

14th Sunday after Pentecost
September 6, 2020
Cross of Glory Lutheran Church
Brooklyn Center, MN

Today, the first Sunday of the month, we will celebrate Holy Communion. As we prepare to take part in this meal together from home, please gather bread (or a cracker) and wine (or juice).

PRELUDE

WELCOME

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who creates, redeems, and sustains us and all of creation. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Faithful God, **have mercy on us. We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We turn from your loving embrace and go our own ways. We judge others before examining ourselves. We place our own needs before the needs of our neighbors. Humble us, have mercy on us, and turn us again to life in you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

God hears the cries of all who call out in need, and through his death and resurrection, Christ has made us his own. Hear the truth that God proclaims: Your sins are forgiven in the name of † Jesus Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, live in freedom and newness to do God's work in the world. **Amen.**

WORSHIP SONG

We're Here to Worship

Worship Team

1 We're here to worship
We're here to sing Your praise
We're here to love You
We're here to seek Your face
Oh God let Your life
Fill this place

Chorus

Oh God hear our cries
So come and shower down Your love
Come and meet us with Your touch
We yield our hearts
Give You our thoughts
We're here for only You oh God

2 We're here to worship
We're here to bless Your name
We're here to honor
Our Lord and gracious King
Oh God be enthroned
In our praise

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

SONG OF PRAISE**How He Loves****Worship Team**

1 He is jealous for me loves like a hurricane
 I am a tree bending beneath
 The weight of His wind and mercy
 When all of a sudden I am unaware of
 These afflictions eclipsed by glory
 I realize just how beautiful You are
 And how great Your affections are for me

Chorus Oh how He loves us so
 Oh how He loves us
 How He loves us so
 (Yeah) He loves us
 Oh how He loves us
 Oh how He loves us
 Oh how He loves (REPEAT)

2 We are His portion and He is our prize
 Drawn to redemption by the grace in His eyes
 If grace is an ocean we're all sinking
 So Heaven meets earth
 Like a loving embrace
 And my heart turns fervently inside of my chest
 I don't have time to maintain these regrets
 When I think about the way that

PRAYER OF THE DAY The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray . . . **Lord God, your love gathers together as one body, across both distance and difference. Be present among us now, that in being loved by you, we might share the gift of your love with our neighbors; through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.**

READING: Romans 13:8-14

⁸Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The 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." ¹⁰Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

¹¹Besides 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; ¹²the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SPECIAL MUSIC**Mark Trease****GOSPEL: Matthew 18:15-20**

The holy gospel according to St. Matthew. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹⁵"If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. ¹⁶But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

Pastor Ali Tranvik

A couple of weeks ago, we read a passage from Romans that likened the Christian community to a body with many different members. We talked about the gift of difference—about how the body would not work if all the members had the same function, about how the church body depends on all our different passions and personalities, our different priorities and perspectives.

It's a beautiful metaphor, but let's be honest: difference doesn't always work so beautifully on the ground, does it? Difference can be a gift, but it can also be the source of conflict. The way we handle our differences in where we're from, how we look, who we vote for, who we love, how we worship can not only cause sore spots on the body, but can sometimes cause deep and painful wounds.

We may think that Christians are better at dealing with conflict than our secular counterparts, or at least better poised to. But as Princeton Seminary professor Eric Barreto reminds us, "what makes a church a church is precisely the presence of so many troublesome people" (if you're watching on Zoom, please don't start scrolling through the faces of your fellow church members...and I'll just pause for second while everyone does exactly that!). His point, though, is that conflict isn't limited to governments or political parties, conflict isn't only something that happens in our homes between spouses or siblings or extended relatives around the Thanksgiving table, but conflict happens between *Christians*, between *us*—members of the body of Christ—in fellowship halls and sacristies and on church committee emails...

And Jesus is well aware of this. He entertains no illusions that his followers all "love their neighbor as themselves," as today's text from Romans says. So, in today's text, Jesus provides a kind of "how-to" guide for church conflict resolution, for how to deal with one another in love. He lays out these four steps for what to do if a fellow church member sins against you: first, go to them directly and point out the fault one-on-one. If the person doesn't listen, then take a couple other people with you as witnesses and mediators in the conflict. And if they still don't listen, then take the issue to the whole church body. And finally, if all of these options have been exhausted, and the person still refuses to listen and still continues to harm, then as a last resort, treat them as a "Gentile" or as a "tax collector," that is, as an outsider.

I don't know about you, but I don't typically turn to Matthew 18 in the midst of my own conflicts. But perhaps it could be instructive for us. When conflict inevitably arises, Matthew 18 doesn't say gossip about it to friends, or post about it on Facebook, or sweep it under the rug for the sake of the *illusion* of harmony (as many of us schooled in "Minnesota niceness" are so adept at doing), retreat when things start to get messy, or give up on church altogether...all of these things that we'd probably much *rather* do in the face of conflict. I wish Matthew 18 gave me permission to separate myself a bit, to take care of myself, to do life apart for a while when life together gets to be too complicated. But instead Jesus leads us more deeply into it, giving us steps to confront and work through our conflicts: address the offender. Name the transgression. Speak truthfully. Listen carefully to one another, for it is in listening, Jesus says, that a member is regained...

For a guy who typically speaks in perplexing parables, here Jesus lays out some pretty straightforward rules for reconciliation. For a guy whose advice is usually much more confusing, demanding, Jesus' words today seem quite practical, reasonable, doable—that is, if we follow them correctly.

But therein lies the problem. Christians never seem to be able to follow these steps. As I mentioned a moment ago, we have our own preferred ways of dealing with conflict (namely, to not deal with it!). And even when we do follow these steps more closely, we don't always see results. Conflict still seems to bubble up. We continue to speak far more than we truly listen. We continue to withdraw, thinking we're better off on our own. We continue to harm and be harmed, offend and be offended, disappoint and be disappointed by one another.

Pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber, who founded a Lutheran church called House for All Sinners and Saints in Denver, CO, tells of starting her new member classes a bit unconventionally. "Welcome to House for All Sinners and Saints," and in the same breath she would say, "this community will disappoint you. It's a matter of when, not *if*. This church will let you down or I'll say something

stupid or someone else will hurt you and we will fail to meet your expectations. If you become a member here, you will be disappointed.”

Pastor Nadia took the Lutheran value of starting with confession to the extreme. She wanted people to know right off the bat that the church is no better at conflict than anyone else (and in fact we may be worse, she'd say, because we often *think* that we're better—that we're holier, more devout, that God is on our side). She wanted people to know that the Christian community is not immune from sin, that churches are not exempt from conflict, that this place that we think is supposed to please us and comfort us and meet our needs (and maybe even our wants) will inevitably *disappoint* us.

Taking Pastor Nadia's cue, I too, as your still-very-new pastor, want to make it clear right off the bat: I will disappoint you. I will mess up—I already have and I will continue to do so. There will be times when I speak and I should have listened, or times when I remain silent when I should have spoken up. There will be days when I don't pay close enough attention, when I miss things, forget things, days when I will get too wrapped up in myself and my own interests. And as desperately as I wish this weren't the case, I know there will be times when conflicts arise and, in an attempt to “follow the steps” of Matthew 18, I only do further harm.

So what hope does the church have if its full of people like me (or if you happen to resonate with anything I just said, what hope does the church have if its full of people like us)? There is a promise hidden in what appears to be Jesus' three-step program for conflict resolution. You see, in verse 19, Jesus also says this: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” We often think this verse is talking about people gathered for prayer or worship (i.e. even if only 2 or 3 people come, if our attendance is very low, God will still be here!). But that's actually not the biblical context. The “two or three gathered” here refers to two or three in conflict: the offender(s) and the offended. The harming and the harmed. The disappointing and the disappointed. And God is present among them.

God is here, and what that means is that love is here, because God is love. And love, as we read about in today's text from Romans, fulfills the law (13:10). Love, whose name is Jesus, has already followed all laws and commandments and rules and steps and has reconciled himself to us. And is present among us. Which means that maybe, just maybe, we can be reconciled to one another. It means that maybe, just maybe, we can be reconciled to “the other.”

Matthew 18 says that if all other attempts at reconciliation fail, then finally, treat the offender as a Gentile or tax collector--the ultimate “other.” If we're focused exclusively on this text, we may think that means cut them off, sever them off from the rest of the body. But if we zoom out a bit, look at the larger Gospel story, the other stories from Matthew we've read this summer about the people who Jesus chose to “be the church” —a bunch of fearful fishermen (Matt 14:22-33), hungry hordes (Matt 14:13-21), disbelieving disciples (Matt 16:21-28), loud and annoyingly persistent women (Matt 15:21-28)—we see that the church has always been a place of belonging for the outcasts and outsiders. A place that has always brought people *together* in spite of all the ways that we may try and keep ourselves apart. The church has always brought people together across difference.

And that's why church—why life together—can be so hard. It's hard to love those who are different from us! It's much easier to love the people who are like us, the people who agree with us, the people who we choose to be our friends. As one of my former seminary teachers once said, “you can choose your friends, but you can't choose with whom to be the church” (Willimon). Loving, *actually* loving, people across difference is just plain hard.

But the Good News is that no matter how bad we are at Matthew 18, no matter bad we are at loving those who are different than us, God's ability to draw us together is always more powerful than our attempts to keep ourselves apart. The Good News is that no matter how much we harm, or offend, or disappoint one another, God's ability to make things right is always more powerful than our ability to get things wrong (Bolz-Weber).

“I mean, if the church getting things wrong could destroy the Gospel, it would have been destroyed long before it was handed off to us to have our turn at getting it wrong. We Christians have done

our best to kill this thing and yet here it still is" (Bolz-Weber). The church has survived papal corruption and the crusades, bad televangelists and lutefisk dinners. And it will survive us too. Pastor Nadia Bolz-Weber would tell her new members something else in that new member class. "Welcome to House for All Sinners and Saints. This community will disappoint you. *But...*" she would continue, "if you decide to leave because we let you down, you might miss the way that the love of God can come in and fill the holes left by our community's failure, and that's just too beautiful and too real to miss."

"The love of God can come in and fill the holes left by our community's failure." *That's* what Jesus means when he promises to be present among us. Our sin pulls us apart, but the love of God holds us together even in spite of ourselves, inviting us into the hard work of honesty, listening, repentance, and reconciliation (Sutton). Inviting us into the hard work life together across difference. Inviting us into the hard work of living in this body many-membered body, members who desperately needs us, and members who we desperately need in return. Inviting us into hard work, yes, but also deep, deep joy.

Welcome to Cross of Glory Lutheran Church. We will disappoint you. Will you stick around when we do? I hope so. Because if you do, you just might catch a glimpse of God here. You just might encounter the God who defiantly keeps showing up in spite of us. The God who says that where two or more people who get things wrong, I am there. The God who is here in bread and wine and water and word, who is here in our distance and difference and disappointment, drawing us together in love. Thanks be to God! Amen.

Sources:

- Audrey West, "Commentary on Matthew 18:15-20," *Working Preacher*, Sept 6, 2020.
- Eric Baretto, "Commentary on Matthew 18:15-20," *Working Preacher*, Sept 7, 2014.
- Nadia Bolz-Weber, "A Sermon on Who to Trust - Us or Jesus," *Patheos*, Sept 8, 2014.
- Tillich, Paul. *The New Being* (New York: Scribner, 1955).

HYMN OF THE DAY #526 God is Here!

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| <p>1 God is here! As we your people
meet to offer praise and prayer,
may we find in fuller measure
what it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us,
all our varied skills and arts
wait the coming of the Spirit
into open minds and hearts.</p> <p>3 Here our children find a welcome
in the Shepherd's flock and fold;
here as bread and wine are taken,
Christ sustains us as of old.
Here the servants of the Servant
seek in worship to explore
what it means in daily living
to believe and to adore.</p> | <p>2 Here are symbols to remind us
of our lifelong need of grace.
here are table, font, and pulpit.
here the cross has central place.
Here in honesty of preaching,
here in silence, as in speech,
here, in newness and renewal,
God the Spirit comes to each.</p> <p>4 Lord of all, of church and kingdom,
in an age of change and doubt,
keep us faithful to the gospel.
help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication,
all we have to give, receive.
we, who cannot live without you,
we adore you! We believe!</p> |
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CONFESSION OF FAITH Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead? On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the

Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

OFFERTORY

Because we are unable to collect our regular offering during online worship, we invite you to send your offering to the church office (5929 Brooklyn Blvd, Brooklyn Center, MN 55429). Knowing that our income may be impacted during this time apart, we invite those with extra resources to make a special gift. Thank you for your generosity!

OFFERTORY RESPONSE #674 Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ

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| <p>1 Let us talents and tongues employ,
reaching out with a shout of joy:
bread is broken, the wine is poured,
Christ is spoken and seen and heard.</p> | <p>Refrain Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!
Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again,
pass the Word around: loaves abound!</p> |
| <p>2 Christ is able to make us one,
at the table he sets the tone,
teaching people to live to bless,
love in word and in deed express. Refrain</p> | <p>3 Jesus calls us in, sends us out
bearing fruit in a world of doubt,
gives us love to tell, bread to share:
God (Immanuel) ev'rywhere! Refrain</p> |

OFFERING PRAYER

Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. You have given us these gifts of your good creation. Nourish us with this food and drink, and send us forth to set tables in the midst of a suffering world, through Jesus Christ, the bread of life. Amen.

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE

Reconciled to God and to one another, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need...

God who loves, you've given us the gift of being part of your body. Forgive us for the ways we try to sever and separate ourselves from one another, and guide us in the ways of repentance and reconciliation. Bless the work of this church community as we share in both the disappointments and joys of life together. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God who listens, give us ears to listen well to one another, especially to the voices in our midst of the those who have been harmed, the voices of the disempowered and vulnerable, the voices of the poor, the abused, the uninsured, the unemployed, the unsheltered, the undocumented, the imprisoned. By listening to the voices of one another--of *the* other--may we hear your voice. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God who reconciles, be present in the conflicts between two or three, the conflicts between nations and political leaders, the conflicts between races and religious groups, the conflicts between family and friends. Guide us all in the ways of humility, of truth-telling, of justice, and of love. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God who gives life, enliven the seas, skies, and earth that you lovingly created, especially places that are currently suffering from fires, floods, hurricanes, drought, or pollution. And enliven us, that our actions would not bring harm to your creation, but may help to nurture and sustain it. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God who is with us, tend to all who yearn for your presence. For those who are grieving the loss of loved ones. For those who longing for community and connection. For those who are sick, and for all those who lovingly care for them. We pray especially for Bev Hoium, Karen Earnst, Gil

Hartlage, Nancy Hengel, Terry Stejskal, Jeffery, son of Harriet Halvorsen, and Bonnie and Kevin, family of Carol Sjoquist. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Just as you promise to be present in our conflicts, O Lord, so too be present in our prayers. We lift these prayers---and those that remain in the silence of our hearts---to you now, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered together as one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray the prayer Jesus taught us...

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, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

COMMUNION The body of Christ is given for you, and the blood of Christ is shed for you.

You are invited to partake in this holy meal at home with bread (or a cracker) and either wine or juice, trusting that God is present in it, and that it draws us together as one body, even while we are apart.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

God of the welcome table, in this meal we have feasted on your goodness. Gathered and sustained by the gifts of bread and wine, empower us now to share your abundant love with all who hunger, through Jesus Christ, the giver of life. Amen.

BLESSING

Mothering God, Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you and lead you into life. **Amen.**

SENDING FORTH SONG

#513

Listen, God is Calling

Refrain

(Listen,) listen, God is calling, through the Word inviting, offering forgiveness, comfort and joy.

(Listen,) listen, God is calling, through the Word inviting, offering forgiveness, comfort and joy.

1 (Jesus gave his mandate:)
share the good news
(that he came to save us)
and set us free. **Refrain**

2 (Let none be forgotten)
throughout the world.
(In the triune name of God)
go and baptize. **Refrain**

3 (Help us to be faithful,)
standing steadfast,
(walking in your precepts,)
led by your Word. **Refrain**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Love your neighbor.
Thanks be to God.

<p>Congregational Support as of 8/31/2020 Annual Budget: \$225,000.00 Year to Date Budgeted: \$150,166.68 Year to Date Received: \$147,842.03 Difference: \$-2,324,65</p>
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Community Announcements

- Following today's Zoom worship service, you're invited to Virtual Coffee Hour, an opportunity to connect with each other during a brief time of small-group fellowship.
- Bible Study continues to meet on Tuesday mornings at 9:30 am on Zoom. Join us as we explore the texts for the upcoming week.
- Next Sunday, September 13, Cross of Glory celebrates the installation of Pastor Ali Tranvik during worship. After Zoom worship, join us for a drive-by in the church parking lot between 12-2pm to greet Pastor Ali and Isak and grab an ice cream treat. More details are included in the green insert.
- We hold students, teachers, and families in prayer as the new school year begins! If you're interested in supporting students at Progeny Academy this fall in some capacity, whether through 1:1 tutoring, pen pals, etc., please let Pastor Ali know.
- Due to Labor Day, there is no Cross of Glory softball game scheduled for this coming Monday. Our next game will take place on 9/14 at 8:20 pm at the north field of Evergreen Park. Fans will sit physically distanced - bring your own lawn chair!
- Please contact Pastor Ali with any other announcements or pastoral concerns and needs. You can reach her by email (atranvik@crossofglory.us) or phone (763-533-8602).