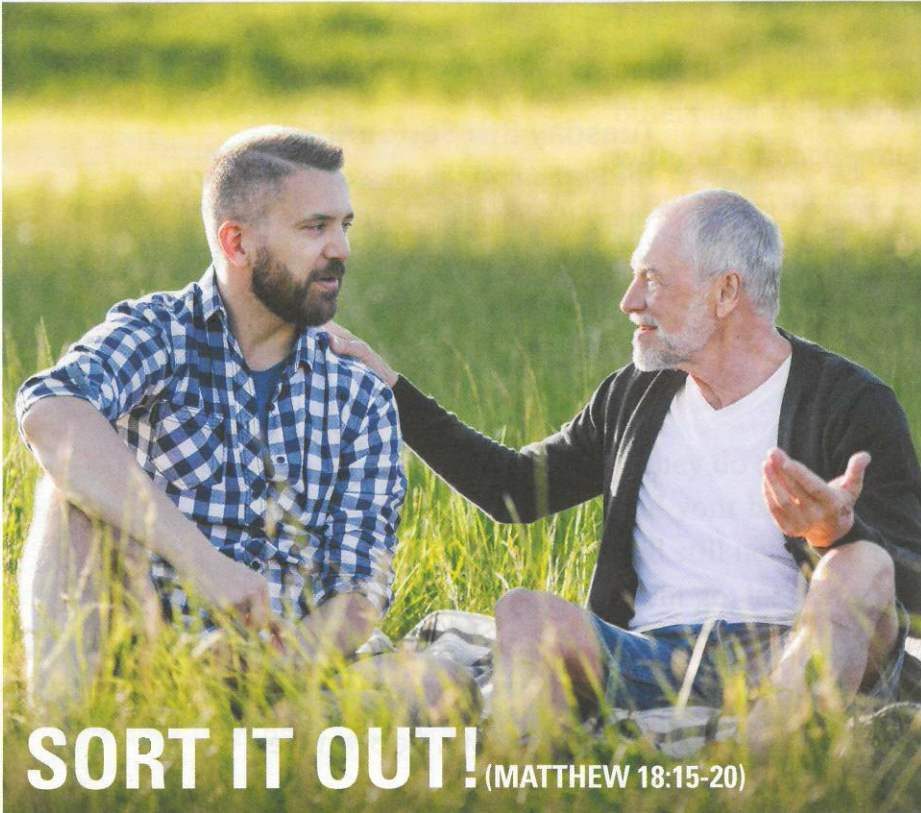


Sunday Message

THE WORD

Year A • Psalter Week 3



SORT IT OUT! (MATTHEW 18:15-20)

Matthew continues his account of the teaching of Jesus about life in community. Jesus accepts that relationships between disciples are likely to go wrong from time to time, but the true disciple will not allow such a situation to continue.

The threefold procedure which Matthew presents is the Jewish way of resolving a grievance: first, the personal, informal confrontation; secondly, the more formal meeting in the presence of witnesses; and thirdly, when these attempts fail, the official proceedings in front of the community, the Church. Treating the offender "like a pagan or a tax collector" can be understood as excommunicating them from the body of believers: it might also be taken to mean that they need further evangelising and training in what it means to be a disciple of Jesus.

Earlier in the Gospel narrative, Jesus had given Peter the power to bind and loose, to forbid and to allow. Here, he gives the same power and authority to the wider group of disciples. The way in which this is expressed means that God will accept whatever decision the disciples arrive at. And Jesus will be present when disciples gather in his name, he will be truly *Emmanuel*, "God-with-us". ■

LEARN

The term "brother" here signifies another member of the community: we can reasonably understand it as meaning brother or sister.

In Rabbinic thought, the divine presence is with people who study *Torah*, the Law.

In some synagogues, a light is kept burning in front of the Ark, the cupboard where the scrolls of the scriptures are kept. Christians will recognise the significance of this sanctuary lamp.

The divine presence is denoted by the Hebrew noun *Shekhinah*.

REFLECT

Misunderstandings are a very common occurrence in social interaction. We can all think of occasions when someone has taken something we have said in the wrong way, and when we have done the same. Judaism and Christianity are both community religions, and so it is important for the wider group that such damaged relationships should be repaired as soon as possible. Jesus tells us that if we are at odds with someone, then we should sort it out before we come to celebrate the Eucharist, which is the sign of unity among those who are taking part. Whether we are the innocent or guilty party does not matter; we are told that we are to clear the air and be reconciled. Otherwise, we are likely to end up in that most unhealthy of emotional states, resentment. Anger can compel us towards action: resentment simply turns us in on ourselves, nursing our wrath to keep it warm. For our own sake, even if our efforts fail, we are encouraged to do what we can to put things right.

Also in our Gospel passage, we find that Jesus gives the same authority to the wider group of disciples as he gave to Peter in the matter of deciding what to allow and what to forbid. Perhaps there is a lesson here for discerning decisions in the Church today. ■

DO

Sort out any awkward situation you experience with another person, especially anyone with whom you celebrate the Eucharist.

SAY

How very good and pleasant it is, when kindred live together in unity! (Psalm 133:1)



ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

You are just, O Lord, and your judgement is right;
treat your servant in accord with your merciful love.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, by whom we are redeemed and receive adoption,
look graciously upon your beloved sons and daughters,
that those who believe in Christ may receive true freedom and an everlasting inheritance.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Ezekiel 33:7-9

A reading from the prophet Ezekiel.

The word of the Lord was addressed to me as follows, "Son of man, I have appointed you as sentry to the House of Israel. When you hear a word from my mouth, warn them in my name. If I say to a wicked man: Wicked wretch, you are to die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked man to renounce his ways, then he shall die for his sin, but I will hold you responsible for his death. If, however, you do warn a wicked man to renounce his ways and repent, and he does not repent, then he shall die for his sin, but you yourself will have saved your life."

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 94

Response:

O that today you would listen to his voice!
Harden not your hearts.

1. Come, ring out our joy to the Lord;
hail the rock who saves us.
Let us come before him, giving thanks,
with songs let us hail the Lord. (R.)

2. Come in; let us bow and bend low;
let us kneel before the God who made us
for he is our God and we
the people who belong to his pasture,
the flock that is led by his hand. (R.)

3. O that today you would listen to his voice!
"Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as on that day at Massah in the desert
when your fathers put me to the test;
when they tried me, though they saw my work." (R.)

SECOND READING Romans 13:8-10

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans.

Avoid getting into debt, except the debt of mutual love. If you love your fellow men you have carried out your obligations. All the commandments: You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and so on, are summed up in this single command: You must love your neighbour as yourself. Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour; that is why it is the answer to every one of the commandments.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Your word is truth, O Lord,
consecrate us in the truth.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 18:15-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Jesus said to his disciples: "If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone, between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you: the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain any charge. But if he refuses to listen to these, report it to the community; and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector.

"I tell you solemnly, whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.

"I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them."

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

**I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.**

**I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;**

through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,

(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O God, who give us the gift of true prayer and of peace,
graciously grant that, through this offering,
we may do fitting homage to your divine majesty
and, by partaking of the sacred mystery,
we may be faithfully united in mind and heart.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Like the deer that yearns for running streams,
so my soul is yearning for you, my God;
my soul is thirsting for God, the living God.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant that your faithful, O Lord,
whom you nourish and endow with life
through the food of your Word and heavenly Sacrament,
may so benefit from your beloved Son's great gifts
that we may merit an eternal share in his life.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

Christ asks for a home in your soul, where he can be at rest with you, where he can talk easily to you, where you and he, alone together, can laugh and be silent and be delighted with one another.

Caryll Houselander