

Church of the Divine Love

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SEPTEMBER 10, 2023 10:15 AM

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

Please observe silence

Prayer before worship – on insert

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn **#473 – Lift high the cross**

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (sung) page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Ezekiel 33:7-11**

Psalm 119:33-40

Second Lesson: **Romans 13:8-14**

Gradual Hymn **#493 – O for a thousand tongues to sing**

Gospel: **Matthew 18:15-20**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze (printed on insert)

The Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form VI page 392

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn **#492 – Sing, ye faithful**

Doxology (sung)	
The Great Thanksgiving:	
Eucharistic Prayer A	page 361
Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal)	page 367
Hymn during Consecration – on insert	
The Lord’s Prayer	page 364
The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer	page 337
The Communion of the People	
Communion Hymn #324 – Let all mortal flesh keep silence	
Post Communion Prayer	page 365
Prayer for Peace – on insert	
Prayer of St. Francis	page 833
Dismissal Hymn – The Power of the Cross (on insert)	
Dismissal	

Sermon Sunday September 10, 2023

Ezekiel 33:7-11; Psalm 119:33-40; Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 18:15-20.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

Last week, we learned how following Jesus means surrendering our entire selves to God, just as Jesus did. We saw how discipleship connects the Kingdom of God to our earthly existence, and stretches our earthly walk toward God’s kingdom. We saw Peter rebuke Jesus, and Jesus’ rebuke Peter, and we were reminded that taking up our cross can often put us at odds with the world, and sometimes even with each other.

What happens when a brother or sister hurts us, or we have a sharp disagreement with someone? How are we supposed to be honest and loving at the same time? How do we maintain open lines of communication to promote healing and unity within Christ’s kingdom here on earth? Today’s reading from the gospel of Matthew is part of a larger teaching on how to live in the Kingdom of God. In this passage, Jesus teaches us how to resolve conflicts so we can live together in peace. We are in community together, and because we are all sinners, it means we are going to bump up against each other from time to time. We are going to disagree with one another from time to time. We are going to hurt each other occasionally. When that happens, Jesus gives us a means for getting reconnected, for making peace, for becoming whole again. In the first few verses, Jesus gives us a process for working out our

differences that seems like a simple problem-solving method. It seems to follow a series of steps that start small, and expand as necessary: Start by addressing the one who has hurt you face-to-face. Whenever someone wrongs you, go immediately to them and tell them what is bothering you. If that doesn't work, bring along a witness who can also act as mediator or advocate. If that doesn't work, call on the resources of the larger church.

Before we can even go to the one who has hurt us, though, Christ encourages us to do a little soul-searching, to recognize our own part in the conflict. Earlier in chapter 18, Jesus tells us to cut off any part of our own bodies that cause us to sin. To do that, we have to recognize our own sinfulness. So, before we can address sin in another, Jesus calls us to look at ourselves. Answering a few questions can help us gain clearer understanding, avoid overreacting, and move us toward wholeness. The first question we should ask ourselves is, Can I let it go? If the offense is minor, and you can honestly let it go, there is no reason to confront the other person. There is no reason to create conflict where it doesn't already exist outside our own minds. But if you know this is going to keep bothering you, it's time to ask another question: What might the other person think I have contributed to this problem? Taking the time to see things from the other person's viewpoint can help us recognize what we need to take responsibility for, before we confront another.

And asking, what does God see? can give us an even broader perspective. This broader view helps us see the issue more objectively, and prevents us from allowing anger and fear to cloud our vision as we work toward resolution. We may discover that the problem we have is really within ourselves, and we can avoid causing distress in others and in the church through our own repentance and discipleship. But sometimes, that self-examination shows me how I really have been hurt by another, and allowing that wound to fester will not lead to healing. Then I must get up and go to the one who has hurt me, and tell that person what is wrong. The purpose of this step is not to get even or express my anger. The purpose here is to resolve the conflict. As I work to understand the other person's point of view, the goal is for us to work together to come up with solutions. Here's something to ponder: that word "church" only appears twice in all the gospels, and both of them happen in Matthew. Jesus also uses the word "church" in chapter 16, when he gives Simon the name "Peter." Both of these passages that include the word "church" also promise that what is bound on earth will be bound in heaven, and what is loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Jesus emphasizes that what we say and do here on earth is connected to what happens in heaven. Resolution and agreement reflect a heavenly ideal of the unity in community, and Christ promises to be with us as we seek to resolve our conflicts with one another. Christ is present among us as we work out what it means to live in the Kingdom of God, loving one another in Christ's name, seeking each other's good, showing the world what it means to live in peace.

Jesus isn't saying that we have power to dictate what will be acceptable in heaven by what we choose here on earth, any more than he is saying that we can ask for any whim to be satisfied, and simply tack on the words in Jesus' name to get what we want. Jesus says simply that he will be present in the process of seeking reconciliation, and God will honor the solution reached by two parties who actively seek God's will. We do not do this hard work of building community by ourselves, but through the power of the Holy Spirit. When unresolved issues become the center of a church's attention, the wound never heals, and the church gets stuck in crisis mode. Christ's words may seem harsh, but treating someone who refuses reconciliation as "a Gentile and a tax collector" may be the only way a church can survive

such a crisis. Here we are, back at that “Gentile and a tax collector” phrase I mentioned earlier. While his disciples may have heard this as a standard expression for excluding an outcast, Christ’s practice was to include both Gentiles and tax collectors among his followers. Matthew himself was a tax collector, after all! Think about the way Jesus treated outcasts like the Samaritan woman at the well, or Zacchaeus. When we cannot reconcile with another believer, Jesus encourages us to treat that person as an outcast, but I don’t think he’s asking us to shun those who won’t agree with us. I think he’s asking us to spend even more energy on drawing them into God’s love and forgiveness, entering into intentional community with them, engaging them in ongoing discipleship. And sometimes that requires that we allow God to work on our hearts.

We only hear a few verses of chapter 18 in today’s reading. Next week, we’ll see Peter step in to take this idea of reconciliation even further. But the thing you need to know is that this entire chapter is not about church polity. It is not about the steps you need to take for quick resolution of every argument. When we read these few verses in the context of all of Matthew’s gospel, we find that the Rule of Christ is not a bunch of rules at all. No, the Rule of Christ is the Reign of Love over all of us, whether or not we see ourselves or each other as lovable. It’s a way of protecting the most vulnerable, the most damaged, the weakest among us. It’s a way of protecting our children, and those in our society who have no power to speak or act for themselves.

This reign, this Rule governs our life together in the Body. Because we are made one in Christ Jesus. So, as you come to this Table, where the feast of Bread and Cup have been prepared with love for you, open your hearts to be one with each other. **Amen!**

15 PENTECOST	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	(also o zoom)
		COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS	
MONDAY	8:30 PM	AA MEETING	
WEDNESDAY	7:00 PM	AL-ANON	
THURSDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP	
	8:30 PM	AA MEETING	
SATURDAY	10AM-2PM	THRIFT SHOP	
16 PENTECOST	10:15 AM	HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II	(also on zoom)
		PARISH PICNIC FOLLOWS (sign-up sheet on back table.)	

	Today	Next Week
Eucharistic Minister	Jess Berbeck	Anthony Giordano
Coffee Hour	Nolans	Parish Picnic

PARISH PRAYER LIST

Loving God, comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Especially we remember before you:

Grace Schinella	Lourdes S.	Kaylee
Bob Curley	Arlene Goodenough	Art
Chris Dickson	Kate Jones	Deb P.
Michael Echevarria	John Rocco	Bethany
Joan Blan	Warren	Dennis
Charlotte H.	Bernie Walther	Anthony
Mo (Rachael)	Phil Ryder	Carolyn
Anthony Paribello	Barbara Curran	Del
Robert Hosey	Robert Sweat	Aidan
Sally & Roger	Sophia	Carol K.
Mary & Family	Christopher	Amy
Nathan Treadwell	Vincent	Judy
Michael & Family	Celeste	Ciara
Donna Amundsen	Margaret G. and Baby	

All people and countries suffering from violence, hatred and natural disasters.

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them. Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,
Lay my life before you,
How I love you.

Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus and third verse starting with Spirit.

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions and glory, now and for ever. Amen

