

# Life Sunday Sermon “Jesus Is Pro-Family”

**Sermon Text:** Mark 10:2-16

What kind of voter are you? Now, notice I didn't ask you which candidate you voted for or even what political party you belong to. No, I'm asking you to consider what the issues are that drive you to the polls. Maybe some of you are energy voters. You want to make sure our country uses our resources to either preserve the environment or keep costs low – or both if possible. Maybe your issue is defense, so you vote for the candidate you believe will keep our military strong. Maybe, like so many others, elections for you are about the economy. There's the future of Medicare, the national deficit, health care and health insurance, taxes, jobs, welfare and entitlements. I suppose when we start talking about money the list could go on forever. Maybe you're pro-education, pro-life, pro-peace, pro-constitution or pro-liberty.

What if, though, there was an issue that trumped them all – one issue that, if we could get the whole country to focus on, would fix almost all of our woes? Impossible, right? We live in a complex society with complex issues. There's no such thing as a silver bullet – and there's probably some truth to that, but look at our sermon text for today. It's fairly safe to say if God ever condescended enough to take part in our democratic process, he would be pro-family. He's been pro-family since the beginning. Now certainly, already at creation, other issues were important to God too. There was a form of government, an economy, even a stewardship of the environment. God instructed humanity to be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth, subdue and rule over it. He gave them every seed-bearing plant for food.

But notice, of all the institutions God could have established to help humanity accomplish all of this, he established just one – the family. God intended family to be the bedrock of society. Humanity wouldn't fill the earth like the rest of the animal world. Humanity was to conceive and take care of its offspring in a committed relationship called marriage. **“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”** When God saw Adam's inability to rule and subdue the earth alone, He didn't give Adam a business partner or a vice-president, a legion of troops, or even a handful of sons to help run the farm. No, He first gave Adam a wife. The family would be the first government, the first social service agency, the first church. As families came together in communities, it was still be the family that would provide the foundation and pattern for every other institute of society. It's no wonder then, the devaluing and breakdown of the family has led to the disintegration of society and the Church.

So, are we pro-family? Do we value the family (as God intended families to be) as society's most important institution? Do we really? How many of our churches conduct far more funerals than they do weddings every year? Have we given ourselves over to the cultural shift in which so many of our young people move in together and have

children before they commit to one another in marriage? Have the sitcoms brain-washed us to believe a traditional family, with a father – who is a strong provider and leader – and a mother – who is a supportive and respectful helper – is viewed as morally appalling? Think about that... a woman would probably get more grief today if she said her husband was the head of her household than she would if she told people she was raising a couple a kids out of wedlock and might eventually get married to the guy she was living with. Men, have we given up the fight for fatherhood and headship because, frankly, it's a lot easier and lot more fun not to have to commit? Is it a lot easier to let the women do all the work? Look at our children. Look at what are kids are wearing, watching, listening to, talking about doing, and actually doing. Look at how they talk about their parents and others in authority. Have we given ourselves over to the ho-hum attitude that says, "Kids will be kids. That's how we acted when we were kids. Why should we expect them to act any differently?" And you're right, "Kids will be kids," but it's your job as parents to help them through their adolescence. Are we still ready to grill the boyfriend before he takes out our daughter; are we still ready to teach our daughters to respect themselves enough to say no; are we still ready to sit down with our sons and teach them godly respect for women and self-control?

And it would probably be a lot easier just to "go with the flow" and be cool – to give up the fight for the family. It probably is a losing battle. Friends, the fight for family is only going to get harder, but as those who are privileged to know about God's will and blessings for family, let's not be those who give up the fight.

But now we're getting to the heart of the matter, aren't we? It's not that we don't know what God's will is for the family; it's just that we don't have the desire to follow it anymore. As soon as it gets tough – we want to find a way out. Too often people do enter marriage and family life for the novelty of it all, and as soon as the fun wears off they cast it aside, just like they do all their other toys that aren't as exciting as they used to be. How many girls plan the wedding but forget to think about the marriage? Coming home to a good woman everyday sounds pretty nice, but how many guys become disillusioned by the whole thing when they find out that woman wants to share her feelings while he'd rather watch the game? How many parents don't take the time for their kids because they get in the way of their careers and their goals? We forget, don't we, that family isn't about the love we get out of it, but it's all about the sacrificial love we give to those God has most directly entrusted to our care? When sacrificing ourselves for a loved one gets to be a drag...when we're not getting what we want out of the relationship...when family life gets too boring or too hard, we look for a convenient and quick way to get out of it or get rid of it. Our sinful society has too ambitiously embraced abortion, divorce and everyday distractions in exempting us from God's ultimate design for the family.

Sometimes we think the disintegration of the family is a modern-day problem. But look at what Jesus had to deal with in our sermon text for today. The church leaders of His day tried to find an argument for lawful divorce. Jesus' own disciples treated children as an inconvenience. And the fact of the matter is you may find a Biblical justification for divorce. You may even be able to make a Biblical argument for a rightful abortion, but trying to find a loophole in God's will for family life to make us feel better about ditching

a part of our family that doesn't excite us anymore is despicable. It's selfish and loveless. The Pharisees and disciples thought they could justify their selfishness if they obtained Jesus' stamp of approval. But Jesus wouldn't do it. It would have probably been a lot easier for Him to just "go with the flow" too, but Jesus wouldn't give up the fight for marriage, family and children. He spoke clearly and decisively about God's hatred for easy divorce. He was indignant with His disciples for turning away the children.

And some might say it was easy for Jesus to talk the talk, because He never had to walk the walk. And it's true Jesus never had a wife, He never had any biological children, but Jesus still had the responsibility to love, care and sacrifice for those God entrusted to Him. Jesus was never a father, but He experienced God's anger against every dead-beat dad out there when He died on the cross. God heaped on Jesus the punishment for every neglectful mother, promiscuous teen and abusive husband, so that by Jesus' wounds the sins of the family would be healed. Long for that blessing. Long for that forgiveness Jesus purchased for you too when He died for all the times you sinned against the institution of family.

Going to the polls won't necessarily fix family life, but going to the Lord will. His blessing in Word and Sacrament will heal our neglect of those we were supposed to have loved the most. As we receive His forgiveness in the gospel, we will desire to forgive those family members who have wounded us. Just as Jesus restored us, we will restore them. When family life grows hard and when we don't get back the love we're putting in, we'll remember what Jesus sacrificed for us. Even when it meant there was nothing in it for Him – He died for us. He gave us His life so we could be His forever. What a joy and a privilege to reflect that same sacrificial love in our families, in thanksgiving to Jesus, who in His deep love for us made us His family. Amen.

**Service Notes:** This sermon is based on the Gospel for the 22 Sunday after Pentecost Year B. The readings for that Sunday are strongly family-focused. The Old Testament lesson is Genesis 2:18-24, and the Epistle is Ephesians 5:21-6:4.

Any hymns from the Christian Home section of Christian Worship Hymnal would work well for the service.