

FAITH @ HOME

Week of October 18, 2020

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

REFLECT: Most of us came to know about Jesus for the first time because someone shared with us. Do you remember who first told you about Jesus? Maybe you were so little that you don't remember who first told you!

We learn about God, about what Jesus taught and did, and about how to grow in our faith as Christians by doing things the Church does. We read or listen to the Bible to learn the stories of God's people. We pray with words from our hearts or prayer books to talk to God. We worship with other people who make up the church community- in a building, online, outside, in a home, or somewhere else. Did you know that one of the oldest and most important ways people learn about God's love is through the words and actions of others? The earliest Christians didn't have a New Testament, prayer books or church buildings yet, but they shared how to follow Jesus with their words and by showing lots of love and welcome to others in the name of God. They knew that the love they shared with one another and others came right from God!

RESPOND: Draw a picture of a time when you felt God's love because of something another person in the church said or did. Take turns sharing who is in your picture and what the people in the picture are doing or saying. Talk about all the ways God teaches us about Jesus, love, and faith through other people. How can the ways we treat each other or the stories we share help others know that God loves them, too?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: MICHELLE BULLOCK



Michelle Bullock serves as Rector at St. Peter's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church in Swansboro, NC. She has a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education (Appalachian State University) and Master's of Divinity (Duke Divinity School) and has a background in youth and children's ministry, and formerly served as a school chaplain. She and her husband have two daughters in preschool and elementary school. You can follow Michelle on her website at revbullock.com.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Matthew 22:15-22

REFLECT: Many people have heard the old saying: “Don’t talk about religion and politics.” But I think there’s grave danger in abiding by this saying. Our reluctance to talk about religion and politics is one of the reasons we’re facing such a hostile environment these days. Instead of digging into the difficult work of learning how to talk (and disagree) with one another on serious matters of the heart and soul, we punted and let the adage create a false narrative that polite folks don’t engage in such conversations.

First, as Christians, we must talk about our faith. Jesus tells us to go and make disciples, to share the good news of love and light with all we meet. Our faith is fundamental to the why of our lives. And politics is central to the how we live our lives. Political systems provide an infrastructure for safety, education, health, care for creation, our financial system, and so much more. If we can’t talk about the why and how of our lives, what is there to talk about besides the weather?! In this passage from Matthew, Jesus is clear about maintaining a separation of church (religion) and state (politics), but that doesn’t mean they’re not connected. Our civic decisions should be deeply rooted in our faith values. The two are not separate streams never to run together but ones that feed into the same body of water, this world in which we live and love.

RESPOND: Talking about religion and politics is important, but it isn’t always easy. However, it’s critical that we give our children the tools to navigate these conversations and the opportunity to develop the skills. Over this next week, spend time talking about how government works. For older elementary students, look into the *Who Was/What Was* series. Then, ask your children about the role of faith in government decisions. You might compare the Baptismal Promises with the Bill of Rights. What are the similarities? What are the differences? Don’t worry if these conversations are awkward at first. We have been trained all our lives to avoid these kinds of talks. Let us not repeat that mistake with this generation.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: RICHELLE THOMPSON



Richelle Thompson lives in the beautiful bluegrass of Kentucky, near Cincinnati, with her husband, their two children, a horse, a cat, and two dogs. She serves as the deputy director and managing editor of Forward Movement, a ministry of the Episcopal Church and publisher of the daily devotional, *Forward Day by Day*.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Matthew 22:15-22

REFLECT: “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Matthew 15:21, NRSV) Once again, we find Jesus being questioned. A group of pharisees who were really out to trick Jesus. So, they asked him, “Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?” Now, this might not sound like a trick question, but it was. The imperial tax meant that the Romans forcefully took money from the Jews and if the Jews did not pay it, they were punished. If Jesus said yes to paying taxes, it would make the Jews very angry. But if Jesus said no, this was reason to send him straight to jail for defying Emperor Caesar. Instead, Jesus does not say yes or no. On the other hand, his answer was quite simple. He instructed them to give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.

RESPOND: Today’s lesson from Matthew is one used often during stewardship season. Are we remembering to give to God what is God’s? Stewardship isn’t just about money though. It’s so much more. When I think of stewardship, I think about superheroes because stewardship is also about using your gifts and talents and giving those to God as well. Superheroes use their gifts and talents so clearly and wear them visibly on their sleeves. They live their lives based on those special gifts. What if we chose to be stewards like them? What are your gifts and talents? How can you be a good steward? Can you sing? - join the choir. Can you serve? - be an acolyte. Do you have hands willing to work? - help clean a neighbor’s yard. Remember, there is a superhero in all of us.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: LAUREN WAINWRIGHT



Lauren Wainwright currently serves as the Director of Student Ministries at Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in Dallas, TX. She has worked with large and small churches across several dioceses over the past 13 years, serving in youth ministry. Lauren is originally from Hattiesburg, Mississippi where she first began her call to ministry but has called Dallas home for the past 4 years. In her free time, she enjoys reading, Netflix watching, and spending time with her 2 dogs at home.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Matthew 22:15-22

REFLECT: *“Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”* (Matthew 15:21, NRSV) This narrative that tells the story of Jesus’s response to the inquiry about whether it is lawful to pay taxes is a familiar story to many of us. What makes Jesus’s response so profound in this moment of him being challenged, is that he isn’t speaking negatively about the law or expectation to “pay taxes,” but yet, Jesus is calling his followers, as well as those who are gathered being witnesses to his message, to think about how they are giving to God. Something that I know at times can easily be forgotten. In this season where many of us are being asked to think about being good stewards, I find myself asking: how am I giving to God what is God’s? Each of us have been entrusted with the care of all of God’s creations: the land, the animals, and one another. God has blessed us with gifts and passions to do such work, to be such stewards, and yet, we forget to use these blessings for such a cause, sometimes we forget to give of ourselves to God.

RESPOND: As we think about the ways that we might financially support our faith communities in our various stewardship seasons, I challenge ourselves, to additionally ask the questions: How am I giving of my time to my faith community? How am I living out my Christian Vocation, my baptismal vocation, ensuring that I am giving myself through acts of calling for Justice, giving of myself of through acts of Love, hope and peace, in my community, in my work, and in this world? Taking the time to list and record these things, just as we do our pledges, may also serve as an accountability for how we are pledging and giving of ourselves to our God.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: CHRISTOPHER DECATUR



The Rev. Christopher Decatur is the Deacon in Charge at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Cleveland, Ohio. He is a graduate of Virginia Theological Seminary. Prior to seminary, Chris served at Trinity Cathedral in Cleveland, OH as the Associate Minister for Children, Youth, Family, Young Adult and Campus Ministries. Chris also has served as “The Chair of The Subcommittee for Racial Reconciliation and Justice for The Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music.” Chris has an undergraduate degree in Comparative Religion from Cleveland State University and years of studies and practicing of Early Childhood Education at both CSU and as a student at The Catholic University of America.

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