

Sunday 6th September 2020

Good Morning and welcome to worship here at MPN. We're so glad you have come to join us this morning as we worship God together. This week as I have been preparing for yet another ending on this journey of faith and thinking on new beginnings, I came across this prayer walk online. Something that we could do and one thing I am going to try in my new parish:

We begin with What we are thankful to God for:

Does life feel like a storm?

Add your boat to the waves

Alphabet prayer: pray through the letters of the alphabet

Memory tree for those we want to remember.

We are the Church

It's good to give thanks and to pray for our towns and people and to commit them to God in prayer. Something we can all do.

A reminder that we meet on Zoom for a catch up at 12 on Sunday's. The details change every week and if you want to join us contact us and we will give you the login details.

We are still looking for some help to gauge our online worship and help us in our return to the building. You can use the link on our Facebook page or the qr code or the link at the bottom of the YouTube clip.

Our Call to worship:

Praise the Lord!

Sing to the Lord a new song!

We are glad in our Maker and we rejoice in our King.

We praise our Lord with melodies and dancing!

May we bring pleasure to our Lord and seek out his most holy way. And when we find ourselves amidst argument and division, conflict and disagreement, may we return to your presence resolved to find a better way.

Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord in all we do!

Let us worship God together as we sing our first song:

This morning our passage looks at the age-old problem of conflict. Some folks like to deal with conflict, others run in the other direction and others over the years find themselves in a position where they need to learn to deal with it.

Conflict has been there since the beginning of humanity. Certainly, scripture doesn't paint over the conflicts that God's people have faced. Jacob and Esau fought over birthright, Jacob's brothers wanted to kill him but at the last-minute thought making money off him and selling him into slavery was a better option. The disciples wanted to find out who was

the best and who was Jesus favourite. I could go on and on. Plenty of examples for us to study and reflect on.

The Church has not escaped this conflict, in her time there have been wars and splits and still she struggles for unity within her communities of faith.

This morning we read of the way Jesus is setting out to deal with conflict in faith communities. Jesus knew that people would have differing opinions, that the way one person interpreted a rule or law would differ and that in community boundaries and rules would be needed to help people live and worship together. So, he sets out within the messianic community a way to deal with people in a Christlike way.

And were told:

“ If your brother or sister^[a] sins,^[b] go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that “every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”^[c]¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

Jesus is saying to his followers, you go and try and sort this out. Talk through where things have gone wrong. But don't lord it over them, be humble and try as best you can to keep them in your community of faith.

Jesus was using a redemptive and restorative model of justice. And while we as humans want to get pay back for our wrongs, Jesus is saying to us forgive us you have been forgiven.

A Japanese legend tells the story of a mighty shogun warrior who broke his favourite tea bowl and sent it away for repairs. When he received it back, the bowl was held together by unsightly metal staples. Although he could still use it, the shogun was disappointed. Still hoping to restore his beloved bowl to its former beauty, he asked a craftsman to find a more elegant solution.

The craftsman wanted to try a new technique, something that would *add* to the beauty of the bowl as well as repair it. So, he mended every crack in the bowl with a lacquer resin mixed with gold. When the tea bowl was returned to the shogun, there were streaks of gold running through it, telling its story, and—the warrior thought—adding to its value and beauty. This method of repair became known as *kintsugi*.

Jesus in this passage is telling us that it is better to build each other up, that all of us are broken and that in mending relationships by listening and understanding others we will grow our communities of faith and be stronger by this.

When we send people away or make it difficult for them to be part of our Church it hurts not only the people we send away, it hurts those that are left behind.

We, like the Japanese pottery menders, are to see the beauty in difference and life would be so much duller if we were all the same. We celebrate the difference and try to understand it.

Soon I will be asked to say vows that I took at my ordination, when I am inducted to my first charge. While I take them all seriously there is one that makes me stop for a minute longer.

It says: Do you promise to seek the peace and unity of this Church; to uphold its doctrine, worship, government, and to cherish a spirit of love to all your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Peace and unity. In this world today it's getting more and more difficult to have peace and unity. Peace is not the absence of conflict, but it does mean we need to be willing to see another's point of view. Even if we don't agree but recognise that the world doesn't live in right or wrong answers but in shades between and is not a fixed point in time.

So, Jesus tells the disciples

"Again, I assure you. That if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, then my Father who is in heaven will do it for you."

It's all about how we treat each other and our attitude towards God. I don't think Jesus is saying it's like this, if you agree on anything God will grant it, just like some magic gene in a bottle. Or like when you have you kids, and they fight all the time but that one time they agree on something like they want the same cereal, and all is well with the world.

No, I think it's about remembering the commandment of Jesus. To love your neighbour as yourself. It's about remembering that every action we do has consequences for not just ourselves but for all those who live around us. For the greater good we hear a lot just now.

We wash our hands and stay a 2-metre distance and try and not mix with too many other households. It's for the greater good, to look after the vulnerable and ourselves and to help us get to a place where live can resume again. We think of others.

That's what communities at their best do. They know it's hard to accommodate everyone. They know that there will be times when folks don't see eye to eye and finding agreement is difficult. There will be times when folks think that they know better and things are just taking too long. But a community and especially a faith community works for the good of all who make up that community. No one should feel that they are left out or not listened too.

That's what Jesus is trying to say to this community we read of today and what he says to us all. That change and reconciliation are needed to live together and that the hope and faith and love that we find in Jesus will be there when we meet together. That when we experience the hope and the transformation of the gospel, we try and see others in the way that Jesus see us. Healed, restored and forgiven.

To God the Father,

God the Son

God the Holy Spirit

Amen.

Blessing (Morag)

Go into this new week
seeking peace in your heart.
Let go of the grudges,
the resentment that holds you back, know that Jesus loves you
and those with whom you struggle. May God's peace,
Jesus' love,
and the Spirit's presence
go with you.

And the blessing of God Almighty
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Be with you and remain with you and all those you love
Now and always
Amen.