



The Priority of God

Mark 10:1-31 | Mark Friestad | January 22, 2023

With passages that challenge – because they are personally convicting, because they seem overly “judgy”, or because they point to past hurt – we might:

- A. Ignore or Minimize – “I like to focus on the positive parts of Jesus’ teaching
 - a. But, every episode recorded in scripture fleshes out the full picture
 - b. Not every episode is of equal importance
 - c. There are even things Jesus did that aren’t recorded! (John 21:25)
 - d. The full picture will be revealed in heaven
- B. Contradict it – “It doesn’t at all mean what it says”
- C. Dismiss it as culturally bound – “That was then, this is now”
- D. Grapple with it:
 - a. Let it read as it reads!
 - b. Use discernment to try to understand
 - i. Why did the author include this?
 - ii. Is there a timeless principle that carries to today?
 - iii. Or, was it situation-specific?
 - iv. Or, culturally specific only?

Mark 10:1-12 – Pharisees want to “test” Jesus by finding out whose “side” he was on – divorce in the case of adultery, or divorce for any and every reason

Jesus re-casts our understanding of the marriage relationships

- People (men) are not the Lord of their marriages
- God is the Lord of marriages! Marriage uniquely comes from him
- All broken relationships break God’s heart
- God is a purposeful God. The Creator gets to define the purpose of the created thing.

**This passage also speaks to the difference between HAVING the truth and HANDLING the truth carefully

- Jesus was answering a question
- His teaching on divorce was not the central theme of his ministry
- Jesus’ primary mission wasn’t to come to earth to condemn divorced people.
- *What’s the flag you’re flying at the front of your Christian parade?*
- His was, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”
- All other teachings are & were secondary
- Likewise, it’s ok to believe in God’s truth as it pertains to all manner of subjects – BUT – let’s keep the core gospel message central. Other issues are peripheral.

Mark 10:13-16 – Jesus welcomes the children

Kids, low in status in Jewish society, would not have been seen as worthy of Jesus’ attention. But they are not mere object lessons in this story! Jesus actually welcomed them and blessed them.

We need to take kids seriously, spiritually: telling them the truth, and also paying attention to the influences that are forming them.

Jesus was *indignant*: It is a *sin* to construct barriers between children and Jesus.

Mark 10:17-31 – The Rich Young Man

“We have to sell everything we own to be saved” is a too-simple interpretation of this passage.

- Rich young man’s sin was *omission* – what he didn’t do – rather than *commission*.
- He was too committed to his material goods
- He believed his conduct was “good enough” for eternal life
- Respectability and holiness (righteousness) are not the same thing!

“Who, then, can be saved?” – what use is the Law if it doesn’t justify?

A: “All things are possible with God.”

- We need a power outside of ourselves
- That requires an ongoing humbleness

Thinking It Through

In your own words – based on Mark 10:1-31, what would you say are the priorities of God?

- Honestly reflect and then share: To what extent do you share those priorities?

What’s your tendency when you come across a Bible passage you wish wasn’t there - either because it’s personally convicting, it seems overly condemning, or it points to an area of personal pain?

- A. Ignore or Minimize the passage
- B. Contradict it (“It actually doesn’t mean that”)
- C. Dismiss it as culturally bound (“That was then; times have changed”)
- D. Grapple with it

What’s “the flag you’re flying at the front of your Christian parade”? In other words, what do outsiders see you representing when it comes to Christianity? Do they see and hear, in your words and actions, the gospel of repentance and redemption and renewal? Or something else?

- How might you need to correct in order to make your gospel witness more pure?

What are some barriers that Christian churches might put up that prevent children from getting to Jesus? Do you see any of those operating in our church? In you, personally? What do you see as your role here?

What have you possibly overly committed to that’s keeping you from coming to Jesus with empty hands?

- Even if God is in it...it can become a source of self-righteousness. What are some practical things we can do as believers to guard against pride and self-righteousness, to keep ourselves humble and dependent on God?