



ST. ELIZABETH EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Matthew's Jesus presents a process for resolving differences among his followers. And as a 2,000-year old form of conflict management, it's not bad. Bringing a fracture to light is often better than letting unresolved issues simmer. The aspiration toward reconciliation is noble; it is not, however, always possible and sometimes not even advisable. A great deal of care is essential in confronting people, especially in airing grievances before any assembly.

And when Jesus suggests treating a person who doesn't listen as a gentile or a tax collector, he means they need to be re-approached in search of learning. Jesus is urging us to be faith-minded churches, rather than like-minded assemblies. Predators and those who have caused harm intentionally may, of course, need to be separated from the assembly but with (even stringent) requirements for their potential return because the hope is always for unity.

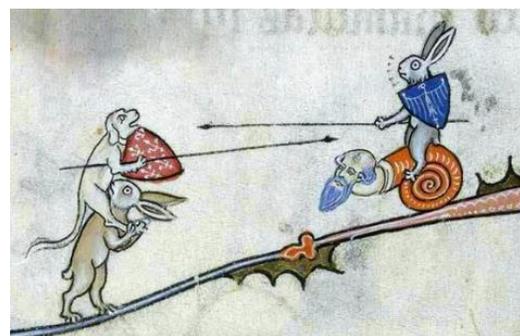
Now, as Paul wrote to the church in Rome, is the moment for us to wake from sleep. We are currently faced with a rare and urgent opportunity to model openings for forgiveness, reconciliation and learning. But this process from Matthew's Jesus needs a bit of updating.

Nearly 20 years ago, my business partners and I were invited to become the first group of people authorized to practice an approach to change management created by Harvard psychologist Bob Kegan. To prepare for "reconstructive conversations," Bob taught us three warm-up exercises; mental stretches that help create relationships with our perspectives so that we aren't held captive by them. They are especially useful preparation for conversations involving differences of opinion.

First, **step back from your vantage point.** This is not putting "my eyes in your head," but acknowledging that multiple perspectives exist. Imagine what seeing through the other person's eyes might be like, and make a sincere attempt to imagine what the other person might be experiencing and thinking. What they see is not likely to be exactly what you see.

Second, **step back from your theory of the situation.** Am I making any unexamined assumptions? Where did I get my facts? Am I bundling any interpretation into my "facts"? Are these causing any distortions? Can I entertain the possibility of a different or opposing valid explanation?

Third, **step back from your theory of the other person.** Remember that they are another child of God. Imagine if some third person whom you deeply respect were doing or saying what this person did or said. Do you feel differently? After these warmups, fruitful conversation becomes possible. And when sisters and brothers come together, God works more freely, making nothing impossible.



Preparation



Now that we are in the summer season after Pentecost called “Ordinary time,” we use green as the liturgical color for altar and priestly vestments. The color symbolizes growth, creation, life, health and hope for many people from many faiths. And so, you may want to drape a green cloth over a kitchen table, dining table, or a table in a garden or under a tree if the weather holds.

During this temporary physical separation, you might also dress your worship space with photos or real flowers and greens. Anglican spirituality holds that all the senses can disclose God’s presence – not just texts for speaking or singing. Try burning some incense as an enhancement. If you have a favorite icon, cross, rosary or image of Jesus, putting holy artifacts in your worship space can help focus your prayer. A candle is always appropriate, as is inviting friends, family or loved ones to join you by phone or through social media. You may want to

invite loved ones that we no longer see or saints that you admire.

There is a soothing and appropriately sparse rendition of an old favorite, Hymn #1, “Father, we praise thee” sung in Korean at youtube.com/watch?v=HkxwFnHE4iA (I wish I could find more information about the choir!) While that hymn praises God in the morning, there is a lovely recording from St. Mark’s Compline choir of Psalm 149 in Anglican chant at youtube.com/watch?v=twKt8SQjSo Peter Hallock was a real gift to this diocese.

For a sequence hymn between the Epistle and the Gospel, you might like to stay with the Compline choir singing Hymn #593, “Lord, make us servants of your peace.” The words are based on a prayer by St. Francis. youtube.com/watch?v=dFePl5ioYQo Or you may be in need of something a bit more opulent, in which case you might like this posting of Hymn 576, “God is love, and where true love is” offered by All Saints, Margaret Street, London at youtube.com/watch?v=N6j-mbONxi0&app They have been an Anglo-Catholic fixture in London for more than 150 years. The interior of the church is filled with tile-work as impressive as the harmonies and melody of this hymn.

And finally, I commend this rendition of Hymn #336, “Come with us, O blessed Jesus” at youtube.com/watch?v=D1GGWc7H4A8 It was recorded just a few weeks ago at the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Lexington, Kentucky, featuring a soprano with a heavenly instrument accompanied only by an organist with a talent for phrasing and arrangement. The lyrics are a perfect way to leave worship and get back to daily life with a slightly lighter heart.

Please remember that despite being physically separated for a time, we are all bound together in Christ. We still pray as and with the community of saints, and with all the company of heaven who sing “Holy, holy, holy” now and for all time. Until we can gather again in-person, may the wisdom, the love and the grace of God strengthen you to be Christ’s hands and heart in this world.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost 6 September 2020

Centering

Make the sign of the cross as the leader says: Blessed be God; (+) Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever.

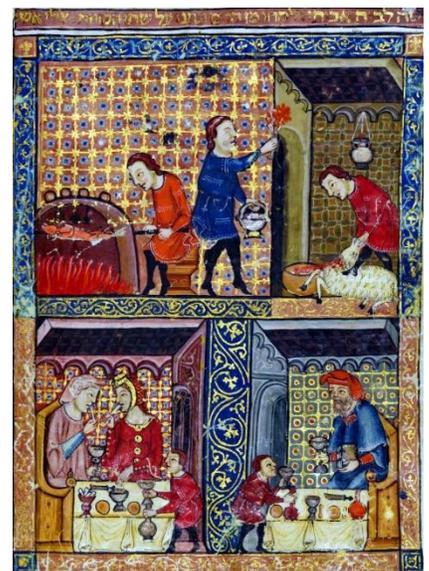
The leader prays:

Holy God,
you call us to righteousness and light.
Teach us the undivided law of love
that we may love your children even as you do,
love you with all our will and strength,
and find our freedom in this blessed service,
taught to us in word and deed,
by Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The Word of God for the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

A reading from Exodus: The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you. Speak to the whole community of Israel and say that on the tenth of this month each of them shall take a lamb to a family, a lamb to a household. But if the household is too small for a lamb, let [it] share with a neighbor who dwells nearby, in proportion to the number of persons: you shall contribute for the lamb according to what each household will eat. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a yearling male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep watch over it until the fourteenth day of this month; and all the assembled congregation of the Israelites shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they are to eat it. They shall eat the flesh that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw, or cooked in any way with water, but roasted – head, legs, and entrails – over the fire. You shall not leave any of it over until morning; if any of it is left until morning, you shall burn it.

This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly: it is a passover offering to the LORD. For that night I will go through the land of Egypt and strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both [human] and beast; and I will mete out punishments on all the gods of Egypt, I the LORD. And the blood on the houses where you are staying shall be a sign for you: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, so that no plague will destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.



This day shall be to you one of remembrance: you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD throughout the ages; you shall celebrate it as an institution for all time.

Reader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God

(The response: Prayed together or by alternating verses) Psalm 149

HalleluYaH.

Sing a brand new song to YaH;
this is how He is celebrated
among the *chassidim*.*

Israel is happy knowing his Maker;
Zion's children delight in their King.
Dancing, they chant His Name,
making rhythm with drums and strings.

YaH loves Her people;
the self-effacing
can count on Her for help.

Chassidim savor His awesome Presence—
even on their bed they hum His praises,
they exalt God in inner speech.

Such praise is a potent blade,
repelling antagonists, scolding bigots;
to immobilize their commanders and arrest their agitators,
rebuke them as they deserve!

All this because God's *chassidim*
give honor to Him in splendor.
HalleluYaH!

**devoted ones*

A reading from Romans: Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of the night and put on the armor of the day; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Reader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God



The Gospel is the primary reading of the day and should always be read. Read the passage aloud without rushing. Allow the images to enter your awareness and find a home within.



A reading from Matthew:

[Jesus said], “Now, if [another member of the church] sins, go and remonstrate with [them], between you and him privately. If [they listen] to you, you gain [that person]. If, though, [they do] not listen, take one or two others along with you, so that everything that is said may be confirmed by the mouths of two or three witnesses. If, though, [they refuse] to listen to them, tell it to the assembly; and if [they refuse] to listen even to the assembly, let [them] be to you as the gentile or the tax collector. Amen, I tell you, whatever things you bind on the earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever things you unbind on the earth will be unbound in heaven. Again, [amen,] I tell you, that if two of you agree on earth concerning everything they request, whatever it is, it shall come to pass for them, coming from my Father in the heavens. For where there are two or three who have gathered in my name, I am in their midst.”

Reader: The Word of the Lord

Response: Thanks be to God

Sermon:

There is a story told about the great Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem-Tov, the founder of Hassidic Judaism. It is said that when he saw misfortune threatening the Jews, he would go into a specific part of the forest to meditate. Once there, he lit a ritual fire and said a certain prayer. Always, the misfortune would be avoided.

After the Baal Shem-Tov died, one of his disciples, Dov Ber ben Avraham of Mezeritch took up the practice. Whenever he needed heaven’s intercession, he went to the place his master showed him in the forest, where he would say: “Master of the Universe, listen! I do not remember how to light the fire properly, but I am still able to say the prayer.” And, again, catastrophe would turn away.

Years after the Maggid of Mezeritch died, whenever his student Rabbi Moshe-Leib of Sasov needed to save his people, he would go to the place in the forest where he had been taught to go. Once there, he would say: “I do not know how to light the fire properly and I can no longer remember the prayer, but I do know the place and that must be sufficient.” And it was.

Eventually, the task fell to Rabbi Yisrael of Rizhyn. When trouble started brewing, he would sit in his armchair with his head in his hands and speak to God, saying: “Blessed

Adonai, I don't know how to light the fire, I do not know the prayer and I can no longer even find the correct place in the forest. All I can do is tell the story and that must be sufficient." And so it was; having told the story of the fire, the prayer and the place in the forest, Rabbi Yisrael blessed his people.

Because God loves stories.

Not only does God love to *hear* our stories, God loves to *tell* them. Shoah survivor Elie Wiesel said that it's the reason God creates people. We are the stories that God loves to tell. And because we are God's children, we take the mix of pain and joy, anxiety and gratitude that show up in our lives and use them to craft stories about God.

For centuries, the Jews have provided stories for the rest of us about God and about life. We have inherited books filled with the traditions and convictions of our ancestors in the faith. And while these books have ancient roots, the truth they carry is alive right now.

Of course, not all the tales we tell from the past are true. Columbus didn't discover America; there were actually many nations of people already living here. And none of the tales we tell are complete; some leave out important voices or change details to make them more palatable. Fortunately, many of them can be updated if we keep an open mind. What's still more important is the awareness that all of the tales we tell from scripture are brimming with truth, even when they were never meant to be factual.

In the passages that immediately follow this story about Moses from the book of Exodus, God will emphasize to Moses the importance of passing down the chronicles that connect us and that influence how we understand our relationship with each other and with God.

This reading tells us about the time when the people of Israel, a community forced together as captives in Egypt, had to start forging a new of identity. God tells Moses how the people should prepare because, in the morning, they will be freed from Egypt. That means they will need to start defining the contours of their new lives together.

They have consequential questions to consider – questions that they will carry with them through the years in the desert all the way to Mt. Sinai: "Who are we now?" "Where are our boundaries?" "How much of our past do we want to bring with us? What traditions will we pass along to the next generations of this new way of being?"

This is such a major turning point in the life of the Jews that God changes the calendar that they keep. Time has played a critical part in Judaism since God blessed a holy day, Shabbat, on the seventh day of creation. And here, at the cusp of their liberation, God gave the Jewish people a way to sanctify time by setting the Jewish calendar. Time is beyond human control. We can manipulate material things in space, but time is where we encounter holiness.

By changing the calendar, God provided a way for Jews to know when to gather each year to tell the story that keeps the memory and lessons of this event alive. That first Passover will become the most ancient continuously observed ritual in the Western world.



God launched a second remarkable change in this reading. “Speak to the whole community of Israel,” God tells Moses. Up to this point, the people have been identified by tribe: Binyāmîn, Lêwî, Zəḥūlun and so on. And here, for the first time in Hebrew scripture, God refers to this mixed multitude of people as one congregation. Each family will celebrate in their homes, and yet all will keep the feast. To this day, Passover is the event most American Jews will participate in even if they never make it to synagogue.

Jews of all denominations engage in the ritual partially to keep the memory of history alive. But history is what happened to other people at another time, often in another place. Participating in a Passover seder brings a person into the story that is being remembered. All experience is just a first draft; updating the memory makes experience part of a living story.

Eating matza, the unleavened bread of affliction and dipping a sprig of parsley in saltwater to taste the tears of one’s ancestors; eating a dollop of horseradish as a symbol of the bitterness of slavery; chewing the sweet charset that represents mortar for brick-making; these practices help make the experience of Passover a defining part of the identity of each Jew.

And learning from the memory of the event teaches every person tasting the symbols of ancient affliction why they have to resist the temptation to afflict others. Rabbi Aaron Shmuel Tamerat said that God commanded the children of Israel to stay in their homes when the angel of death passed over Egypt because even when your cause is just, any contact with violence can awaken the angel of death within us all and make us oppressors ourselves.

This is foundational to understanding Judaism and why Jewish scripture worries less about facts and more about truth. The Torah is not systematic theology, although it is brimming with theological insights. It is not a philosophical dissertation or a record of historical events, although it is alive with wisdom and corresponds to many moments that have been captured by historians. All our scripture is stories about experiences held in interrelated books and nurtured by people who have kept it alive over centuries of learning.

Like Judaism, Christianity is less about static *statements* of truth than it is about living *stories* of truth. We are characters in a larger story with our own chapters to write. And living scripture is a character in our own particular lives as the most powerful and personal way to reveal God’s identity to us. That makes us responsible for doing our best to hand it on to those who will come after us.

We may no longer remember how to light the fire, how to say the prayer or where the place in the forest is, but if we *are* the story we tell about ourselves, then as long as we never lose the story, God’s children will never lose their identity.

And what we can do will be sufficient.

stillness and silence

The Nicene Creed

Leader: Let us reaffirm our faith in the words of the Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God,

the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,

the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.

Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven:

by the power of the Holy Spirit

he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary,
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

With the Father and the Son he (or “she” or no pronoun) is worshiped and glorified.

He (she/who) has spoken through the Prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,

and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need

These intercessions may be used, adding others in each household:

Leader: Through baptism we have been made alive in Christ Jesus. With the breath of the Holy Spirit speaking through our renewed lives, we pray for the whole state of Christ's church and the world, saying: "LORD, have mercy."

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, we pray for the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, the Most Reverend Thabo Makgoba, Archbishop of Capetown and Primate of Southern Africa. In the Diocesan Cycle of Prayer, we pray for Holy Spirit, Battle Ground; St. Matthew, Castle Rock; St. James, Cathlamet.

For the church, that we might be faithful, willing to serve, constant in grace, and receptive to newness, let us pray to the LORD.

All: LORD, have mercy.

Leader: We pray for our neighbors at Navos, for Neighborhood House, for Hospitality House, for Operation Nightwatch, and for the safety of those in military service, for the safety and stamina of healthcare workers, for first responders, and for their families. We pray for those on our long-term list. Let us pray for our own needs and those of others, offered silently or aloud.

Leader: For this congregation, that we might be eager to welcome, diligent in prayer, and generous in deed, let us pray to the LORD.

All: LORD have mercy.

Leader: For our nation, town and neighborhood, that we might be advocates for the excluded, diligent in prayer, defenders of liberty and models of justice.

All: LORD have mercy.

Leader: For those who lament the iniquity of racism, those who protest the brutality of hateful speech and deadly action; for those working for racial justice and harmony, and for the courage to examine our own prejudices, inviting the Holy Spirit to free us from them.

All: LORD have mercy.

Leader: For those experiencing homelessness, unemployment or under-employment, and those without healthcare or food stability.

All: LORD have mercy.

Leader: For those who grieve, for those isolated in care facilities, those in prison, those suffering from addiction and those who are despondent.

All: LORD have mercy.

Leader: For those in dangerous occupations, for those who care for the sick, who work the land, those who work in transportation, warehouse or delivery services and those who teach.

All: LORD have mercy.

Leader: For our families and all those placed in our care, for those with whom we disagree, and for those who are examples of grace in our lives.

All: LORD have mercy.

A period of silence follows and then, leader: God of all mercies, awaken us to your glory. Open our eyes to your presence, our ears to your call, and our hearts to your love that we may proclaim with confidence that you are among us through your son, our brother, Jesus the Anointed. *Amen.*

Leader: Let us confess our sins to God.

Silence may be kept and then all together:

Almighty God, our heavenly Father:

We have sinned against you,

through our own fault,

in thought, and word, and deed,

and in what we have left undone.

For the sake of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ,

forgive us all our offenses; and grant that we may serve you

in newness of life, to the glory of your Name. *Amen.*

Leader: May the Almighty God grant us forgiveness of all our sins, and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Pater Noster/Our Father/The Lord's Prayer

Please feel free to use the translation and language that most feeds your heart.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;

thy kingdom come; thy will be done;

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation;

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory,

for ever and ever. *Amen.*



Prayer of spiritual communion

Most Holy Christ, we trust that you are truly present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

We love you above all things, and we long for you in our souls. Since we cannot at this

moment receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into our hearts. We embrace you

as though you were already there and we unite ourselves entirely to you. Never permit us to

be separated from you. *Amen.*

Concluding Prayer

God of creation, through your great mercy you renew us: Send us now back to the love and

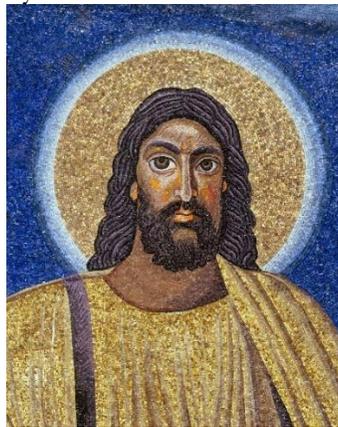
labor of this day with joy and compassion in our hearts; through Christ our Savior. *Amen.*

Blessing

Make the sign of the cross as you say: The love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that God has given us. May the blessing of God (+), Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be among us and remain with us and those for whom we pray, this day and for ever.
Amen.

Giving Thanks at Table

Leader: Jesus of the wedding feast,
of breakfast by the lake,
bless this food we have prepared for you and all our friends.
Be with us now and at all our meals,
give us appetite and joy in eating together.
All: Blessed be God for daily bread.



“Facts bring us to knowledge, but stories lead to wisdom.”
~ **Rachel Naomi Remen**

Offerings

Just a reminder: There are many ways to continue to invest in our shared ministry at St. Elizabeth during this time apart. You can still send your pledge or gift to P.O. Box 66579, Burien, Wash., 98166 or you can find us on Givlify.com. You can also find us at <https://resources.ecww.org/> Your gift will help to provide upkeep and maintenance of the building and grounds; allow church staff to maintain our ministry; ensure that normal operations can resume when the time comes. If you want to make a gift to the Rector's Discretionary Fund, which we use for those who have emergency needs, please indicate that on your check.

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