

**LOVE THE ONE YOU'RE WITH  
BLC – B. HULL SOMERS – 10.7.18**

***Genesis 2:18-24, Hebrews 1:1-4, 2:5-12, Mark 10:2-16***

You would think that after last week's text with hell and cutting off hands and feet we might get a reprieve and get to meditate on a healing or something, but here we are with another Scripture that has been misused through the course of church history to disastrous result, this time on the subject of divorce.

A man told me this week that in his Lutheran church growing up a woman who had been an engaged member of the community dared to come to church after she had divorced her husband and was treated as a pariah; no one would sit near or her or speak to her. I have heard of people being denied communion, asked to step out of leadership and even thrown out of churches for divorcing their spouses. And it all comes back to the way that folk have interpreted the Scripture and used it against their siblings in Christ.

Marriage was a completely different animal in the first century. In that time there was no falling in love and planning the perfect proposal and getting married. No. All marriages were arranged by the family. One married whomever their parents and family decreed to be a good match and most beneficial for the family. Did you like the way they looked? Who cares! Do they also like piña coladas and getting caught in the rain? Didn't matter.

A good family likely wanted their children to have a good match and be stable but being happy with the match was of no concern. To try and compare our current culture of romance marriages that are primarily focused on two individuals and do not include clans of families and intricate land and trading ties is inappropriate.

One of the terrible byproducts of the heavy-handed, rudimentary and judgmental readings of these Scriptures is that it has caused many to stay in difficult, abusive and miserable marriages. And many more have felt that they had to choose between their own emotional and physical safety and the church that they loved.

So, before we go any further into these Scriptures this morning, I have a message for those of you who have been divorced: as I stand in this pulpit this morning with my vestments that remind us all of our yoking to God and 2018 years of church history and my position of leadership in this place and in the ELCA: I am sorry if any pastor or Christian has ever made you feel like you did not belong or you were in some way less of a child of God because of your journey. You are beloved, you are welcome here, your divorce does not define what we think of you or what God thinks of you, we are grateful that you are here and we embrace the gift of God's resurrection life with and for you. Full stop.

Now we can unpack and explore what Jesus was communicating to the disciples. He was not asserting that no one should divorce anyone anywhere ever; he was using marriage as a metaphor of what it means to live humbly and faithfully in the life we are given. To choose to love the life that we have and be filled with the love of God.

Jesus, remember, was never married. One does not have to be married to live a holy, faithful, and fulfilling life. Jesus is a beautiful example of this. And this Scripture is for everyone this morning regardless of relationship status. Love the ones you are with, embrace the life that you have been given.

God has created us to be in relationship with Godself, with one another and with the created world. Everything is connected. The way we live in even in our most domestic and

unobserved moments matters. Since my dad died I have had a different sense of the fragility of creation and its interconnectedness. It has stopped me in my tracks when I see something beautiful in the world. My relationship with him has slipped off the tracks of father and daughter getting to laugh and hike together and share meals and has become something different. But the primacy and strength of that relationship – mundane as it seemed on days when he drove me to soccer or taught me to ski – has formed me and has changed me because it affects how gently and boldly I live. Our relationships – however mundane – can do this.

Jesus did not get married but he had many very close friends. When he was at Martha, Mary and Lazarus's place, he was home. When he hung out with John or bickered with Peter or had a meal with Mary Magdalene, he was embracing his earthbound life.

Jesus spread His love around to as many as He could connect with – showing how powerful day in and day out mundane life can be. He did not only heal and perform miracles. He had meals and he walked many miles with his friends and he did chores and he bought things at the market. Whether he was wandering in the chaos of the wilderness with the disciples or given hospitality in one of his many followers' tables, he loved the ones he was with.

And this normal life teaches us as profoundly as the highlight reel.

Today's Scripture is not about divorce; it is about honoring the life that we have. Jesus' teaching is about the primacy of relationships. With one another. With the created world. With our dogs and cats and birds – for those of you who came to the blessing of the animals yesterday you know the ways that animals can bring joy and comfort to our worlds. What we do with our relationships, with our mundane lives matters.

We must honor these moments and one another as holy.

My mother has been on her own journey of a marriage ending – through death. She has been very, very sad but also has been busy with the richness of relationships and life that she has in San Antonio – her church, her clubs and her friends and family. Recently, I was on the phone with her while she went for a walk. It was near the end of school and she was walking by a local high school. As we talked, she said, “Oh, look at those teenage boys. They think they’re so cool with their shirts off and their pants hanging down. I am going to give them high fives.” And she proceeded to start to say, “Hey! High fives! High fives for the old grandma!” I heard chuckling and a young man say, “Have a nice day, ma’am!”

It was such a beautiful mundane moment. A seventy-six-year-old widow and grandmother with a shock of white hair walking down the street. She could have just remained invisible as she has been so sad, no one would blame her but she chose to spread encouragement and joy.

God intends for us to live in relationship and community. And in community as we love each other, care for each other, serve together, laugh together; we become the Body of Christ that is a safe haven for all, loving the ones we are with – ourselves, our pets, our partners, our kids, the greater community.

You, church, beautifully love the ones you are with. I watch as you love each other and it is a wonder to behold. You care for each other and tease one another and live your mundane lives to the Glory and service of God.

It is changing the world. The way you stand in line to pick up your kid at preschool. The way you listen to your co-worker’s woes. The way you hug your children when they are sad. The

way you bake cookies for coffee hour. The way you follow up on a conversation with care and compassion. The way you give your spouse or best friend the space to be themselves. Your relationships are holy and true. Your mundane lives are proclamations of the Gospel. Your willingness to hope is a claiming of Jesus' resurrection life.

Your hospitality is safe haven for the world. You are the Body of Christ. Amen.

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