

The Road to Jerusalem

Matthew 19–20

What We Found

- Asked about grounds for divorce, Jesus went behind Moses to the beginning: what God has joined, no human authority may sever. Moses' certificate was a concession to hard hearts, never the design.
- The disciples' shock ("better not to marry") shows Jesus taught something stricter than every rabbinic school. Catholic tradition has often understood the exception clause to concern unions that were never true marriages, which is also what an annulment declares: not a Catholic divorce, but a finding that no valid bond existed. However the clause is read, it gives no permission to dissolve a valid marriage.
- Jesus answered their shock with a second gift: celibacy embraced for the sake of the kingdom, given to some as total availability for God. Two vocations, both graces.
- The rich young man was one possession away from following; his possessions possessed him. With men salvation is impossible; with God all things are possible.
- The vineyard's householder cheated no one and scandalized the dawn shift: grace is not wages, and the denarius is eternal life, God's own gift of himself, given whole to the eleventh-hour worker.
- The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many: Isaiah 53 in Jesus' own mouth, and the reason for Jerusalem. Christ died for all, without a single exception.

Voices of the Church

Voices of the Church: St. Augustine (On Adulterous Marriages)

The bond of a consummated Christian marriage is dissolved by death alone. Separation may be permitted, but the bond endures: the Lord's appeal to the beginning admits no exception that ends a marriage God has joined.

Voices of the Church: St. John Chrysostom (Homilies on Matthew)

Jesus did not say riches are evil, but that clinging is fatal: the young man's possessions possessed him. What Christ asks, he asks as a physician prescribing freedom.

Voices of the Church: St. Gregory the Great (Homilies on the Gospels)

The hours of the vineyard are the ages of a life: some are called in the morning, some at evening. Let no one presume on a late call, and let no one despair of one; the denarius the householder pays is eternal life, which is communion with God himself.

Live It This Week

- If you are married, pray this week for your spouse by name and for one married couple under strain; if you are single, pray for the grace to hear your vocation as a call, not a verdict.
- Give something away this week that costs you: money, time, or the eleventh-hour grudge you have kept against someone God treated generously.
- Pray the Jericho prayer once each day: Son of David, have mercy on us.

Scripture Memory

Matthew 20:28 (RSV2CE): *"...even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Before Next Session

Read Matthew 21–23: the King arrives at his city and his temple.

Catechism References

CCC 1614–1615 · CCC 1618–1619 · CCC 2053 · CCC 605