

MA TE KORERO,
KA ORA:
THROUGH
CONVERSATION,
COMES
WELLBEING

*Reflection for Friday 1st October 2021 at St
John's Theological College*

*Gospel reading for Sunday 3rd October,
27th Sunday in Ordinary Time: Mark 10: 2-16*

by Dr Paul Reynolds

MARK 10:2-16

Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

"What did Moses command you?" he replied.

They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."

"It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied.

"But at the beginning of creation, God 'made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.'

So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.

When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. 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. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

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My focus for the reflection this week is on the gospel passage, Mark 10: 2-16, with an emphasis on the lesson that Jesus was teaching. In this passage there are two connected stories that exemplify the love Jesus had for all, especially those who were vulnerable:

1. The Pharisees were testing Jesus, asking him if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife.
2. The disciples rebuked people bringing children to Jesus, thinking this would be a hoha to him.

This was a time when women and children were seen and not heard, considered as chattels and as property. They had no rights, apart from those granted by their father, then for women, by their husband.

Jesus understood the position of vulnerability that both women and children were in during this time, where women in particular could quite easily be left abandoned on the side of the road if a husband decided their wife was not performing her duties according to his will.

As we know, the place of women and children in some cultures and societies is open to exploitation, abuse and neglect. Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and the disciples for their lack of heart and compassion, and for their disregard for the protection of the vulnerable. Although there are human laws, they were not written to protect all.

This week is Mental Health Awareness Week (MHAW). The theme this year for MHAW is 'Ma te Korero, Ka ora: Through conversation, comes wellbeing.'

Mental health awareness is important for us all, especially during this challenging time of lockdown, and especially for Tamaki Makaurau being in lockdown for six weeks now.

We read and hear on the news, and some of us know within our own whanau, of the stories of hardship for whanau and businesses, and the strain this causes. For those who are already impacted by unwellness, they have a greater challenge to carry on and survive.

There is a growing understanding and awareness now of mental health. This week provides an important opportunity for us to talk openly about mental health and wellbeing, and to check in on one another. We have all read the articles saying it is ok to say 'I am not coping,' and to talk about it with those you trust. Heck, not only this week but whenever we feel we need awahi and support, we need to talk to one another. This is a time to be gentle and kind to one another, and to ourselves. At different times, we are all vulnerable.

May the blessing of the Lord be upon you all, and all your whanau and loved ones.

"And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."

Mark 10: 16