

Jesus and the "Scarlet Woman"...

This gospel is extraordinary. Jesus meets the woman whose neighbors consider to be a whore. She comes to the well at high noon, because her neighbors who come in the cool of the morning will have nothing to do to her. And yet, Jesus does not approach when the "good and pious women."

No he arrives in the heat of the day and engages this outcast in conversation. She is evasive when he asks her about her husband because as he knows, "you have five husbands and the one you have now is not your husband!"

What about today? All we have do is look around and see that marriage as we have known it i in trouble. So many children are deprived of fathers. And do we not all know women whose husbands have left them for younger trophy wives?

So in all of this mess, where are we to find Jesus? Apparently wading into the midst of it as he dd so long ago at the well in Samaria. And what are we to make of his presence there?

Some summary thoughts:

1. He did condemn divorce in his time. And in his time it favored the man, and always the woman was judged to be the evil doer.

2. What about today? Very often in divorce one party is innocent. Are they to be condemned? If Jesus had compassion on a five time loser would he not have compassion for an aggrieved party in our time?

3. The Christian Orthodox think so. They have a pastoral remedy:

"While the Orthodox Church stands opposed to divorce, in its concern for the salvation of its people, does permit its people to marry a second or even third time...Second or third marriages bear a penitential character, and are performed by "economy" of concern for the spiritual well being of the parties concerned, and as an exception to the rule so to speak."

These are the Christians of the East. And they do possess the valid seven sacraments. So, might the Christians of the Roman west adopt such a pastoral remedy? We shall see.

What we do see in the Gospel today is Jesus encountering a woman of many failed marriages, and not rejecting her as her neighbors did. He even sends her forth as a messenger to bring good news to the village, and he offers her a well of new water which springs up towards eternal life. There is much to ponder about in this remarkable gospel.

Breakfast Question: What do you ponder about this gospel?

Personal Reflection: Do I or some divorced person I know need to talk to a kind and compassionate pastor about a marital situation?