



Introduction

Today's gospel combines a saying that makes many of us uncomfortable with a story we find comforting. Jesus' saying on divorce is another of his rejections of human legislation in favor of the original intent of God's law. Jesus' rebuke of the disciples who are fending off the children should challenge us as well. What does it mean to receive the kingdom of God as a child does?

Confession and Forgiveness

In the name of the Father, and of the ✙ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone.

Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sins in the presence of God and one another.

Most merciful God,

we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves.

We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us.

Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved.

In the name of ✙ Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven.

Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. **Amen**

Opening Hymn ELW # 879/ LBW # 561

For the Beauty of the Earth

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Prayer of the Day

Sovereign God, you have created us to live in loving community with one another. Form us for life that is faithful and steadfast, and teach us to trust like little children, that we may reflect the image of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Genesis 2:18-24

Genesis 2 stresses that people are not meant to live in isolation but in relationship. Out of love for humanity, God creates them male and female, to provide companionship for each other and to become with each other “one flesh.” The Hebrew words used here are ish (man) and ishshah (woman).

Read the complete text [here](#).

Psalm: Psalm 8

¹O LORD our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!—

²**you whose glory is chanted above the heavens out
of the mouths of infants and children;
you have set up a fortress against your enemies,
to silence the foe and avenger.**

³When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars you have set in their courses,

⁴**what are mere mortals that you should be mindful of them,
human beings that you should ¹care for them?**

⁵Yet you have made them little less than divine;
with glory and honor you crown them.

⁶**You have made them rule over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet:**

⁷all flocks and cattle, even the wild beasts of the field,

⁸**the birds of the air, the fish of the sea,
and whatever passes along the paths of the sea.**

⁹O LORD our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Second Reading: Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

Quoting from the psalms, this passage from Hebrews emphasizes that Jesus, the one through whom God created everything and who sits at God's right hand, is also the one who experienced human suffering and death in order to blaze the path of salvation for us.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Gospel: Mark 10:2-16

Jesus announced and enacted in history the new reality of God's surprising activity. These two stories demonstrate this new reality: Women and children are accepted and valued, not dismissed as inferior to adult men.

Read the complete text [here](#).

Reflection on the Text

Our Second Lesson begins with these words:

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds.

Even though we call this book of the New Testament "The Letter to the Hebrews" it should more rightly be called a Sermon for the Hebrews. The book of Hebrews does not have any of the markings of a letter – no greeting or ending; it certainly does not look like any of Paul's letters with the normal long greeting where several people are named, or ending where more people are named and the receiver is asked to share Paul's love and greetings with the others.

The fact of the matter is that we really do not know very much about this New Testament. We do not know who wrote it, and we only have our best guess as to when it was written – around 70 AD - a few years after Paul's death and around the time of the destruction of the temple in Israel. While it very much seems like a sermon, we are not sure who it was intended for, or if it was written for general circulation. It does seem to address some specific issues, but as we think about those issues, they speak to us as well.

Preaching Professor Tom Long describes the issues this way:

"The preacher is addressing a real and urgent pastoral problem, one that seems astonishingly contemporary. His congregation is exhausted. They are tired - tired of serving the world, tired of worship, tired of Christian education, tired of being peculiar and whispered about in society, tired of the spiritual struggle, tired of trying to keep their prayer life going, tired even of Jesus..."

Tired of walking the walk, many of them are considering taking a walk, leaving the community and falling away from the faith. (**Interpretation: Hebrews**, p. 3) ”

I don't know about you, but this certainly seems to describe the state of most Christians and most churches I know of today. Keeping it all going during a pandemic of more than 18 months (and counting) has been hard. The divisions in our communities and our country have made it extremely stressful. Many people are ready to check out and hibernate, not having to talk to anyone about wearing masks or getting shots or anything else that has to do with the pandemic. We are all tired, and are not sure when this will ever end.

This sermon, however, brings us hope and assures us that our faith is not in vain. God sent us his Son. Not just another prophet, not just another spokesperson, but his one and only Son, Jesus, who is the reflection of God's glory and who sustains all things by his powerful word.

These opening lines remind us of the opening lines of John's Gospel:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people... And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-4, 14)

Jesus – the Word through which all things were created – was sent to us by God. Jesus was made a little lower than the angels for a time during which he became truly human, and he lived, suffered, and died.

This Jesus – the Word made flesh – the one through whom the worlds were created – this Jesus came to be with us – to become one of us so that we are all his brothers and sisters, all children of the same Heavenly Father. Jesus was sent by God so that he could “proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.”

Even though we are tired, even though we may feel beaten down, even though we may not feel as if we have much hope, these words sustain us and lift us up. Jesus came to proclaim the name of God in our midst, and to show us God's love and mercy. For this, we carry on with the mission of the church. For this, we give thanks to God. For this, we lift up the name of Jesus to one and all, and heads held high, we share the love of God with everyone. Amen.

Hymn of the Day ELW # 640/LBW # 357

Our Father, by Whose Name

Listen and sing along [here](#).

Apostles' Creed

We profess our faith with the whole church in all times and places:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

Made children and heirs of God's promise, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Holy One, you have raised up faithful leaders throughout history. Empower those discerning a call to ministry, all seminarians, and those awaiting call to a congregation, that they continue to be formed for the sake of the gospel.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You have established a diverse and beautiful creation. Revive declining species and preserve endangered lands. Cultivate in us a sense of wonder for the world you created.

Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You desire for us not to be alone and to live in community with one another. Strengthen relationships between nations and peoples, that we celebrate and support one human family. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You share in our experiences and struggles. Bless all who live with any mental or physical disability. Inspire creative communities, spaces, and environments that are accessible and hospitable. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You have established and nurtured relationships that extend beyond those gathered here today. Bless members who can no longer travel to worship with us and remind us of their continued role in this community of faith. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You provide healing, comfort, and strength for those in need. We pray especially for those we name now. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

You promise eternal life to all your children. Thank you for the people of faith who have gone before us. Strengthen our trust we have in you. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Receive these prayers, O God, and those in our hearts known only to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come,
thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Hymn ELW # 656/LBW # 370

Blest Be the Tie That Binds

Listen and sing along [here](#).

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Today's reflection was written by Pastor Ray Sipe.