

The readings for Sunday, November 10, 2019:

First Reading: Job 19:23-27a

First Reading (Semi-cont.): Haggai 1:15b--2:9

Psalm: Psalm 17:1-9

Psalm (Semi-cont.): Psalm 145:1-5, 18-22

Psalm (Alt.): Psalm 98 (semi-continuous) (Psalm 98 (Semi-continuous) NRSV)

Second Reading: 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17

Gospel: Luke 20:27-38

This week's Gospel reading finds Jesus in a familiar situation: a group of religious leaders approach Jesus with a tricky legal question about a woman who marries seven times with no children. When she dies, who will be her husband in heaven?

It's amazing to look back over our lives and realize how many times we engage in these kind of useless legalistic arguments. Sure, they're fun at first, especially when we're children (if you had to be blind or deaf, which would you choose?) or when we're in college ("Would you rather be a free man in Sparta or a slave in Athens? Discuss"). But as we get older, I suspect that most of us find these lines of discussion increasingly tiring and tiresome.

For one thing, we already know what most people would say. Why continue to argue? I've noticed lately that political discussions usually turn into arguments, even when all the people in the room feel the same way. We're actually arguing with people who aren't really there. We already know what we think. We're just arguing for the adrenaline surge, the joy of the jolt of self-righteous anger that arguing gives us. Yawn.

Likewise, those religious leaders don't really care what Jesus thinks. They aren't confused themselves. They know what the right answer should be. They want to see if Jesus will give it.

Jesus gives his questioners a giant yawn too, and he reminds us that we are chosen for better things than this. Perhaps his remarks seem anti-marriage to you, and it's important to remember that you have to edit Jesus fiercely before you get the Family Values Jesus that some people promote. Many of Jesus' teachings warn about the pull of the worldly life, and families are a big pull.

Jesus comes to move our conversations into realms that are truly important. Who cares about marriage and all its social niceties, when our very souls are at stake? Again, and again, Jesus reminds us that important work remains left to do, and we are called upon to do it. Along the way, we should avoid those activities that sap our

energies and move us away from our true purpose. Those activities may involve our families.

Does that mean we shouldn't get married? Not necessarily. But even our family duties don't excuse us from keeping our focus on more important issues. We're not to worry about who our families will be when we're in Heaven. We're to worry about families that are alive right now.

Again, and again, Jesus tries to show us what is most important. We are called to love each other. Most of us aren't very loving when we're arguing. Move your energies to something more productive. It was true when Jesus walked the earth, and it's just as true today.