

Issues of broken relationships always gather more attention than healthy ones! For some reason we take ONEness for granted, and maybe that is why relationships fail. When attention is not paid to what keeps a relationship strong, they can quickly disintegrate. And then there is divorce, a shooting, a war. That is what makes the headlines, brings Presidents to the Rose Garden, but dealing with symptoms rather than disease doesn't end disease.

When we are preoccupied with who is the greatest, we have involved ourselves more in separation than in building community. This is nothing new, and why Jesus spent so much of his ministry on restoring what has been lost. One definition of “SIN” is that it is the loss of “oneness.” When no longer ONE with God or each other, “relationship” is lost. And that is painful and tragic reality of what we call SIN. Such disunity is contrary to God's creative intent of harmony, and peace. Especially tragic is divorce, because it breaks a special *oneness intended from beginning*.

Jesus is not interested in condemning broken lives, but in restoring what has been lost. To fix what has been broken. To heal what has been hurt. Jesus came into a broken world to restore the unity that sin destroys. Marriage is a wonderful example of what this all means, for nowhere do we see more clearly the joys and the sorrows, the potential and the pain, when the unity of a man and a woman is destroyed.

And whether one is married or not, understanding how Jesus deals with marriage and divorce indicates how God's love deals with any relationship. Divorce, whether legal or not, is not the issue but merely a symptom of the brokenness of an imperfect world. Just because divorce is legal, doesn't mean it is good. Just as the legality of abortion doesn't mean that it is right or desirable. Sin is sin, and a broken world is the one in which we live.

Both firefighters and the Marines are famous for “leaving no one behind!” Whether it is in a burning building or a struggle in some far-off land, their ONEness means that no one will ever be left alone, regardless of the price paid to “leave no one behind.” Jesus' goal is to do that in a more perfect and eternal way.

Hebrews 1:3 reminds us that Jesus is the “reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of his very being.” IN other words, Jesus didn't leave “God behind” or back in heaven as he joined us on this earth. Instead, he brought heaven to earth and earth to heaven. The purpose of God-in-the-flesh is that none of us would be left behind or alone.

Jesus came to a broken world, to taste our brokenness in his crucifixion and death. Then he spread a heavenly banquet for all with his miraculous gift of Easter. All was done that brokenness might be healed and ONEness might be restored. Jesus came to bring the word “ONEness” back into our vocabulary and living – to make it a new lifestyle!

And while our efforts will never be perfect, our goal is to proclaim his love in our relationships with others. Should we ever leave the “partner” we are called to serve “behind,” we are no longer partners but individuals, and individuals revert quickly to the selfishness that Satan tempts us to bite and chew into each and every day. And it matters not whether our partner is a spouse, a child, a nation, or one of God's children in another land. Love God love neighbor means always! And Jesus calls us to work to be one with each other!

It is easy to point out brokenness or to fix blame. But wherever there are broken lives, we are

invited and encouraged to be agents of healing and support, rather than side-takers who further separate the unity that has been lost.

Jesus turned aside the feeble attempt of the Pharisees to trap or discredit him with their question about marriage and divorce, using the language of Genesis to explain God's goal and Jesus' power. A man and woman complement and complete each other and through their ONENess, and in the gift of marriage, the miracle of new life and re-creation can ensue.

Our world too easily abuses this (and every) relationship in terms of what "feels good for me." Such an approach is not based on ONENess but only on me. That is a powerful illustration of the brokenness of sin, and loss of ONENess that is God's gift.

Genesis is not intended as a *scientific explanation of creation* but lifts, from the beginning, God's perfect goal of UNITY and Oneness in his creation.

What a powerful expression of God's love that he would create in humanity a visible expression of the ONENess that he feels and intends in his relationship with each of us. That all might be one! In the gift of marriage, God created a relationship of oneness that mirrored (in a remarkably sublime way) our relationship God. Two opposites are united as one, and that ONENess allows for the miraculous potential of new life – a new creation.

In the same way Christ makes Church ONE with him! IN the gift of family God's plan was that the ONENess of marriage might produce the fruits of a new creation. That is the reason Holy Scripture (so often) lifts up marriage as a metaphor for our relationship with God, as two beings, completely different from each other become ONE and a new creation or is the gift in response. And what has Jesus done for me that is any more loving than that?

God's perfection complements my imperfection; His life changes my death. The incarnation is God's *marriage* to us, that the garden's lost unity might be restored! If we are ONE in Him, we are called to live in unity with Him and one another. Jesus made clear there is no difference between loving God and loving neighbor -- they expressions of the same love!

In today's text, Jesus helped his disciples (who kept missing this point about divorce) by lifting up a little child. He said, "If this little one is divorced from the oneness of community, there is no community!" To live with me is to embrace especially the lowliest treating her or him the same as I would wish to be treated. And so it is marriage, a family, and even a nation!

Having been asked, "What can I hold back on, what is the least I need to do, what is legal for me to get away with," Jesus responded. He said, "The real question is "what are you willing to give?" Or in other words, what will you sacrifice to "make the body whole again?" We know how He does that for us – how will we choose to do that for each other? It is all about the gift of ONENess, which we are called to live, to share, and protect! Amen!