

Matt 18:15-20

**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.
But 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.
If 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.
Truly I tell you whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and
whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.**

Meditation

**Last summer Bill and I had a chance to see “Hamilton”!
Oh my goodness!...it is as exceptional as you might have heard about!
The music is fantastic...and trust me... I’m not a rap music fan,
but I will freely admit that
I’m truly obsessed with the musical score: trying to learn the lyrics...
and I’ve learned a lot of American History through this play...
teachers are using it in their classrooms
One of the things that I learned was the way 2 people at that time
often settled disagreements and offenses: the duel
There is even a song entitled “The Ten Duel Commandments”..
which lays out the process of settling an argument by dueling....
although historians say there were actually 25 rules around a duel...**

**Well...that is one way of settling disagreements.
And although we don’t see many duels these days--**

at least not ones structured with rules and parameters--
we have all heard of people who reach for a gun as a knee jerk reaction
to a perceived indignation or real offence.

And of course other ways of settling disagreements:
There is the famous silent treatment...
or being just plain old passive aggressive...

The problem with all of these tactics is that none of them are very good
for actually resolving the problem...
All of them leave more hurt, more pain and more anger in their wake.

But in our reading today
Jesus offers a different path to conflict resolution and reconciliation ...
He's says: talk to each other!
listen to one another...the word listen is actually mentioned 4 times in this short reading!
go...seek out the one who has hurt you,
and work it out.

Ha! Now there is a novel approach!

One significant problem with this approach though,
is that most human beings don't know how to truly listen.
And it is not just due to electronics...

According to the International Listening Association:
although we spend 45% of our time appearing to listen
about 75% of that time,
we are distracted or preoccupied!

You know how that goes...

The other person is sharing their thoughts and feelings...

and even though I am not saying anything,

in my head I am rehearsing my brilliant argument

why they are wrong and I am right

or how my story will top their story

True listening requires that we get out of the chatter inside our heads and

actually pay attention to what the other person is saying.

By paying attention we offer respect to the other person.

and we acknowledge the humanity of the other person:

their needs and their desires as well as our own....

and when we offer respect...

whether or not it is returned to us,

we sense a rise in our own self respect....

because self respect is an inside job.

Truly listening to our opponent...

to the one who has harmed us

can actually be scary for some people...

what if I see their point?

What if I can understand their feelings?

What if I actually did something to contribute to them feeling that way?

What if I find out that I am wrong?

True listening requires humility and vulnerability.

and to be humble and vulnerable is not something that most of us were taught....

but learn it we must.

**Listening skill that can and must be taught...
it is an essential survival skill for our planet and for our species.
It is the path to reconciliation and peace....
and it needs to start now...
not next week or tomorrow but NOW.**

**Have you ever tried to really listen?
It's REALLY hard!
It takes a lot of energy and it takes time...
Two things that many of us say we don't have.
Ask anyone: How are doing?
Most people say: I'm so busy...
second answer: I'm tired!**

**Being tired and busy interferes with real listening...
mostly we just want the other person to agree with us
so we can move on and tackle the next thing on our to do list.**

**Most of us, most of the time feel we don't have the time for the patient,
back and forth dialogue that is necessary for resolving
conflicts in a mutually beneficial way.**

**Resolving conflicts and disagreements through
mutual listening and respect is not the common way
it is not often the easiest way....
It is not the way "everyone else does it",
but as followers of the Christ, we are asked to walk a different path:
a path of respect, forgiveness and love...
As followers of the Christ we have said yes to this path...
of respect, attention, vulnerability and humility.**

Jesus understood that walking this path wouldn't be easy..

He understood the human condition...

so he gave us his way resolving our eventual conflicts:

Listen to another, respect one another,

honor one another as a Child of God.

Will it always be successful?

No....but we must be willing to try something different if we want a different world for our children and grandchildren.

Remember the definition of insanity:

“doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result.”

Now is the time to begin to resolve our disagreements in a different way:

not tomorrow or next week.

Now is the time for finding different ways of settling the score,

of finding resolution to our differences,

for finding a solution to our differing values...

Now is the time to talk with the intention of listening and understanding,

Now is the time to find ways of coming to a win-win situation

rather than a winner take all scenario...

because with our technologies and capabilities ...there may soon be no 'all' left....

The consequences of our conversations and our actions have taken on global proportions...

and global implications.

Now is the time to change.

Now is the time to listen...

The only real question is: Are you willing? amen.