Join in the Creation, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 18091004
Psalm 8 and Mark 10:2-16
Elon Community Church, United Church of Christ, 4 October, 2009

There is a beautiful arrangement of flowers on the buffet in the narthex. The flowers are from a wedding yesterday, my two hundred thirty-fourth and one of the last of my professional career. As I officiate at weddings, I know full well that fifty percent of them are statistically likely to end in divorce. My stock words to a couple asking about a wedding is, "I can't tell you whether you can get married or not, but I'll help you have the best marriage you can have." I know that if I say "No" to their request, they will go down the street and find someone else who will marry them, someone who may not do any pre-marital counseling at all.

I require at least four pre-marital sessions with couples during which we review the strengths in their relationship and the areas that they need to work on. What are the gifts that each brings to the marriage, and how can they best communicate with each other and resolve conflicts? Such counseling is no guarantee that the couple will remain married. Each marriage involves risk and is often affected by family histories, one's desire to rescue another, unrealistic expectations, and narcissistic attitudes. I don't know of anyone who came to the chancel not intending to keep their vows to remain wedded to each other until they die.

As we hear Jesus' words on divorce, we squirm in discomfort. This is one of those hard teachings of Jesus. There are those, sitting in any church on a Sunday morning, who suffer the guilt, shame and pain of divorce. The church should not be a place of guilt and shame. Rather, it should be a place of kindness, compassion and love. I applaud the woman or man who's had the courage to leave an abusive relationship. God did not intend for people to live in suffering and pain. The church should provide not judgement, but support – support for both parties in a divorce, and especially, support for any children involved.

Many Christians want Jesus to have been a legalist. They want to ask the questions the Pharisees asked. "Is this lawful or legal?" They want the security of definite answers and strict boundaries. They want, as Tom Erich says, "to be God's agents in meting out punishment."[1] But Jesus was not a legalist!

Keep in mind the fact that this section of scripture began with the Pharisees trying to trap Jesus. "...to test him they asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?'"[2] Jesus frequently violated the law of Moses because he saw that human hunger and pain mattered more than law. Forgiveness and inclusion mattered more to Jesus than punishment and boundaries.

The amazing thing to me is that even with a fifty percent chance of failure, people are still coming to the chancel to promise themselves to each other, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, and to remain faithful to each other for as long as they both shall live! That is a miracle! That is one of the wonders of life, and something to be celebrated in the church. Remember that the only commandment Jesus gave was for us to love each other.[3]

The Psalmist wrote, "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and

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[1]Tom Erich, Morning Walk Media, onajourney.org, 9/28/2009

[2]Mark 10:2

[3]John 13:34

the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor."[4] God has created humans with bursts of colors and choruses of voices. Each one certifies that there is a God and that God cares about each one!

Did you ever watch as a child was born into this world? Did you marvel at how this person, the result of love between man and woman, could take shape and grow? Did you wonder at how it could gulp that first breath of air and scream for life and praise God as the author of creation? "Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger."[5]

Into the midst of the serious debate about divorce, some parents came to Jesus and asked him to bless their children. As important as the debate about divorce was, and it was a life and death issue for Jesus, he affirmed that the children were more important. Babes and infants silenced Jesus' avengers.

I don't think Pharisees as a group were really God's foes. In their way, they were trying to glorify God. Some were a little mixed up. They thought they knew exactly what God wanted. They thought they could take God's place and do God's judging.

God's real enemies are those who would deny God's creative diversity, those wanting to re-create humans (and God) in their image. We deny God's creative diversity when we deny the worth of any human being. We deny God's creative diversity when we declare only one brand of Christianity, or religion, for that matter, to be the proper one. We deny God's creative diversity when we take God's place and judge others instead of looking at them as God's precious creations.

On the other hand, we take part in God's on-going creation when we make room for diversity: when we affirm those with disabilities; when we recognize the importance of children and the powerless of our world; when we recognize God as the one God, the Creator of all.

Jesus tells us to receive God's kingdom like a child. Jesus made his point using children: we are to receive God's realm with the awe, wonder, and expectation that children have. Our job is not to trip up others through arguing theological points. Our job as Christians is to accept God's love like children accept their parents' care.

Be amazed at the wonder of God's creation. God has created for us this communion table. This morning, on World Communion Sunday, we gather around to celebrate the diversity of the followers of Christ around the world. We celebrate the wonder of God's creation.

Rejoice in the fact that God loves each one of us, just as we are.

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[4]Psalm 8:3-5

[5]Psalm 8:2