

FAITH @ HOME

Week of September 27, 2020

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Philippians 2:1-13

REFLECT: This passage reminds us why we love other people: because we follow Jesus' example to do so! Paul reminds us that Jesus first loved us by giving of himself for us. Not only did Jesus live among us, teach us, and eat with us... he even died on the cross for us! Jesus' life and example shows us just how big and beautiful God's love really is.

Now, we might not sacrifice our lives in the exact same way that Jesus did. However, we can give of ourselves in ways that help others know just how much God loves them. Maybe it's sharing our favorite toys or snacks with a sibling, even when we don't want to. Maybe it's not going somewhere so that we can help other people stay healthy. Maybe it's giving up our own comforts and wearing a mask while at school or the grocery store. Maybe we give our birthday money to a stranger who needs it for food, clothes, or shelter. We do all of these things because we love others, just as Jesus first loved us.

RESPOND: Color and cut out hearts. On the hearts, write or draw ways you will model Jesus' love to others. What are things you can do to follow Jesus' example and give of yourself to others? How can you share with other people just how much they are loved and cared for? Hang these hearts up around your home and challenge your family to complete these actions over the next few weeks.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: VICTORIA HOPPES



Victoria Hoppes is the Director of Youth and Children's Ministries at Resurrection Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Indianapolis, Indiana. She also serves as the Project Coordinator for Faith @ Home. She has ministry experience with youth, family, and camping programs at both the parish and diocesan levels. She holds degrees from Texas Lutheran University and Luther Seminary. She also holds a certificate in Youth and Family Ministry from Forma's certificate program. You can follow Victoria on her website, www.ministryincontext.com, or on social media (@vlhoppes).

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Philippians 2:1-13

REFLECT: “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus...” (Philippians 2:5, NRSV) Wow! What a big task! Be like Christ. Paul wrote this to the Christians in a city called Philippi. He is writing them with instructions on how to be the church, a community of Christ believers. And his main instruction is to be outward-facing. This means thinking about others not just yourself. Being outward-facing could mean offering someone else the last piece of gum in a pack or sharing the last cookie, even though you really want it. Being outward facing may mean opening the door for someone or helping your sister or brother with a task, even when you don't want to. It means having “regard for others.” The good news is that we have a great model for what being outward facing looks like... Jesus.

RESPOND: This week, do 3 things daily that are “outward-facing.” Take note of how this makes the receiver of your acts of kindness feel. Take note of how it makes you feel? Reflect on what it would take to make “outward-facing” living a habit?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MALCOLM MCLAURIN



Malcolm is a seminarian out of the Diocese of Olympia and is currently a senior The University of the South: School of Theology in Sewanee, TN. His background is in children's, youth, and young adult ministry. His 20+ years of experience has taken him from Mississippi and Arkansas to California and Washington. He is a husband and father of two wonderful boys.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Philippians 2:1-13

REFLECT: *"It's mine! It's my right!"* Americans are people obsessed with rights. In fact, we even have the Bill of Rights. We know how important it is for people to have rights and are called to work to "respect the dignity of every human being" (*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 604) in our baptismal covenant.

Those aren't the rights Philippians talks about.

Jesus gave up his rights and privileges, not as a way to devalue who he was or a way to oppress others but as a way to demonstrate love. Jesus offers us a picture of one who has given up some of his rights, another way to look at it is Jesus gave some of his privileges, as a way to connect and help others become fully human in knowing God.

Sometimes our rights and privileges conflict with other people's dignity. Sometimes our need to grasp on to our "rights" is not love but rather selfishness. It's precisely those times that we, like Jesus, have the opportunity to give these up so that others may, too, be fully human.

RESPOND: What is one thing you can do to help advance other people's rights that respect the dignity of every human being? Watch a movie together that will highlight the lack of rights some people experience. In response to the movie, give up some of your rights to your own time to advocate and advance the rights of others through participating in a protest as a family or calling your representatives.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: HOLLY ZAHER



The Rev. Holly Rankin Zaher serves as Rector for St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Evansville, IN. For 30 years, Holly has helped people think and reflect on what it means to be church in today's culture in the Episcopal Church as a lay youth ministry professional and as a priest. If Holly isn't hanging out with her husband or three kiddos, she's probably somewhere reading, hiking, or making things out of yarn.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16

REFLECT: A friend of mine once told me that if I was having trouble seeing God's promises to read through old journal entries. When I was twenty-five years old, her wisdom was exactly what I needed to hear. Nearly twenty years later, though, I wonder how I'm supposed to claim God's promises when journaling is no longer my jam, and when life feels that much more, well, complicated.

But I think her suggestion still applies, even if I have to finetune my response a bit – because sometimes it's in the looking back that matters. In that way, Psalm 78 sets a storytelling tone, of recounting “to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.” (Psalm 78:4, NRSV). The last five verses then lay out step-by-step examples of God's promises lived out to God's people. Need a sea to part, in order to escape from the warring enemy? Here, watch as the water stands up like walls (Psalm 78:13). Feeling thirsty in the middle of the desert? Receive this drink, from hard rocks (Psalm 78:15). Because when we choose to enter into the sacred act of remembering, we can't help but lean into God's promises.

RESPOND: In a way, I hope you've already begun to respond to God's promises by letting your heart and your imagination fly in remembering. If you haven't already, grab a piece of paper and a pen (and perhaps a spot of tea, if that's your thing). You can go at this randomly, and like the Psalmist, jot down five memories when God showed up in your life – when the things you'd long prayed and hoped for were marked by gigantic holy thumbprints. Or perhaps you begin by thinking critically about different times in your life – childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, the middle years and the golden years, for instance – and by remembering a time when you lived into God's promises. However you end up going about it, might the sacred act of remembering bring you peace.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: CARA MEREDITH



Cara Meredith is a writer and speaker from Seattle, Washington. Her memoir, *The Color of Life: A White Woman's Journey Toward Love and Justice*, released in 2019 (Zondervan). You can connect with her on her website (<https://www.cameredith.com/>) and on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (@cameredithwrites).

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