

Bible reading Matthew 18 15-20

Hymn 712 - Singing- Put Peace in Each Other's hand

Dealing with Sin in the Church

¹⁵ “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.

¹⁸ “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be^[d] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be^[e] loosed in heaven.

¹⁹ “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three gathers in my name, there am I with them.”

New International Version (NIV)

Reflection

The Matthew text reminds me of a story that I heard of a teacher and a student. In a class of many students one student's watch went missing. The teacher therefore decided to search the pockets of the whole class. He told them to close their eyes and face the wall. The teacher went round and searched the students' pockets and found the watch in one boy's pocket. The teacher did not stop where he found the watch. He continued to search till to the end. He instructed everyone to sit down and told them that the watch was found. Other students wanted to know who had the watch but the teacher did not want to name and shame the student. Do we not live in a world where naming and shaming is the way of life?

After a while the student met the teacher at a wedding and the student went to the teacher and tried to remind the teacher of the watch incident, saying he was the one who stole the watch. The boy was therefore trying to remind the teacher and the teacher said he could not remember who it was and the boy was surprised by the teacher's response and he asked the teacher why he cannot remember. The teacher said he did not remember because his eyes were also closed therefore did not see who had the watch in their pocket. The story

is aligning very well with what Matthew text is saying. When we see a sister or a brother doing something wrong we should not name and shame them but talk to them in private between us. Our eyes should be closed to condemnation or judgment of others. If our brother or sister sin we should be able to point out their fault in a sisterly or brotherly manner without trying to humiliate or punish them.

But if the person does not heed then we should involve one or two people from the church as witnesses to the correction, but if they refuse to listen treat them as a pagan or tax collector. Why pagan or a tax collector because they have not accepted Christ and have no conviction therefore they should be shunned. Our actions should testify that we are the true children of the kingdom therefore whatever is bound on earth should be bound in heaven and whatever has been loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven. We should endeavour to walk in agreement to the glory of God. Our actions should talk Christ. It is time and now that we are encouraged to be doers of the word and not just hearers of the word. We should endeavour to change the world by our actions. In Jesus name. Hallelujah!

Prayer

Thank you, father, for such a reminder to be bold and encouraged to point out our sister's or brother's mistakes in a loving and caring manner. We are being reminded that we are our brother's keeper and not condemners of others for we also fall short of your glory. Teach us Lord to live a holy and righteous life for the time of judgment is near. We should be moved by love not to harm our neighbours but to show them love and walk in agreement and in the shadow of your grace. We pray that our eyes be blind to sin and see what is good. We say all this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen □□□□□□

*Prepared by **Rev Mary Sachikonye Methodist Minister for (Mile Cross, Costessey, Trinity Thorpe Marriott, Hosford and Drayton)** for a time as this. We are a church without walls. We should therefore, continue to proclaim the good news. I will be sending **Words of Hope** every week so that we may continue to nourish our spirits and continue to live in HOPE!*