

FAITH @ HOME

Week of October 4, 2020

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

REFLECT: What are some rules you follow every day? Why do we follow rules? Sometimes, rules are in place to keep us safe, or we follow them for the safety of others. Sometimes, we follow rules because they help us act kindly toward one another. Rules guide us in the relationships we have with ourselves, with other people, and with God.

In this passage from Exodus, we read the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are rules that God gave to the Israelites to help them love God and love other people. Today, we read these rules and are reminded of ways we should also love God and others, too. Will we always perfectly follow the rules? Probably not. But that's okay. God still loves us and will help us do better.

RESPOND: Watch this sing-through of the Ten Commandments together: <http://bit.ly/10commandmentsboogie>. Dance, sing, and talk about all the ways you will follow the Ten Commandments this week. You may also wish to read a child-friendly version of the Ten Commandments together (you can find kid-friendly versions in most story Bibles.)

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: VICTORIA HOPPES



Victoria Hoppes is the Director of Youth and Children's Ministries at Resurrection Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Indianapolis, Indiana. She also serves as the Project Coordinator for Faith @ Home. She has ministry experience with youth, family, and camping programs at both the parish and diocesan levels. She holds degrees from Texas Lutheran University and Luther Seminary. She also holds a certificate in Youth and Family Ministry from Forma's certificate program. You can follow Victoria on her website, www.ministryincontext.com, or on social media (@vlhoppes).

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

REFLECT: Rules, rules, rules...everywhere you turn there are more and more rules. But, could you imagine a world with no rules? Could you imagine playing a game of basketball and not having rules that tell you how to score points? Could you imagine soccer where everyone could use their hands? Could you imagine a classroom where there were no rules? I can, but it wouldn't be pretty. Rules or guidelines are important. They help us live, play, and learn together. They are supposed to help us be a fair and healthy community. The Ten Commandments are also rules that God gave to the Israelites to help them to establish ways to live in community. When we live with these guidelines in mind, we live in a way that strengthens and supports our relationships. These rules or guidelines help us to live not focusing on "I," but places the focus on "we."

RESPOND: With a partner, read through the Ten Commandments. Discuss what they mean and how you think they strengthen the community. Wonder what our faith would be like without these rules for living? Are there commandments that are harder for you? Easier? Finish the exercise with a prayer asking God to help you live into these commandments.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MALCOLM MCLAURIN



Malcolm is a seminarian out of the Diocese of Olympia and is currently a senior The University of the South: School of Theology in Sewanee, TN. His background is in children's, youth, and young adult ministry. His 20+ years of experience has taken him from Mississippi and Arkansas to California and Washington. He is a husband and father of two wonderful boys.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Matthew 21:33-46

REFLECT: How many times does God reach out to us and try to connect? Have you ever thought about that? How many ways has God sent someone or a situation to help us know who God is? How many times do we even notice? How many times do we actively push God away?

This story illustrates the many times God sends messengers to us. Like the landowner who sends different people to their tenants, God sends messengers to us. In this story, God sends messengers to people who expect to know God and to be doing the work of God.

Here's where the story shifts - since the landowner and their representatives keep being rejected, at some point the landowner offers bonuses to others, maybe even people who do not expect to know the landowner.

The story tells of a God, the landowner, who reaches out time and again until finally God offers goodness and wholeness to someone else who will not reject who God is.

How many times have you noticed God reaching out to you?

RESPOND: Do a family drawing. It might seem silly, but on a large piece of paper with markers or crayons, draw different ways where God might have sent a message or messengers to you. Draw what reminds you of God. After everyone has drawn for five minutes, have each person show what they drew and why. Post it on the fridge as a reminder of God reaching out to you and as a prayer to notice God.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: HOLLY ZAHER



The Rev. Holly Rankin Zaher serves as Rector for St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Evansville, IN. For 30 years, Holly has helped people think and reflect on what it means to be church in today's culture in the Episcopal Church as a lay youth ministry professional and as a priest. If Holly isn't hanging out with her husband or three kiddos, she's probably somewhere reading, hiking, or making things out of yarn.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Philippians 3:4b-14

REFLECT: A couple of months ago, I attended Rooted in Jesus, a conference hosted by various facets of and organizations connected to the Episcopal Church. I didn't really know what to think going into it, after all, as someone who's fairly new to the tradition, the title alone made me wonder how woo-woo more than a thousand Episcopalians could actually get, when all the Episcopalians I knew weren't exactly known for charismatic expressions of faith.

Soon after I arrived, though, my jaw dropped to the ground. Tears brimmed in my eyes and flowed down my face when, together, we sang the songs that had been sung for hundreds of years and prayed the prayers that had been prayed by thousands of tongues. And whether you call that a touch of woo-woo or an anointing of the Spirit of God, one phrase rang true: Christ is the cornerstone of our faith. Like Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians (and like I experienced at the conference), it all comes down to Jesus: knowing Christ and gaining Christ and being found in Christ is everything. After all, knowing "Christ and the power of his resurrection" (Philippians 3:10, NRSV) is all we really need.

RESPOND: Today's invitation into response includes actual activity, so lace up your sneakers and don your sweatpants, because we're going on a walk together. Whether you live in a rural, suburban, or urban setting, cornerstones are all around us. So, start noticing. What do you notice about the foundations of the houses or buildings in your neighborhood? What anchors redwood tree that towers above the rest of the trees at the edge of the forest? As you walk and notice the cornerstones present all around you, let those thoughts translate to Christ, the cornerstone of our faith. Ruminant on such thoughts.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: CARA MEREDITH



Cara Meredith is a writer and speaker from Seattle, Washington. Her memoir, *The Color of Life: A White Woman's Journey Toward Love and Justice*, released in 2019 (Zondervan). You can connect with her on her website (<https://www.carameredith.com/>) and on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (@carameredithwrites).

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