

## **“Sharing One Cup, Sharing One Bread”**

Mark 10:2-16

About 2,000 years ago, the Jewish community was divided, regarding whether or not divorce was lawful or permitted from a religious point of view. So, some Pharisees, religious elites, who were lawful people, came to Jesus, a young rabbi, to test him. They asked, “Does the Law allow a man to divorce his wife?” I think they were testing Jesus to see how he would interpret the Law of Moses, which appears in the first five books of the Old Testament.

Genesis may certainly be cited as divorce-resistant. Genesis, chapter 1 affirms that humankind is made in the image of God, male and female. To be made in the image of the one God certainly carries with it the connotation that male and female also are to be one. This point is really driven home in the Genesis 2 creation account, which says, “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.” (2:24)

No two people with sincere hearts expect divorce when they get married. Divorce, however, happens to couples. So there are laws within the Old Testament, addressing how divorce could be made “official.”

Instead of answering the Pharisees’ question, Jesus asked them, “What did Moses command you?” They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a divorce certificate and to divorce his wife.” Their response is: “Moses said ‘Yes, divorce will happen and can happen and there is a lawful way of getting a divorce.’” The Pharisee’s answer is based on the book of

Deuteronomy 24: 1-4. It says that “If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something ‘objectionable’ about her,” he needs to write a certificate of divorce and state the grounds why he is divorcing his wife. At that time, only men could divorce their wives, but not vice versa. Please bear with me, especially women! These laws were written sometime around the tenth or eleventh century B.C. -- in a very male oriented society.

At the time of Jesus, divorce was generally allowed but its grounds were a matter of debate. One school of thought, headed by Rabbi Shammai, held that a man could not divorce his wife unless he found in her something objectionable (presumably something other than adultery which could be cause for her being stoned -- not just divorced). In contrast, another school, headed by Rabbi Hillel, held that even a matter as small as spoiling his food provided adequate grounds for divorce. The difference arose from the interpretation of the unusual and grammatically puzzling Hebrew phrase which the New Revised Standard version translates as “something objectionable.”

Whether divorce is lawful or not in the Old Testament depends on which Scripture is chosen and quoted, Genesis or Deuteronomy. The grounds for divorce were debatable, according to how the words, “something objectionable,” were interpreted.

The Jewish community was divided about marriage and divorce -- which is more lawful, which is more Scriptural, which is or is not allowed in religious society.

Today, the body of Christ is split and divided. Some churches still do not ordain women to the priesthood -- including the Catholic Church and some more conservative churches within the Protestant faith. They use Scripture to support their course of action. Churches ordaining women clergy also use Scripture to support their decision.

Some churches ordain gay pastors; others strongly oppose it.

Some Christians welcome gay marriage. Some don't.

Some Christians advocate for stronger gun control. Some oppose it.

Some Christians support the death penalty. Others oppose it.

Some Christians vehemently oppose abortion. Some are a bit more lenient, depending on the circumstances.

**All are likely to cite scripture passages to support their particular practices and beliefs.**

Within this congregation too, I'm sure there are different degrees of "yes" and "no" on the issues I mentioned.

Today is World Communion Sunday, the Sunday to celebrate oneness in Christ throughout the world. Yet the body of Christ has been split over various issues -- beliefs and practices.

It's easy to commune with and to celebrate communion with those who think like us, act like us, look like us and feel like us. It tends to be much harder for us to see those who express different opinions, don't share our perspective and often stand on the opposite side of an issue as our brothers and sisters.

Yet, on this World Communion Sunday, Christ invites us to see in every person the image of God, to see each person as our brother and sister, for whom Christ offered his life. ONE body of Christ was sacrificed for us. ONE cup of suffering, drunk for us all.

Sometimes our minds divide us – theology, opinions, interpretations and even beliefs – whereas our hearts often unite us.

I think all of us were deeply moved by the testimonies, messages and sharing of their work in the Philippines by Grace and Jay Choi, the missionaries we have been supporting, who came to our church on Sunday, June 21. Their dedication to and love for the --students at a college, indigenous people, poor exploited farmers, children with cleft lips and autistic child they helped to come out of a closed room in his house -- touched our hearts. We could see Grace and Jay as our sister and brother, even though we met them for the first time, and the people they have ministered to, as our brothers and sisters, even though we have never met them.

On this World Communion Sunday, let us be challenged by Christ, who offered his body and the cup of suffering, to see or find the image of God in every person we encounter. In doing so, may genuine respect and care for every person be generated in our hearts, even though we may be different in the way we think, act, feel, look and speak. Let us BE the Body of Christ, reaching out to one another.