

The Gathering

1 - Welcome - [OLIVER]

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Welcome to St Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow.

All of us have dreams—the way we hope things will turn out. It doesn't always go as we intended, though. And we might be left wondering where it went wrong. How did we get here? Where is God?

As we come together to celebrate this mass, let us find God with us despite any miscalculation or mix up that may have happened. In the place where we are now, God is here.

3 - Collect for Purity - [IAIN]

**Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

5 - Confession

[MAGGIE] God is love and we are God's children.
There is no room for fear in love.
We love because God loved us first.

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith.

[Silence]

God our Father, we confess to you and to our fellow members in the Body of Christ that we have sinned in thought, word and deed, and in what we have failed to do. We are truly sorry. Forgive us our sins, and deliver us from the power of evil, for the sake of your Son who died for us, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[OLIVER] God, who is both power and love, forgive you and free you from your sins, heal and strengthen you by the Holy Spirit, and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

7 - Gloria - [MAGNUS]

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

8 - Collect - [OLIVER]

Creator God, in Christ you call all to the fullness of glory for which you created them in your image. Heal our hardened hearts, renew

our obedience to your spoken will, and conform our lives to your gracious design. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever.

Amen.

The Ministry of the Word

11 - GOSPEL: Mark 10:2-16 – [MARGARET]

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark.
Glory to Christ our Saviour.

Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' They said, 'Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.' But Jesus said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, "God made them male and female." "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'

Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Give thanks to the Lord for his glorious gospel
Praise to Christ our Lord.

12 - Sermon [MAGGIE]

I have a book on my bookshelf at home, called *The Hard Sayings of Jesus*, by FF Bruce. I was given it as a present when I was a student, and I go back to it again and again. Some sayings of Jesus, the author says, are hard sayings because we're not sure how to translate them, or we don't know the historical or social context, which makes them difficult to understand. Other sayings, like the ones we have today in our Gospel reading, are hard because we do understand them – it's the implications for us that are hard.

It's tempting to skip to the end of our Gospel reading and just focus on Jesus and the children – that's easier than the rest of it. But in talking about divorce, Jesus is talking about something that is relevant to us today – I would guess that most of us here have either been through divorce, or are close to someone who has. We can't just glide past, we need to engage with what Jesus is saying.

Before we look at what Jesus says, let's think about what the pharisees are up to. They are doing what the pharisees do so often – they ask a seemingly straightforward question, but with an ulterior motive.

“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” they ask. This was, at the time, a subject of dispute amongst the Rabbis, with one school saying that the law of Moses permitted a man to divorce his wife only for a serious transgression, while the other school said that divorce was permissible for trivial offences such as burning the dinner.

The question the pharisees ask is challenging enough, but they have another motive behind the question. Mark told us back in chapter 6, that Herod had married Herodias, the divorced ex-wife of his brother Philip, in breach of the law of Moses. John the

Baptist had spoken out against Herod's behaviour, and for doing so he had lost his head. If the pharisees could get Jesus to make some similar statement on divorce, perhaps Herod would do to Jesus what he had done to John.

In his answer, Jesus acknowledges the law of Moses but then takes his questioners back to first principles, to the book of Genesis where marriage is first described in the Bible. The relationship of marriage, which brings together two who are separate and makes them one, while still retaining the distinctiveness of each, this relationship echoes the mystery of the Trinity, that our God is three distinct persons and yet is one God. Marriage is therefore an aspect of the image of God in us. It is a sacred tradition, and if God joins two people together, who are we to separate what God has joined?

When they are away from the crowd, the disciples ask Jesus again about the subject. Jesus gives them a blunt answer – if you divorce your wife or your husband and marry again, you will be committing adultery. It is important at this point to look at Matthew's Gospel, which tells of this encounter at ch19. In Matthew's version, Jesus does not give a blanket prohibition of divorce but instead names some circumstances in which divorce may be permitted. Matthew's words mitigate somewhat the words we heard from Mark, and taken with Jesus's acknowledgement of what is laid out in the law of Moses, suggest that Jesus is not seeking to establish an absolute prohibition of divorce, but to root discussion of divorce within the wider question of the divine purpose of marriage.

Jesus's words, to us as well as to his disciples, emphasise the sacredness of marriage, a relationship in which something of the image of God is reflected in humanity, while acknowledging that there are circumstances where, because of that other part of humanity that falls short of God's image, divorce is something that may be permitted.

Those who marry do so in the hope that their relationship will last a lifetime. And yet life does not always go as we hope it will.

Relationships break down and marriages end, and by God's mercy, divorce is permitted. This is not to say that divorce is the first solution to a difficult marriage. When hard times come, as they inevitably will in a marriage, those who are seeking to follow Christ will work to see if there is a way to restore the relationship, and to hold to the promises they made.

I say start by looking for ways to restore the relationship, but I would also say there are circumstances where it is the right thing to do to walk away from a relationship. The bible doesn't directly address the issue of domestic abuse, but it is clear throughout that God hears the cry of the oppressed – for example here in psalm 10:

*O LORD, you will hear the desire of the meek;
you will strengthen their heart, you will incline your ear
to do justice for the orphan and the oppressed,
so that those from earth may strike terror no more*

If this is something that you want to talk about, for yourself or someone you know, please speak to one of the clergy, who will be happy to speak to you or point you in the direction of agencies who support victims of domestic abuse.

Finally, and briefly, I want to turn to the picture of the children gathering around Jesus. When Jesus exhorts us to be like the children, we often think of pictures of innocence or simple enjoyment, which are good pictures. But children also get hurt, and when they do, they turn to their loving parent for comfort. I can remember even in my thirties, after a relationship breakdown, going to see my mum and crying like a child in her arms.

Relationships break down, and marriages come to an end. And when they do, no matter what, we can turn like little children to our loving God who is always there to hold us, in God's everlasting arms.

14 - Intercessions [TAYLOR]

Let us pray for the life of the world; that God's peace may be known and may prevail: For all in Glasgow and around the world working to find solutions to climate change;

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

For all who suffer injury, death or loss; that they may know the hope to which God call us: For the people and situations near to us in need of our prayers, and those whose needs are known only to you;

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

For all who exercise rule and authority; that they may act with wisdom, justice, compassion and integrity: For the newly elected government in Germany; And for all involved in public health policymaking around the COVID pandemic;

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

For the Church which is Christ's body; that it may live for the praise of God: For the Church in Wales; For Kevin, our Bishop, and the churches of Holy Trinity Ayr and St Oswald's Maybole; And for our own cathedral, St Mary's, especially the Book Group, Movies at St Mary's and the Needle Arts Group;

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

For those who have died, including Violet Oltersdorf,

May they rest in peace,

And rise in glory.

Communion

17 - Offertory - [OLIVER]

Today's Scripture asks us to think about relationships and commitment.

I am grateful to all who have made a pledge to this place, committing themselves to work with others to reveal the love of God. The faithful partnering of all kinds of people is a valuable relationship on which the Church depends.

To collaborate in this endeavour, make a financial contribution online. Visit www.thecathedral.org.uk and click DONATE TO ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL.

Let us present our offerings to the Lord.

Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour, and the majesty; for everything in heaven and on earth is yours.

All things come from you, and of your own we give you.

18 - Eucharistic Prayer

[OLIVER] The Lord be with you.

[MAGGIE] **And also with you.**

[OLIVER] Lift up your hearts.

[MAGGIE] **We lift them to the Lord.**

[OLIVER] Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

[MAGGIE] **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Worship and praise belong to you, Father,
in every place and at all times.

All power is yours.

You created the heavens and established the earth;
you sustain in being all that is.

In Christ your Son our life and yours
are brought together in a wonderful exchange.
He made his home among us
that we might for ever dwell in you.

Through your Holy Spirit
you call us to new birth
in a creation restored by love.

As children of your redeeming purpose
who honour Mary, chosen mother of your Son,
and with all generations call her blessed,
we offer you our praise,
with angels and archangels
and the whole company of heaven,
singing the hymn of your unending glory:

SANCTUS & BENEDICTUS - [MAGNUS]

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord,
God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Glory and thanksgiving be to you,
most loving Father,
for the gift of your Son born in human flesh
He is the Word existing beyond time,
both source and final purpose,
bringing to wholeness all that is made.
Obedient to your will he died upon the Cross.
By your power you raised him from the dead.
He broke the bonds of evil
and set your people free
to be his Body in the world.

On the night when he was given up to death,
knowing that his hour had come,
having loved his own,
he loved them to the end.
At supper with his disciples
he took bread and offered you thanks.
He broke the bread,
and gave it to them, saying:
"Take, eat.
This is my Body: it is broken for you."

After supper, he took the cup,
he offered you thanks,
and gave it to them saying:
"Drink this, all of you.
This is my Blood of the new covenant;
it is poured out for you, and for all,
that sins may be forgiven.
Do this in remembrance of me."

**We now obey your Son's command.
We recall his blessed passion and death,
his glorious resurrection and ascension;
and we look for the coming of his Kingdom.
Made one with him, we offer you these gifts
and with them ourselves,
a single, holy, living sacrifice.**

Hear us, most merciful Father,
and send your Holy Spirit upon us
and upon this bread and this wine,
that, overshadowed by his life-giving power,
they may be the Body and Blood of your Son,
and we may be kindled with the fire of your love
and renewed for the service of your Kingdom.

**Help us, who are baptised into the fellowship of Christ's Body
to live and work to your praise and glory;
may we grow together in unity and love
until at last, in your new creation,
we enter into our heritage
in the company of the Virgin Mary,
the apostles, and prophets,
and of all God's children living and departed.**

Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory be to you,

Lord of all ages,
world without end.

Amen.

19 - Breaking of the Bread - [OLIVER]

The living bread is broken for the life of the world.
Lord, unite us in this sign.

20 - Lord's Prayer - [MAGGIE]

As our Saviour has taught us,
so we pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Do not bring us
to the time of trial
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever.
Amen.**

21 - Communion - [OLIVER]

God is with us wherever we are.

As we gaze in adoration we feed on God in our hearts and minds
that we may in turn feed the world.

O God, even as this broken bread was scattered over the hills, and
was gathered together and became one, so let Your Church be

gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom; for yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever.

Amen.

24 - Post Communion Prayer - [MARION]

Almighty God, may we who have been strengthened by this eucharist remain in your steadfast love, and show in our lives the saving mystery that we celebrate. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Amen.

25 - Blessing - [OLIVER]

My thanks go to all who have collaborated in this service to make it happen. There are many, but especially today I want to show gratitude for our new sacristans who are doing a great job.

Jesus cites hardness of heart as a shortcoming for the human race. Be more like children, he said. Be generous and open-hearted.

As we navigate the week ahead, let us find compassion in the difficult situations we find, and be gentle with ourselves and others.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord: and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Voluntary - [STEVEN]

Prelude in A (BWV 536) – JS Bach