

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

October 6, 2024



COMMITMENT

marriage is living transformed

by Drew Downs

You may have heard someone say “marriage changes you.” It should! Of course, *life* changes you. And following the way of love is *supposed* to change you. It’s what we’re signing up for!

There is a challenge for the modern person who must wrestle with the idea of being good as we are and also in need of being changed. Much of the way we talk about mental health and success in life seems to

reject the language of change, let alone transformation and repentance! Perhaps we are being too clever by half.

Committing our lives to a cause, particularly a cause of living as a new thing: not just as a spouse *within* a couple but as half of that new thing being created: is neither simple nor ordinary. It is an act of transgressive rebellion toward a new autonomy, combined grace, of embodying something completely new.

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WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Blessing of the Animals

St. Francis is perhaps best remembered for his joy and preservation of creation and his love of animals, which is why the church most commonly honors his memory in blessing pets and animals. Of our saints and practices, this is perhaps the most generous and enjoyable.

Francis was not canonized for his love of animals, however, but for his devotion and selflessness. He founded an ascetic order that would become the Franciscans in the early 13th century around the principle of living in intentional poverty, honoring God's commitment to the poor, and drawing a conscious commitment to serving the poor through poverty.

The borders of our attention: be they financial or species: restrict our vision for generosity and camaraderie, and yet also delight and joy. Francis shows how much joy and freedom is found in owning nothing and loving everything.

Join us this Sunday, **October 6** at **4 pm** in the Mabley Garden at St. Stephen's for the annual Blessing of the Animals! We will gather in the splendor of creation for a short service of prayer, blessing, and remembrance.

With love,
Drew

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FOR SUNDAY

Proper 22B

October 6, 2024

Collect

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and to give more than we either desire or deserve: Pour upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things for which we are not worthy to ask, except through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ our Savior; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

Reading

Mark 10:2-16

Some Pharisees came, and to test Jesus 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, 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

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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.

Reflection

This is one of the most vexing gospel passages because it doesn't make things very easy for anybody.

On the one hand, it seems like Jesus offers a rebuke of divorce, but such a reading scrubs the text of its context and guidance. Because such a reading doesn't then deal with the transgressive character of Jesus's teaching.

The main thing here is that Jesus thinks that, in God we are made one—and because we struggle with such a vision of unity, we have been given a means of disentangling ourselves from such commitments.

What strikes me, however, is just how much "traditional" teaching doesn't even try to define unity in the way Jesus does. Complementarianism, for example, attempts to define husband jobs and wife jobs—which isn't singularity; one flesh—but two flesh living next to each other in the most efficient (and gendered) manner possible.

Jesus acknowledges divorce as something we might call a necessary evil. But I think this is at once too pessimistic and fatalistic—and perhaps too judgy, especially from the married side of the conversation. *We need to preserve divorce for you poor people who didn't get it right* is some condescending ridiculousness.

What we need to parse is what it would actually mean to be one flesh. And I think it has a lot to do with being of one mind with another. Much like we pray that we are of one mind with God. Jesus's vision of neighbor, kinship, beloved community are far more than identity, and mean far more to him than marriage, too. There is something here to being one with those around us, in divine love and trust.

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