

About the Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost
Theme: The Radical Implications of the Kingdom of God
+ highlighting the Scriptures for the week +

Although two of today's lessons discuss marriage, this Sunday, like those which precede and follow it, is about the kingdom of God and what is required of those who are given citizenship in that Kingdom through the gracious gift of God. In the kingdom "both the one who makes [us] holy and [we] who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call [us] brothers [and sisters]" (Hebrews). Members of a family reflect similar traits. The image of the eternal God which is in Christ is also in us. That image is not yet perfected in us as it has been in Him (Hebrews 2:10), yet the Spirit of Christ in us shapes us so that we can recognize and desire the will of God despite the hardness of our hearts.

Only as little children, attentive, trusting, accepting, are we able to receive the kingdom of God and be imaged in the likeness of our Father (Mark 10:15). Thus it was at the creation. Then Man and Woman found in each other the good which God had placed in the world. Jesus' warnings against divorce seem radically new and severe to our ears, dulled as they are by the spirit of our age. Yet His Words are an affirmation of the way things were always intended to be in the beginning. In the kingdom children should delight in the good gifts given them, even as was the case in the infancy of our race. Our inability to rejoice in another's presence reflects an "adult" hardening of hearts that results from our continued eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Yet there is forgiveness for us as there was for Adam and Eve. Because Jesus Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help us when we are tempted (Hebrews 2:18). Therefore, in our gathering together in Jesus' name we recall to one another the Lord's "ancient laws" and find comfort in them (Psalm 119:52).

WEEKLY BIBLE READING SCHEDULE

Use the schedule below in your personal devotion. The first three readings are the lessons read today; the last three will be read next Sunday. The Wednesday reading is the psalmody for the week. Each day you may want to pray that psalm or the prayer printed in our service folder today, followed by the suggested reading and your personal requests and thanksgivings to our heavenly Father.

Sunday	Genesis 2:18-24 What was not good in God's perfect creation? What did He do about this? What is the essence of marriage in God's plan? How is this done?
Monday	Hebrews 2:1-13 How was Jesus like us in His suffering? How are we like Him in His holiness? How are we by faith related to Him? What does this mean?
Tuesday	Mark 10:2-16 What is marriage intended to be in God's plan? How can this be honored by those who are single? By those who are married? How is this done?
Wednesday	Psalm 128 What does the psalmist equate with 'fearing the Lord'? Why? What are the results of such blessing? With what (whom) does true blessing begin (see. v. 5)? This psalm is called a 'song of ascent.' Why?
Thursday	Amos 5:6-7, 10-15 What was the problem in Israel? What is the threat against unrepented sin? What are the fruits of repentance? What is the gift of faith? How is this done?
Friday	Hebrews 3:12-19 A "sinful, unbelieving heart" is another way to describe a lack of repentance. Why is it important for a Christian to allow God's Word to work repentance in his heart? What happened to the Israelites in the desert who rebelled? What danger do we face if we allow sin's deceitfulness to take root in our hearts?
Saturday	Mark 10:17-22 Of all the commandments, which was the main problem for the rich young man? What was Jesus' attitude toward him? What directive and invitation did He give him? To us? Why is salvation always a miracle?