing and prosperity will be yours. Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; your sons will be like olive shoots around your table. Thus is the man who fears the Lord.” (Psalm 128 verses 1 to 4 NIV).

Prayer.

Lord God, we thank you for the amazing way that you ordered life. We give you thanks for marriage today and the way two people become one. We see your love poured out in all relationships where serving each other is more important than serving ourselves. We pray today for whatever relationship we are in that Jesus will be our inspiration and we will seek the highest ideals in everything we do. Lord may all our relationship be sacred because you are the Lord of them all. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Song.

Friend of God <https://youtu.be/lcxKRsn-hGc> Brian Doerksen

Church Today.

Our gospel reading today has Jesus returning to Judea and being asked a question by the Pharisees about marriage and divorce. They asked this question to test Jesus. This was a difficult topic to discuss with differing opinions. Jesus will lead us into the differences between the ideal and the real in terms of relationships.

Bible readings for today.

Psalm 128, Genesis Chapter 2 verses 18 to 24, Mark Chapter 10 verses 1 to 16, Hebrews Chapter 1 verses 1 to 4.

Mission and Planning Report.

We encourage everyone to read the report sent out recently and if you have any questions, comments or input please speak to someone from Church Council.

Church Re-opening.

Church Council is working through a plan to share and discuss the mission and planning report and possible times to return to church.

Show Boxes.

Collecting shoe boxes has been extended to the end of October. Please speak to June Abbott if you need help.

(Sharing later on – stories to tell).

Reading – Genesis Chapter 2 verses 18 to 24

Prayer.

Loving God, you set out life for us in an amazing relationship with you and others in an amazing world that functions. Yet we live now in the brokenness of that as well. Lord God we ask for both great ideals to aspire to in every area of life and compassion when we experience and see the brokenness in every area of life.

Help us to care for the created world when we see it stressed; for animal life with reducing places to live and prosper. We pray that animal cruelty in favour of easy money will cease. We are sorry Lord when we get the balance between dominion and care wrong.

We pray for great relationship with all people even those who oppose us. Lord when we are challenged help us to keep our integrity and focus on that which is right. We draw near to you and we pray the prayer Jesus taught us:

Lords prayer. Amen.

Seluini and Luisa family singing.

Song

Forever Chris Tomlin https://youtu.be/gUH_NzfRmbs

Sharing and Prayer. (Favourite stories from our marriage or relationships)

Reading – Mark Chapter 10 verses 1 to 12.

October 10th 2021, Menai-Illawong Mark Chapter 10 verses 1 to 12.

I want to start today in talking about marriage and divorce by acknowledging that relationships are lot more complex today than they were in time of the bible. Our Psalm reading today 128 speaks of a very patriarchal way of life with the man at the center of the family and his wife and sons spoken of as his blessing. No mention of daughters and all the blessings seen in the hands of

the men. This was how the ancient world was organized and survived. However with a more progressive time the rights and concerns for wives and daughters have been rightly adjusted.

Today there are many types of families and relationships and the teachings of Jesus applies to them all.

Our reading begins by noting a change of setting for our passage. Jesus and the disciples travel back across the Jordan into Judea meaning a return back to Jewish dominated areas from previous Gentile ones.

And with it comes a question from the Pharisees put to Jesus about divorce. They are testing Jesus with this question and it is a difficult one where people have different opinions.

Jesus has previously followed a very liberal interpretation to some of laws relating to washing hands and eating from the fields on the Sabbath. Here with this question about marriage and divorce - there is no such liberal attitude.

In the first century there were of groups with very different approaches to marriage and divorce. And with scripture giving different answers it is easy to see why there were different beliefs held.

This question about whether it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife is a very personal one for most of us. In today's world divorce is very common and divorces are much easier to get. There is hardly a person in the church whose family has not been affected in some way with a relationship breakdown. In past days it was a lot more embarrassing to hear someone in the church whose family had a divorce.

As I have shared before in my immediate family I am the only one whose marriage has survived. So if you have been through a divorce or relationship breakdown; I hope that you do not feel I am speaking about you. This is a matter that has affected us all. Even out of marriages that survive, some exist in name only and others are in abusive relationships that they need to get out of. It's not about judging others or ourselves; it is about acknowledging that with all relationships, some survive, some even get better with time while others fail. We are all sinners whose lives do not live up to the high standards Jesus teaches. Recalling Jesus' teaching on the Sermon on the Mount regarding adultery – even just to think about this makes us as good as guilty.

Jesus will say something here about divorce in Mark that is different from Matthew. In Matthew Jesus allows divorce on the grounds of unfaithfulness in

chapters 5 and 19. In Mark there are no grounds for divorce. Divorcing your wife and marrying another is committing adultery.

The most common explanation for this later addition allowing divorce on the grounds of adultery is not easy to solve, but again like Moses's law; Jesus seems to accept divorce on certain grounds.

There are a number of situations today with domestic and sexual violence and even physical and verbal abuse that should not be tolerated in a marriage and I so I think we need to be careful about simply applying what Jesus says to every situation we face today. The choices women had were far less in bible times.

The Pharisees in speaking about divorce make mention to Moses and how he allowed divorce when a husband was not pleased with his wife. This passage is Deuteronomy Chapter 24 verses 1 to 4. We do not know "*what not pleasing to the husband*" is about. Again this is a male dominated discussion. This is not about adultery because that is mentioned elsewhere. But it appears Moses gave in to the ideals of scripture by allowing an easy way for men to divorce their wives if they were not happy.

Jesus takes aim at this Law referring it to a Law that had to deal with the **hardness of hearts** in men. In other words Jesus doesn't agree with this Law or the male in this case except as an accommodation of sin and weakness.

And sometimes we have to deal with this weakness in life in many issues.

I am not in favour of abortion, but in certain circumstances I can accept it. I am not in favour of capital punishment but in certain circumstances I could accept it. I am not in favour of the drug injecting policy of the Uniting Church but in certain circumstances I can see how it can save lives and that's good.

I am not in favour of euthanasia but in certain circumstances I could support it.

There are lots of situations where an ideal way of living clashes with the real broken and fragile people.

Moses has set up a Law as an easy way out and Jesus has rejected it.

In its place is what everyone knew about and that is God's model for marriage outlined in Genesis which is **forever** and what God has joined together - let no one separate.

Jesus supports the ideal of marriage expressed in Genesis. And that is what most people aspire to as well. Putting aside those who marry for wrong reasons; when meeting with couples before marrying them we go through

some kind of counselling. I am trying to help couples understand the blessing and challenges of the relationship ahead of them. It's not as common today because lots of couples don't marry to start with or have already lived together.

But I have never met a couple who are not thinking - I hope and expect this marriage will last forever and as starry eyed couples getting ready for marriage - they don't think broken relationships or divorce will apply to them.

Like the teaching on the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus goes to the very ideals of relationships he does so here again with marriage and avoiding divorce.

What Jesus emphasizes is the ideals of life God created. And this is what we should strive for in every relationship.

What happen when relationships breakdown? There are many reasons for this? You can you try to resolve the issues. You can go to counselling and this sometimes can be helpful and getting your relationship back on track.

I have come to the understanding that marriage and other relationships **have to work** to make them worthwhile. And sometimes the past hurt makes healing very allusive. There is little value in being in a marriage that doesn't work.

Now there is less chance a second marriage will work also so sometimes there is an allusion that the other person is the problem. You are thinking; if I can just find someone else I will be happy. More often than not – relationship breakdown both partners contribute. It's just that, sometimes you are blind to your shortcomings.

In ancient times there were not social services available for women and so walking out on a relationship could be very costly and life threatening.

In today's world there are more networks of support.

I just want to finish by encouraging us all to work on our marriage or relationship. Don't take it for granted. Each day show love in some way. Go out on a date; take time to build a great marriage. Work through conflicts, don't avoid them. Share dreams and see them fulfilled. Listen to the bids for attention or love from your partner and don't react or pull away but respond positively where you can and you might see your partner do the same.

Jesus is saying marriage or a relationship similar is worthy of our best effort and God's intention is that they remain until death do us part. Marriage is

worth every effort and never compromising on the ideals of marriage as a goal to work at and strive for.

But sometimes sadly you do need a plan b for times when sin sets in and a marriage does not work. That seems to be the position of Moses and I think Jesus as well. Amen.

Song. I surrender all Traditional <https://youtu.be/SW8EA7DEQ2M>

Prayers of Intercession.

- For NSW Parliament and the new premier Dominic Perrottet.
- For people to act responsibly as we start to re-open.
- For schools as they begin a new term.
- For churches learning new ways in a changing world.
- Pray for rising tensions in our region with China.
- For our church council and congregation as we work through the mission and planning report.

Responses.

Leader – Lord in your mercy.

People – Hear our prayer.

Offering Prayer.

Heavenly Father; the earth is yours and yet you trust us as your stewards to look after it. We bring our gifts of our harvest, our work, our pensions, our pocket money to lay at your table for your kingdom and work. May our lives reflect your purpose and help us as a church to share your generosity with others. We offer ourselves today as a living sacrifice to do your will. Amen.

Bank details for direct depositing.

Not for everyone – but if you can we encourage you. Account – Menai-Illawong Uniting Church

BSB 634 634 Account number 100019580.

If you prefer to give directly; contact Grant and he can arrange to collect the offering from his letterbox.

Song. Shout to the Lord Darlene Zschech
<https://youtu.be/y78aKBa917I>

Benediction.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and peace. Amen.