



The Gospel isn't meant to be gulped down on Sunday morning, but gnawed on through the week so it really becomes a part of us. You've got to work at it, like a dog with a good bone! Here's the Gospel for this coming Sunday.

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Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost (Proper 22) Color: Green

Common Lectionary:

Job 1:1; 2:1-10 with Psalm 26

OR Genesis 2:18-24 with Psalm 8

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

Mark 10:2-16

October 7, 2018

What was marriage to Jesus? This isn't an easy question to answer. Clearly in this text marriage is about heterosexual households. He speaks about leaving the household of a father and mother and setting up a household as a man with a wife. The household or oikonomos was a financial, social and ethical unit. It is from the Greek word for a house that we get our words for economy and economics. If we look at Proverbs 33 the picture of a good wife is of an individual who runs the economic unit that was an iron-age home. She is up early, goes to market, runs things efficiently and turns a profit. A father seeking out a wife for his son, in this model, was more like recruiting a catering and services manager with agricultural skills. In her book 'Doughnut Economics', Kate Raworth argues that the labour of many women is a crucial part of the economy, and yet because it is not part of the monetary economy invented by men it is rarely valued. The married women in Jesus' time were used as economic pawns in a social system that did not enable them to choose their sexual partner, nor choose their employment, and in which they did not own the proceeds of their labour.

If we look at Jesus compassionate attitude to women elsewhere, especially those not treated well by

this socio-economic use of women as sexual partners and home-managers, such as the Syro-Phoenician woman or the woman at the well, we see a man who is aware of the low status of women and yet also sees their humanity for what it is.

In which case, maybe when he speaks about 'hardness of heart' he is referring to the system in which women are not free in any sense of freedom we would understand today. If a person in modern society wished to model their ethics of marriage on the marriage of Jesus' day that would be to take on a system of arranged marriages without women's right to choose in which those women had no education, no property rights, no feminine sanitation, no access to contraception and no freedom of movement. Perhaps some would advocate a 'back to the bible' return to this system.

For most Christians in the Western world, it is unthinkable to have a society which would treat women in this way. Where we do find such a society, we speak out against it. This leaves us with a difficult text. Jesus' teaching on divorce was predicated on a society where a man divorcing a woman (and perhaps she hadn't had much choice in accepting him in the first place) was the end of her reputation, her business, her income, her social standing and the end of her relationship with her children. In this situation, divorce was as much an abuse of an unfree individual as marriage was. Does this mean Jesus would say the same thing if he were teaching a crowd in the shopping mall today?

Jesus spoke to their 'hardness of heart'. Another challenge out of this reading is whether we can follow Jesus without hardness of heart; in loving acceptance of all faithful relationships, gay or straight, whether married, living together, or civil partnerships. Where choice is an active element in any and every relationship sometimes the choice to divorce is definitely and clearly the right choice for an individual. The context of modern choice may well change our view of this teaching by Jesus on divorce. Can we soften our hearts to hear his word to us today?

God Is Still Speaking just like last week with the Hebrew Scripture

Reading from Esther. So appropriate was it 'for such a time as this'.

'Thanks to the last 100,000 years of evolution that fine-tuned *Homo sapiens*, we humans don't find it easy to think in terms of complex systems. For millennia, people lived relatively short lives in small groups, learned from quick feedback (put your hand in fire: it gets burned) and had little impact on their wider surroundings.' [Kate Raworth, 'Doughnut Economics' (Random House 2017) p. 130]

Does this describe the people of first century Palestine, the audience Jesus' was speaking to directly? If not, why not?

How do you think this quote enables us to understand the bible better in a complex age?

What does it mean to be a Christian in the modern world, at home, at work, online?

OR

Take a walk around a city or village, try to say hello to every person who passes you. Take note of their appearance, age, any features about them that seem unique. There are 7,000 million people in the world today, and that number is growing, yet each one is distinctive. Think about the child Jesus placed before his disciples. What would that child have looked like? What was the gender of the child in your mind's eye? What did the disciples learn from focusing on that one particular individual?

Prayer

In our humanity; we seek Jesus the human teacher.

In our complexity; we reach for faith to reassure.

In our doubts; we grab certainty in simplicity.

Eternal God, be with us

in a world that is dynamic, unstable and unpredictable

let our judgements not force inequality on others.

Speak not to our hardness of heart but to our softness.

AMEN



I first started listening to Krista Tippett (the program was called Speaking of Faith back then) about 12+ years ago. I haven't missed an episode since. The program is an

exploration of what it means to be human, with faith, doubt, poetry, science, human conversation, inquiry, curiosity and joy. The On Being team's approach toward curation of voice and humanity is a weekly balm.

My **Friday GRIND** has been going out to the local church since 2014 but it also goes to many who call themselves NONE or DONE meaning I have no interest in Institutional Church or 'Been there, did that, got hurt'. However, I am finding that many of the NONES and DONES do tune in to Krista Tippett. You can catch On Being via the web or on Public Radio. I consider her show part of my 'continuing education' even though it is not officially counted.

Last week I took in Adult Education on the Holy Spirit one night and Discipleship another.

The biggest problem in prayer is how to "let go and let God."

-Glenn Clark

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A Christian should never let adversity get him down except on his knees.

-Mae Nicholson

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You can keep a faith only as you can keep a plant, by rooting it into your life and making it grow there.

-Phillips Brooks, Perennials

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We hear you. We believe you. We stand with you. I Te oimos. Te creemos. Estamos contigo.

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Many of us live in the Golden Age of Memory. Talk to anybody who grew up in the '50s with *Ozzie and Harriet*, *Leave it to Beaver*, and *Father Knows Best*. It was a time when cities had vibrant downtowns and blissful suburbs, forgetting, of course, Jim Crow laws, redlining practices, and real estate covenants that protected such communities from unwanted outsiders. The fact is that nothing is forever, and nothing is all good, including the so-called Golden Age of Memory.

The great wisdom teachers speak of dying to oneself and being reborn, or losing life and finding it anew. Richard Rohr calls this process "falling upward" into the second half of life, discovering what might be described as the fullness of life.

But when I accept what has died, let go of what has been lost, and celebrate what is being reborn, I start discovering surprising gifts and strengths, a different kind of balance, a new way of living in the world. I pray with hope. You see, the author of the Letter of James was absolutely right: "Prayer is powerful and effective." We just have to be willing to accept the wisdom of Mick Jagger and Keith Richards: "You can't always get what you want, but if you try sometimes, you might just find, you get what you need."