

Let's Talk About It; Putting Away Stigmas in the Church

Text: Mark 10:17-31

Topic: Family: Marriage, Singleness, and Infertility

Big Idea: God's kingdom ideal is not marriage and family, but wholehearted devotion to God.

Application Point: Whatever our calling in life—single or married, parent or not—God is able to bring fulfillment, purposefulness, and joy to our experience as we are obedient to his call.

Talking Points:

1. The nuclear family has been a symbol of American ideals for as long as we can remember. And, certainly, marriage and family are important. God has chosen marriage to illustrate the loving bond between Christ and the church. The relationship of parents to children is emphasized in the many teachings of Jesus about God's love for us. Marriage and family are important and foundational to our very existence. Mark 10 does not negate their importance but challenges the believer to recognize that with or without marriage or family, Jesus and the kingdom give us an eternal answer to our longing for relationship and family.
2. Mark 10:1-10 Religious leaders ask him about marriage and divorce, and he exposes how they are missing the point. Our passage focuses on his next interactions, with a group of children and a rich young man, about the nature of the kingdom of God. People were bringing their children to Jesus for a blessing, and it was really getting on the disciples' nerves (v. 13). Jesus instead welcomed them, saying, "to such belongs the kingdom of God" (v. 14), and warned them that whoever doesn't embrace the kingdom with the wholeheartedness of a child will not receive it (v. 15–16). The emphasis is on the fact that children will receive and don't feel they have to earn everything they get. Children are in a place where often all they can do is receive. This should be our mindset.
3. Next, Jesus encounters a man who is seeking the path to eternal life (v. 17). Jesus challenges the man's assumptions by reminding him of the commandments, but the man says he has kept them honorably. Jesus lovingly and very specifically calls out his truest weakness—something that is different for each of us. He tells the man to sell everything, and the man knows Jesus has hit the nail on the head (vv. 18–22). The same affliction, trusting in our strength and earthly treasure instead of in God, trips many of us up from understanding, receiving, and living for the kingdom. If this guy can't get into the kingdom, how does anyone (vv. 23–26)? Jesus tells them that only God can make the impossible happen (v. 27). Peter reminds Jesus that they actually had "left everything" (v. 28). Jesus replies that nothing lost in this life can compare to the things that are to come—and that includes family, children, and possessions (vv. 29–30).
4. Many in the church have been raised on the understanding that if we lived our lives right, God would reward us with an attractive spouse and a couple of adoring and obedient kids didn't work out for many. Our experience proved that this idea is merely another spin on the prosperity gospel. It fails to consider that God will call some to a life of singleness or childlessness. The Bible does not promise us a life that is absent from loneliness, heartbreak, or loss, but it does promise us good. In "Mark 10:29–30, Jesus promises us something greater than spouses to fill our loneliness; He promises a family within the Church. It's a family of brothers, sisters, mothers and children that transcends marriage and blood relationships, with God as Father. We are assured a family within the Church".
5. What is one of the first things you ask someone when you meet them? "Are you married?", "Are you seeing someone?" or "Do you have any children?" For many of us our identity becomes synonymous with being married or whether someone calls us mom or dad. But we are more than those things. A Christian's identity is firmly rooted in his union with Jesus Christ. Whatever our calling might be—single or married, parent or not—it is God's intention let each of us know of our glorious purpose, to let us know about his supreme sufficiency to satisfy every need, and to let each of us know about our supreme worth to be loved by God and his church."
6. The next time you hear a Christian equate marriage with godliness, or say something about marriage and children being the best things in life, or express the thought that "you're not complete unless you're married," stop a minute and consider these ideas from the perspective of a person who's single and childless, and not necessarily by choice. Imagine how brutally these words might fall on your ear if you had no spouse and no children.