

Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” 3 “What did Moses command you?” he replied. 4 They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.” 5 “It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,” Jesus replied. 6 “But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ 7 ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” 10 When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. 11 He answered, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.” 13 People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” 16 And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Things can get very complicated sometimes. That seems particularly true these days. Things that have always been wrong seem right to some people. Things that have always been right seem wrong to some people. The simple matter of gender has become so complicated it seems hard to keep up from one day to the next. Contrast that with God’s plans. They seem simple by comparison, not complicated at all. Jesus will show us just how simple it all is by answering a question from some Pharisees who had no intention of accepting whatever Jesus’ answer was. All they wanted to do was to set another one of their foolish traps to catch Jesus saying something that they could attack. They asked Jesus about divorce, but Jesus told them much more than they expected to hear. In fact Jesus gave them and us a kind of a lesson in mathematics. In God’s plan one plus one has different answers – not just two. Jesus will explain why as he tells us about marriage and divorce and children. **ONE PLUS ONE EQUALS ...**

1. Jesus had enemies among the Jewish leaders who only wanted to ruin his reputation, get people to stop following him, or just show people that he was not someone they would ever want to follow. He was certainly not the Messiah, the Christ, he was not the Son of God. That’s what they wanted to prove to themselves and the people who followed Jesus, but every time they tried to do that they only made fools out of themselves.

This is a good example of what they were trying to do. The question was, **“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”** The question seems harmless, but it was really complicated by the fact that Jewish leaders didn’t agree on the matter themselves. Besides that, the idea among some of these people was that all a man had to do was write a note and tell the elders that he didn’t want to be married anymore. People were not treating divorce the same way we do today, but they were treating it just as carelessly as many do today.

Jesus had God’s simple answer, and no one could argue with it. People try to argue about Jesus’ answer, or just ignore it, but it doesn’t change God’s simple plan. **“But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ 7 ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”** Doesn’t that provide a simple reply, God’s reply to a lot of questions troubling our times. God created male and female, two genders with two separate responsibilities working together. God unites them in marriage. We have contractual responsibilities to the state and the state pronounces a marriage to be valid, but God is the One who unites a husband and wife and when

he does **ONE PLUS ONE EQUALS ONE** – one flesh. The closest union among people on earth. Closer than father and mother to their children, closer than the union between siblings.

Then Jesus goes on to tell us that what divorce does is to break the union God has established. Marrying someone else is not the union God established. Jesus calls it adultery. To put it simply, a second marriage is not the way God planned it. Once again, people have a way of complicating their lives by trying to change God's simple plan. Of course God forgives and God continues to bless his people, but when we realize that marriage is a union that God has established and blessed we will not want to take that bond for granted, or treat a marriage as carelessly as many people do. **ONE PLUS ONE EQUALS ONE** when God unites people in the one-flesh union with the blessings of companionship, chastity, and if God wills, children. These are blessings that have carried members of our own church and countless others, through decades of blessings that only God can give. And God gives his blessings beyond anything that any of us could desire or claim to deserve. **ONE PLUS ONE EQUALS ONE.**

2. It's natural that Jesus would follow a discussion of God's plan for marriage with a lesson on God's gift of children. It's sad that the disciples had a mistaken idea about how Jesus felt about children. It's sad that some people even today make the same mistake. The disciples wanted to get rid of the people who brought their children to Jesus. Can't you hear them? "Don't bother Jesus. He's busy, too busy to waste time with kids." Jesus' reaction was quick and loud. He was indignant. He didn't just tell the disciples not to send these people and their children away. We might have heard him say, "Hey! What are you doing? Get those people back here right now. Those children are important and very important to me." What followed has become a beautiful picture that some artist's imagination recorded. The beautiful picture of Jesus holding little children on his lap and in his arms shows just how much Jesus wants us to bring children to him. That way, **ONE PLUS ONE EQUALS THREE**, maybe more, maybe two, maybe three, maybe seven because God's plan is for us to live the fact that children are a blessing that only God can give and he gives each new life as a precious gift.

We could say a lot about what happens when children are not considered a gift of God, too often not even a life worth saving. We all know more than we want to about that. Let's think instead about how Jesus wants us to bring our children to him. Our children are sinners just like we are. They need forgiveness just like we do. They will not find forgiveness in Jesus by themselves. They need parents who love them enough to bring them to Jesus. That's why we have Concord Lutheran Academy. That's why we have California Lutheran High School. That's why we will be starting our Sunday School next week. We not only want to bring our children to Jesus, we want desperately for them to know Jesus and his forgiving love as well as the guidance for life that his Word gives us.. We want them in our family, but even more important, in God's family. Is it easy? No. Is it worth doing? **ONE PLUS ONE EQUALS** the beginning of a family that has everything it will ever need because it has Jesus in the family circle.