

FAITH @ HOME

Week of August 16, 2020

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Matthew 15:10-28

REFLECT: Today we learn that even Jesus used unkind words. A Canaanite woman comes to Jesus seeking help for her suffering child. She's desperate for a miracle, and Jesus calls her a dog, an ethnic slur common during his time. Jesus explains that his message and ministry are for Israelites only. It wouldn't be fair, Jesus explains, to take the banquet prepared for his people and give it to Gentiles, the dogs. Jesus is a product of the environment in which he was raised. Even as the Son of God, he was affected by the system of oppression and supremacy around him.

Look at how he responds when the woman confronts him. She challenges Jesus and changes him. She sees God's power in Jesus and knows God's grace extends to all people. She knows there is room at God's table for everyone. Even Jesus needs a teachable moment.

RESPOND: This week will surely present teachable moments like the Canaanite woman shared with Jesus. I guarantee at some point this week, my daughter will pinch my son to get his attention, he will scream, and she'll reply, "it didn't hurt!" I also expect my son to laugh at something my daughter says when she isn't trying to be funny, which will lead to tears, and he will respond, "why are you crying? It's not a big deal."

This is when I'll recite my parenting mantra, "we don't get to decide how other people feel." We don't get to decide how our words or actions affect other people. But if we see that something we say hurts another person's feelings or hurts their body, we shouldn't do it again. Even if what we did doesn't seem like a big deal.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: ALLISON LILES



The Rev. Allison Sandlin Liles is a wife, mother, peacemaker, and priest learning to navigate life in the suburban wilds of Dallas, Texas. After working as Episcopal Peace Fellowship's Executive Director for six years, Allison has re-entered parish ministry in the Diocese of Fort Worth. She currently serves as the Priest-in-Charge of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Hurst, Texas and the editor of *Grow Christians*, a ministry of Forward Movement.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Genesis 45:1-15

REFLECT: What is a gift? It isn't a form of payment or earned acknowledgement for anything the receiver has done. A gift is freely given. The receiver cannot demand a gift, or it is no longer a gift. A gift may be unexpected and undeserved. When Joseph's brothers arrive unaware before the brother they sold into slavery, Joseph gives them an incredible gift. For their treatment of him, they could have expected contempt. The brothers might have deserved retaliation, but instead, in an act of pure grace, Joseph not only forgives them but promises to use his powers to care for them and their families. Joseph can give this gift because he has been the recipient of a gift himself. God transformed the evil that Joseph's brothers did to Joseph into a gift, giving Joseph a life that he never could have had otherwise. It is easy to dwell on misfortune that has happened in our lives or to carry grudges against people who have let us down. It is easy to refuse to be gracious and to instead seek to settle the score and only give people what they think we they deserve. But that isn't how God deals with us.

RESPOND: What is the best gift you've ever been given? Was it a surprise? Something you always wanted? What is a gift that wasn't an object but rather an attitude – did someone forgive you? Did someone spend time with you? Make you feel as if you were special or talented or welcome or beloved? Was it a gift of grace? Now think about how it feels to give a gift – what are you trying to communicate with the gifts you give? Are you willing to give grace as easily as you give something that can be put in a box? Finally, what gifts has God given you? How do you think God feels about you when God gives you gifts? What might God be trying to communicate to you? Talk about the gifts in your life and the people with whom you have both given to and received gifts from.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: LISA BROWN



Lisa Brown is the Director of Digital Ministry for Membership Vision. She is passionate about enriching the spiritual lives of people of all ages, facilitating immersive learning opportunities, collaborative art installations, and digital engagement. Her book, *The Best VBS Workbook Ever!* was published in 2017 and she is also a contributing writer to John Roberto's book, "Faith Formation with a New Generation" and 2020 InsideOut camp curriculum. Lisa continues to grow in personal faith and understanding through her participation in Education for Ministry (EfM), and earned a Certification in Leadership in Lifelong Faith Formation from Virginia Theological Seminary and Forma. A native of Pittsburgh, Lisa enjoys hiking the woods of Western Pennsylvania.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Matthew 15:10-28

REFLECT: Picture in your mind: you are walking down the street and an unclean person approaches you. What would you do? I have witnessed with my eyes persons quickly walking away to avoid making contact, while there were those who stopped and engaged.

I recall a visit to Alabama. I was standing with a friend in Kelly Ingram Park. A man approached us, requesting food or money to buy food. My reaction was: how can I help this man to satisfy such hunger? How can I be Christ to this person?

What if you or I were in the shoes of the hungry person?

With a thankful heart, let us be kind to all we encounter. We are not sure what our lot might be. While we have the opportunity, let us do good. As my grandmother always said, "do good and good will follow you."

RESPOND: How can we respond to the growing trend of discrimination in our communities? Why can't we all live together as a unified body? Can you imagine the magnitude of the transformational impact? Gather some of your friends and come up with a plan for this: how can the church better help its community, especially the outcast, homeless, hungry and the oppressed?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: TREVAUGHN TODMAN



Trevaughn Todman is the Diocesan Youth Representative for the Episcopal Diocese of the Virgin Islands. Trevaughn loves playing and listening to music and spending time with colleagues and family. His life is based around God, music, and youth. He describes his calling with these lyrics from Charles Wesley: "To serve the present age, my calling to fulfill; O may it all my powers engage to do the Master's will."

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32

REFLECT: The gifts God gives you are irrevocable. This is important good news. There is nothing that this world can do to diminish or remove the what God gave you when you came into this world. Even though sometimes it feels like the opposite is true. We always have a way to return to our God given identity no matter how far we seem to be drawn from it by our circumstances. God's mercy means that God's love is always available to us. With that love comes grace and gifts according to the spirit. We are invited to claim this love and these gifts each and every day. God wants us to live our life in the knowledge of these things, to accept the gifts we have been given with gratitude, and to put them to good use.

RESPOND: Take some time to journal about a time in your life when you felt out of touch with your God given gifts. What did this feel like? How long did it last? Do you know what caused the separation? How did you reclaim ownership of these gifts? If you haven't yet what do you think it might take to do so? End your reflection time with this prayer: "I was made in the image and the likeness of my God. It's not something they can take from me. It's not something I can ignore. Because I was made in the image and the likeness of my God."

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: SAMANTHA CLARE



Samantha Clare serves as the Director of Christian Formation at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Fayetteville, AR. She has a passion for spreading Jesus' call for social justice and she helps people to make connections between their daily and spiritual lives so that they can bring their whole and authentic selves to the world. You can find more of her writing at samanthaclare.me.

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