

The bell rang.

And there was the sound of books smacking shut.

The rustle of papers being shoved into folders.

The scraping of chairs across the linoleum floor as students pushed away from their desks.

And then above all that noise was this

A black rectangular box with white text that reads: "EVERYBODY STOP I DID NOT DISMISS THE CLASS".

crisp & clear commanding voice:

screen 1

“EVERYBODY STOP”  
“I DID NOT DISMISS THE CLASS”

And then, for what seemed like a *long time out* in the middle of an

action-packed sporting event (though in reality, it was only about 8 seconds or so) ... there was a gradual decrease of noise until a pall of silence descended upon the room.

screen 2

A black rectangular box with white text that reads: "NO ONE LEAVES THIS CLASSROOM UNTIL I DISMISS THEM".

“NO ONE, Mrs. McMasters said, NO

ONE

LEAVES THIS CLASSROOM  
UNTIL I DISMISS THEM.”

That was the first day of class in my 7<sup>th</sup> grade ... never forgot it.

Mrs. McMasters had the power ... and though a student or two now & then out of eagerness to be somewhere or meet someone between classes might jump out of their seat at the sound of the bell ... generally, we all knew the *McMaster's Rule*

and abided by it every day ... she dismisses the class,  
not the bell.

## MRS. MCMASTERS KNEW



screen 3

## THE POWER OF DISMISSAL

PAGE 2

Let's fast forward to my junior year

screen 4

of High School after a Friday night football game down at Danny's Pizza



... this is

where the “cool” kids would go after the game.

I was *kinda cool* (I think) ... but even in the *cool group* there were rankings of *coolness* and I wasn't in the top tier ... but I was allowed, at least to hangout with the group.

In walks Mark Lohman ... Mark wasn't cool

and the sheer neglect of his presence as he was trying to engage some others ... the sheer neglect was painful to watch.

Mark walks over to where D. J. Wilson was talking with some others.

D. J. sees him coming ... he makes eye contact with Mark;

even wears a faintly approachable smile on his lips; and  
it looks as though there will be some acknowledgement here.

And just as Mark is about

two steps from the group ... with perfect timing, D. J. turns his back,  
takes a slight shuffle left to close the circle, and  
Mark is shut out, ignored ... he was DISMISSED.

In front of us all ... Mark was dismissed ... D. J. WILSON KNEW

THE POWER  
OF  
DISMISSAL

screen 5

## THE POWER OF DISMISSAL.

Ever find yourself sitting at a traffic light

and there's a guy standing at the light on the medial strip next to where cars wait to for

screen 6



the light to turn green ... he stands there holding a piece of cardboard box,

words written on it: **HOMELESS & HUNGRY** or something to that effect.

Ever been there?

I've watched people

screen 7



as they pull up to the stoplight, I've watched them busy themselves with their cell phones or radios to avoid making eye contact with him ... I've done it myself.

Though he clearly

makes us uncomfortable as we wait for the light to turn from red to green ... choosing not to look at him at all is dismissive.

screen 8

THE POWER  
OF  
DISMISSAL

And though I don't like it ... I too, exercise the **POWER of DISMISSAL**

## Mark 10:2-16

Today we have a reading from the Gospel of Mark,  screen 9

when taken a face value, simply seems to be a judgment on divorce ... it seems plain & simple, right – to divorce is wrong and to remarry is adulterous.

**It needs to be said in this context, that the ending of a marriage is but yet another example of the brokenness of our human lives where we fall short of God's desire.**

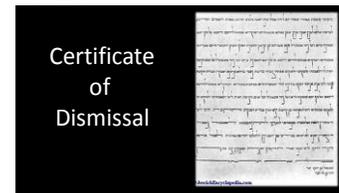
That being said, and without getting into all the details

of the Mosaic Law cited in this reading and without getting into the cultural

complexities of the male dominated Jewish society ... to take this reading at face value leads to erroneous judgmental conclusions ... and a dismissal of divorced people.

Briefly though, when a husband found something

screen 10



objectionable about his spouse, legitimate or not ... a  
Certificate of Dismissal

was all that was needed to end the union – She can't cook.

She's getting too old, whatever.

Only men could write a

Certificate of Dismissal

And the dismissal of a woman by a man in a patriarchal culture

was a sentence to a hard life of poverty,  
scorn, and

dead ends ... remember the story of Jesus' birth  
where Joseph wanted to *dismiss*[Mary]  
*quietly* so as not to *expose her to*  
*public disgrace* (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus recoiled (I think with anger) at the dismissal

of people generally, he knew that the dismissing of individuals or groups of people was undergirded & enforced by social

religious, or  
legal power structures favoring some and not others.

Such was the case with divorce in the ancient near east in the Jewish culture ... the deck was stacked in favor of men; men were not dismissed in divorce, only women and the consequences for them were grave.

PAGE 4

I find it very interesting, very interesting that the author of Mark

screen 11

ends this dialogue with the Pharisees on divorce ... Jesus ends it with four verses

<sup>13</sup> People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup> When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." <sup>15</sup> I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." <sup>16</sup> And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

about people bringing children to him and the disciples trying to turn them away.

Children, too, (like women) were a powerless group in the ancient near east ... They had no voice.

They were a group easily dismissed as is evident by the action of the disciples to shoe them away and sternly ordering the parents not to bother Jesus with their kids.



So when Jesus said,

screen 12

*"Let the children come to me; do not stop them ..."* it was a

rebuke, a

correction, a

chiding ... that the dismissal of anyone is not what God desires.

And he further makes the point with even

screen 13

It is to such as these  
that the  
Kingdom of God belongs

stronger words ... those you dismiss,  
*the Kingdom of*

*it is to such as these that*

*God belongs* - think about that (Jesus seems to be saying)  
the next time you are dismissive of anyone

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The power of dismissal is something all of us have exercised

from time to time ... it happens in the workplace, in social settings  
it happens in churches, even in families sometimes,  
it happens on street corners ... we dismiss people for purposes of  
feeling powerful maybe, out of  
convenience, perhaps ... we dismiss  
people for some perceived advantage.

But it's sobering to think ... that

whomever we might dismiss ... *it is to such as these that the  
Kingdom of God belongs.*

For myself when I line-up with the other vehicles

at the traffic light where I see that guy with the cardboard sign ... if I don't give him  
some change, I'll at least look at him, acknowledge him and say, "hello".

AMEN