

FAITH @ HOME

Week of September 6, 2020

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Romans 13:8-14

REFLECT: Have you ever argued with someone? Maybe you disagree about something. I don't always agree with my friends; we even argue sometimes about what is the best flavor of ice cream, or if pineapple is a good pizza topping! What do you do when you disagree with someone? Do you stop talking to or playing with them? Or, do you try to talk to the other person and listen to their point of view?

In this passage from Romans, Paul writes that "Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." (Romans 13:10, NRSV) Sometimes it is hard to love other people, especially when we don't agree with them. It's easy to walk away from someone or stop talking to them, instead of taking time to listen to the other person's story. One way we can love others is by working through our disagreements with them. We can do that by listening and talking to one another.

RESPOND: In order to love others and practice reconciliation, we first need to build our listening and conflict management skills. Pay attention this week to how your family reacts to disagreements. Do you stop and talk about the situation, or do you walk away? Do you hide your feelings for one another? When you are in a disagreement with one another, stop and encourage listening to what the other person has to say. Practice taking a pause or deep breath before saying anything. Practice sharing "I statements" with each other to share and express each person's point of view.

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: Matthew 18:15-20

REFLECT: For Christians, creating community is incredibly important. Throughout Scripture, God shows us what it means to be in healthy communities. From the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament book of Exodus to the Epistles in the New Testament, God is showing us how to create community. And as Christians, we try our best to create and maintain them. We also try our best to do this without conflict and “drama.” But when people gather, with their differing wants, opinions, and needs, conflict often arises.

In this passage from the 18th chapter of Matthew, Jesus is giving instructions on how to deal with conflict. And what he is telling us is to seek reconciliation. This reconciliation, as Jesus tells us, comes from truth-telling. But this is not the kind of truth-telling that we are used to in our everyday life. The kind of truth-telling that embarrasses, calls out, or causes shame. Jesus’ truth-telling starts and ends from a place of seeking reconciliation.

RESPOND: Who are the people in you that you have a strained or maybe a broken relationship with? What areas in your life could use some reconciliation? Try this two-step process to begin seeking reconciliation. First, name it aloud in your prayers as a family. Maybe this is as simple saying a person's name, or maybe it is naming where you have caused a break in the relationship. Then, imagine together what reconciliation looks like in this situation. When and where appropriate, do your part in seeking this reconciliation.

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: Romans 13:8-14

REFLECT: If we looked for the secret key to unlock the Christian Scriptures, we would find love. All throughout the stories in the Scriptures, love. It is the secret decoder ring, the answer to every question and the reason Jesus joined us on earth.

This love, somehow, is the way we live out the law, another way of saying the way to live life with God.

This love to which we are called is beyond the preference for sausage over pepperoni on pizza, but rather a force which has the ability to transform us so that we, too, can be agents of love. Love takes hard work, the hard work of living well, of not being secretive, and not arguing just for the sake of arguing or trying to be right. It is the difficult work of love that we owe to others.

RESPOND: Play your favorite family game together with a twist on the rules. Your goal is not to win but to pick one of your family members and do whatever you can do to help them win. This practical way to help and love someone else gives us space to try on new and different practices. Afterward, talk about how it went. What did you like about the new rule? What did you not like?

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: Romans 13:8-14

REFLECT: Too often I make things harder than they ought. For instance, when it comes to loving my neighbor, I can think that love best happens when I do the right thing and follow the rules. I know how mental illness and addiction affects the lives of those who are experiencing homelessness, so instead of freely passing out dollars, I respond with granola bars and juice boxes, hand sanitizer and a Ziploc of Band-Aids.

But when I read Paul's words, I'm reminded that humanity stands at the center of love and mercy toward others, for "the one who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8, NRSV). I think about how much it matters when someone not only learns but remembers my name, just as I remember how loved I feel when a friend asks me questions and genuinely wants to engage with me in conversation. After all, I am not seen as a problem, but like the human being I already am and always have been. How then might I engage in this same kind of love and mercy to everyone around me?

RESPOND: All of us experience love in different ways (hence, perhaps why Gary Chapman's *The 5 Love Languages* continues to top bestseller lists), but the command to love your neighbor as yourself is pretty simple. As you go throughout your week, reach out to one person a day. Pick up the phone or shoot them a text. Reach out over social media or pop a handwritten note in the mail. Your words can be as simple as, "Hey, I just wanted to let you know that I was thinking about you," or "You just came to mind, and friend, you are loved." At the end of this week, see how this simple exercise in showing love and mercy toward others changes you as well.

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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