

Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again.

² The Pharisees came and asked Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce *his* wife?" testing Him.

³ And He answered and said to them, "What did Moses command you?"

⁴ They said, "Moses permitted *a man* to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss *her*."

⁵ And Jesus answered and said to them, "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. ⁶ But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.'^[a] ⁷ 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh'; ^[b] so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

¹⁰ In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same *matter*. ¹¹ So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. ¹² And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

¹³ Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought *them*. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw *it*, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. ¹⁵ Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it." ¹⁶ And He took them up in His arms, laid *His* hands on them, and blessed them.

¹⁷ Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, "Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"

¹⁸ So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good but One, *that is*, God. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Do not defraud,' 'Honor your father and your mother.'"^[c]

²⁰ And he answered and said to Him, "Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth."

²¹ Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me."

²² But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

²³ Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" ²⁴ And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches^[d] to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

²⁶ And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, “Who then can be saved?”

²⁷ But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men *it is* impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.”

²⁸ Then Peter began to say to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You.”

²⁹ So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife^[e] or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, ³⁰ who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ But many *who are* first will be last, and the last first.”

Introduction

We have been going through Mark’s Gospel each month before Communion for about 15 months now. The series will probably take a total of 2 years because it is only once a month.

Recently we have discovered that Jesus has started to teach His disciples that He must die and be raised again from the dead. (Chapter 8: v. 31 7 9: v.31)

The disciples struggled to understand what Jesus was talking about.

The reason for this is that the mind–set of the disciples was quite different from the mind of Jesus.

Jesus was trying to communicate something important to his close disciples, but they **weren’t understanding it.**

Their idea was of a “**Triumphant Messiah-type King**” who does not suffer.

Jesus had to die because of the desperate state of humanity.

Jesus also taught his disciples the need for sacrificial discipleship.

If Jesus is prepared to die for them, then they must be prepared to die too.

(Mark 8: v. 34-38 in the N.L.T.)

³⁴ Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. ³⁵ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. ³⁶ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? ³⁷ Is anything worth more than your soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Jesus was trying to explain to his disciples that the sacrificial life was the way to glorify Jesus in their life.

The disciples seemed to want to play “**power-games**” and be concerned about “**status**”.

They clearly **didn’t understand the life of discipleship.**

So far Jesus has given us a number of examples of the kind of discipleship that is required in order to enter into His kingdom.

1. **A total prayerful dependence on him.** – Mark 9: v. 29
2. **Humility in service, no matter whom you are serving.** – Mark 9: v. 33-37.
3. **An understanding of the seriousness of sin and the consequences of refusing to follow the difficult path of discipleship.** – Mark 9: v. 42-48
4. **A trust in the providence and sovereignty of God, even to use unbelievers to support the ministry of Jesus.** – Mark 9: v. 38-41.

In Chapter 10 some of these themes are further developed.

Before we move into chapter 10 I think that it is important that we make an application here on all that Jesus was trying to teaching his disciples in chapter 8-9.

Application

The disciples were clearly not understanding the **terms of discipleship**.

Today many Christians don't understand these terms either.

Here at O.I.C. we run a discipleship programme.

People have disciple-parents who help them to understand the terms of discipleship and **facilitate spiritual growth in their lives**.

This is done through helping the disciple students to fully understand discipleship.

In a condensed statement Jesus made it clear that discipleship involved a life of self-denial, and following in the footsteps of Jesus, whatever it costs for us to do this.

True Christians have three main enemies; the world, the flesh, and the devil.

People follow the ways of the world and conform to the standards of the world.

However, for Christian disciples that is different.

They follow the ways of Jesus and not the ways of the world.

There must be a serious commitment to surrender our lives to Jesus and then to continue each day in that surrendered life.

I hope that we don't miss nor misunderstand true discipleship.

It will cost your life, but it will be worth it.

We need clear thinking about Christian discipleship.

We now come to Chapter 10: v. 1-31.

These verses neatly divide into three sections.

In v. 1-12 Jesus teaches about the **danger of a hard heart**.

In v. 13-16 Jesus teaches about the **need for a humble heart**.

In v. 17-26 Jesus teaches about the need for **God to do a powerful work in our heart**.

1. The Danger of a Hard Heart - v. 1-12.

On first appearance it would appear that Jesus's main teaching here is about divorce.

However, the deeper issue is the hardness of the human heart.

There was no reason for Jesus or Mark to introduce the subject of divorce at this stage in discipleship teaching and training.

Therefore, at this stage we must not get too distracted about the subject of divorce, but to understand the deeper discipleship issues.

Jesus has now moved to a new area.

He is now in the region of Judea on the other side of the Jordan river.

Jesus is teaching to large crowds of people.

The Pharisees interrupted his teaching session by asking him a question that was designed to test and challenge Him.

The question was, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

Before we move on to what Jesus said we need to understand the situation at the time.

First of all, there were two Jewish factions. The Pharisees believed that Moses allowed for divorce for any reason of dissatisfaction.

Another section of the Jews believed that divorce was only possible in the case of immorality.

Finally, Herod Antipas who was in power was an adulterer.

Therefore, whatever answer Jesus gave it was going to upset somebody.

Jesus replied, "What did Moses command you?" In other words, what do the scriptures say?

The Pharisees replied, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and to dismiss her".

Moses was faced with leading a nation of over 2 million people.

He had to regulate a behaviour that threatened to destroy the Jewish nation which was built upon the family.

Moses probably hoped that things would improve and people would open to God's original plan.

Jesus introduced something into their thinking about what they failed to see.

They failed to see the key issue.

The **key issue** here as to why Moses **permitted divorce** was connected to the **hardness of the heart**.

It wasn't God's will at the start of creation to allow divorce.

God wanted people to remain married for life.

It was due to **human failure in marriages** that Moses had to introduce a system of separation by divorce.

This system had been corrupted by the Pharisees and Jewish culture to make it **too easy to divorce somebody**.

It was just a question of writing an official letter, getting it checked and with an official stamp, in order to divorce your wife.

It was too easy and gave men all the authority.

Later on when Jesus was in a house privately with his disciples, they asked him a similar question and he replied with v. 11-12.

¹¹ So He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. ¹² And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

It appears that Jesus is saying that there is **no provision for divorce**, but from other passages in the New Testament we can get a clearer idea of the Biblical understanding.

There are legitimate provisions for divorce in certain situations and we must never condemn people who have had to go through a divorce.

However, what I do know is that both people get hurt in a divorce and we need to understand that marriage is like using super glue to join something.

If you try to break apart something that you have glued with a strong glue like super glue, then **both sides of what you tried to join will get damaged**.

People who have had to go through a divorce need our prayers, not our criticism.

But today we are not considering divorce, we are considering the reason for it and for many other things in life.

The deep issue here is actually the **hardness of the heart**.

The Pharisees were more concerned on how to **evade God's Law** than how to **obey God's Law**.

This reveals that they had a **hard heart**.

People **with hard hearts** always want to **assert their rights above the clear teaching of God's word**.

These people are more concerned with what they **THINK the Bible teaches**, rather than what the Bible **ACTUALLY teaches**.

It was once said by a famous newspaper reporter that there is no such thing as a FACT, it is only YOUR INTERPRETATION of a situation.

This was the problem with the Pharisees.

They wanted to interpret the words of Moses wrongly in order to suit their situation.

This was because they had a **"hard heart"**.

Jesus says here that we will never enter the kingdom of God if we have a hard heart.

Q. How is your heart today?

2. The Need for a humble heart - v.13-16.

In v. 13-16 Jesus is teaching his disciples about the need for a humble heart.

In chapter 9: v. 36-37 Jesus had already used children as an example of what it means to be a servant.

In this passage the disciples rebuked those people who were trying to get their children blessed by Jesus.

The disciples assumed that Jesus was too great a person to be bothered with children.

They got it wrong.

By their actions they have made it clear that they did not understand the way of discipleship.

We need to be careful that we fully grasp the truth here.

Look carefully at v. 15.

I want to translate it from the original Greek translation.

The original Greek translation says: "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God, like one receives a child, shall not enter it." The N.K.J. says, as a little child.

There is a subtle difference here but it makes all the difference to the understanding and interpretation of the text.

Some people think that you have to behave like a little child in order to be a Christian. In other words, you need to take on their characteristics.

This is NOT what the text is saying in the context.

The issue is humility. In those days, to spend any time with a child, especially in public was a very humble thing to do.

You need to humble yourself and get down to their level.

So Jesus is teaching his disciples that if you want to enter the kingdom of God, then humility is required. Humility is one of the biggest reasons why people do not become Christians.

In general people do not want to admit their mistakes of sin, to admit that they actually need a Saviour, here and now and in the future when they die.

If you are not a Christian today, one of your problems is definitely, "humility".

You do not want to humble yourself before God.

If you don't humble yourself, sometimes God will humble you through circumstances, as He did with me when I was 25 years old.

It was painful, but it did bring me back to God, which is far better.

It is much more painful to be humbled by God, then it is to willingly come to Him in repentance and faith.

3. The need for God to do a powerful work in our own hearts. – v. 17-26.

The two incidents that we have covered so far are concluded with a story that confirms everything we have learnt.

In v. 17-22 Jesus counsels a rich young ruler.

This man was rich, young and powerful, and yet he realised that he did not have the assurance of eternal life.

The young man asks Jesus a very important question.

He says, **"Good teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?"**

In v. 18 the first thing that Jesus tries to point out to this young man is that nobody is good enough for God.

Jesus then pointed out to the young man about the 10 commandments.

Jesus was hoping that he might admit to at least breaking one of them.

The young man replied, "all of these things I have kept from my youth".

Jesus knew his heart and also all about his life.

Jesus looked at him, loved him and said, "One thing you lack..."

Jesus identified his biggest problem.

The young man's biggest problem was his wealth.

Jesus told the young man to get rid of his wealth, take up his cross and be a disciple of Jesus.

The young man wasn't willing for what was required in his life, to follow Jesus.

For all the young man's goodness, he refuses to listen to Jesus, he goes away from Jesus, rather than following Him.

The young man holds on to his wealth and is not prepared to deny himself and go the way of Jesus.

He gains the world, but loses his soul!!!

(Mark 8: v. 36.)

³⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? ³⁷ Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

In v. 23-27 there is a conversation between Jesus and the disciples about this incident with the rich young ruler.

The disciples are amazed at Jesus's illustration about the camel to go through an eye of a needle.

I think Jesus is trying to teach the disciples that entry into the kingdom of God is only through a miracle.

We know from John's Gospel chapter three that the miracle is to be "Born Again" by God's Holy Spirit.

God does this miracle when our “**hard heart**” is turned into a “**humble heart**” and we are willing to forsake all and follow Jesus.

Conclusion

Today we have discovered the danger of a hard heart. A hard heart is a heart that is not open to the teaching of Jesus about entry in the kingdom of God.

A hard heart is also a heart that does not want the authority of the Bible to rule your life. A hard heart is a heart that wants to go its own way in life. It is a heart that wants self to rule its life.

Today we have also learnt the need for a humble heart.

A humble heart is willing to admit your mistakes and admit that we are not good enough in our own strength or goodness to enter God’s Kingdom.

We need a miracle to change our hearts.

Finally, we learnt that only God can do a powerful work in our heart by His Holy Spirit.

Actually we need a “new heart” which comes when we are born again.

Q. How is your heart today?

Even if we profess to be a Christian, our hearts must remain humble!!!