

FAITH @ HOME

Week of February 16, 2020

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Sirach 15:15-20

REFLECT: We all have lots of choices to make in life. We can choose to show love to our friends and help them when they are sad or need a hug, or we can choose to call them names or ignore them. We usually know the right thing to do, even if we don't always do it.

God helps remember what is right by the feelings in our heart and the people around us. Just like you would not touch something hot because it makes you feel bad, or you would choose to drink water because it makes you feel better when you are thirsty. Your feelings often help guide you. Other people also guide you to do what's right, like when they tell you not to touch a hot stove or remind you not to share with your friends.

It's not always easy. Sometimes you have to listen closely to know what the right thing to do is. And sometimes we make mistakes and hurt other people. The good news is that God loves us even when we mess up. God wants us to try, and God will be there in our hearts to help us.

RESPOND: Think of times you have had to choose what to do. First think about a time you did the right thing. Talk about how it made you feel. Then think about the time you didn't do what you should have done, like pushing a friend or saying something mean. How did you feel afterward? Imagine you did something differently. How would you feel if you did the kind thing?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: JEREMIAH SIERRA



Jeremiah Sierra is currently the communications manager for Cities of Service, a nonprofit that works to change the way local government and residents work together. He has worked for a variety of other nonprofit organizations and Episcopal churches, most recently Trinity Church Wall Street, where he was the managing editor of the quarterly magazine. He has written for *Forward Day by Day* and other publications about faith. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife and three-year-old daughter.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Sirach 15:15-20

REFLECT: We are reminded that God gives humanity quite an interesting gift in giving us the ability to make *choices*. This is something that most everyone gets to do every day: some of our choices might seem pretty simple, like choosing what color shirt to wear, what type of milk to drink at school, which crayon to use when drawing a picture. Some of our other choices are a little harder, like which book we want to read next, what our favorite song is, who we want to play with during recess. Our hardest choices, though, seem to come within ourselves and other people. Sometimes people say things that hurt our feelings, and when that happens, we have the choice to be mean back to that person, to ignore them, or to be kind to them anyway. As followers of God, we are called to faithfully remember and practice the Ten Commandments as we choose to be more like God and extend grace as it has been given to us.

RESPOND: Think about someone you care about deeply that you recently fought with. Perhaps you were a bit mean to yourself if not another person. How did it feel to be fighting with that other person? How did you choose to react to the situation? Working with your grown-up as needed, write a letter to the person you fought with. If you were the one who said hurtful things, try apologizing for hurting their feelings. If you were the one who was hurt, be honest with that person about it. Either way, offer to do something with that person to work together to choose to get along better going forward. Choose forgiveness. Choose love.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: ERIN WOLF



Erin Wolf is a Youth Minister hailing from Little Chute, WI where she lives with her four kids. She serves both All Saints Episcopal in Appleton and the Episcopal Diocese of Fond du Lac. Her focuses include children & youth, camp & retreats, music, service work, interactive prayer for all ages, and more. You can connect with her via email at ewolf@diofdl.org.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Matthew 5:21-37

REFLECT: Seriously?!?! There will be judgement if we have unresolved anger with someone or insult them! And if someone has something against us, (It doesn't say whether we actually did or said anything but only that someone thinks we did.) we are supposed to go and reconcile before we approach the altar? Some people interpret this to mean not receiving Eucharist if one knows there is a rift with someone. If everyone responded this way, I suspect no one or very few would receive communion each week.

The truth is this all seems impossible. Sometimes we hold onto our anger because it is righteous anger. Sometimes we have a rift or a complete break with someone because what has been done is so painful and to return to the relationship would be detrimental to our physical, emotional or spiritual well-being. God is not asking us to put ourselves in harm's way.

God is also not asking us to do this alone. In fact, God knows we cannot. We can only navigate life and relationships because of God's grace. God's grace does not only extend to give us strength to reach out to others. God's grace is also there for us when we find it, perhaps at this time, far too difficult.

RESPOND: Is there someone with whom you have had a falling out? Is there someone with whom you are angry? Is there someone who is holding something against you? Name that person. Perhaps you want to share whatever it is with your family or even the person themselves. If not, write the person a letter and tell them how you feel or that you are sorry. You may want to mail it, but you may not. Either way, God's grace is extended.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: KATHERINE DOYLE



Katherine is the Coordinator for Youth and Young Adult Ministries and the rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Kentucky. She lives in Louisville with her husband and whichever of her four young adult children happen to be home at the time. Katherine's greatest joy is being a mama: first to her own four and then to all the children, youth, and young adults who call her Mama Doyle. She often finds God in the ordinary messiness of everyday life and writes about it on her blog thesixdoyles.blogspot.com.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

REFLECT: Sometimes we have been Christians for so long we forget where we've come from. We look at others who are not where we are spiritually and judge them. We wonder how they could possibly still be struggling with this or have questions about that. In truth, this is a sign of spiritual immaturity and a lack of grace. We forget that where we are and who we are is not because of how good we are but because of how good God is. Some of us were saved from deep, dark sin, while others were saved from simply being good people who felt they didn't need Jesus. No matter where we were, Jesus had to come down and rescue us from a life of sin and self-reliance. It is because of this we can have grace with others when they are not where we think they should be. We recognize that we were once them and if it not for God lavishing God's grace upon us, we would not be where we are today. All of life is God's good grace being poured out on us. We in turn are gracious to others as God has been to us.

RESPOND: Christians are called to be disciples making disciples. Today, pray for those whom you judged. After you have done that, think of ways in which you can help them grow into maturity in Christ. Find at least one person and make a plan to spend time on intentional discipleship with them.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: CJ QUARTLBAUM



CJ is a writer and speaker from Brooklyn, NY. He spends most of his time hanging with his family, playing with his daughter, playing basketball, and reading. He's passionate about seeing the gospel spread in his city, in Brooklyn as it is in heaven. You can catch up with him on Twitter @CJ_Quartlbaum or at CJQuartlbaum.com

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