



Newsletter Friday, September 4, 2020

Dear friends of Emmanuel,

I am pleased to be back at Emmanuel after being away for four weeks. In my absence, the liturgy was carried out in a beautiful and inspiring way by many of Emmanuel's parishioners. What great theologians you all are! I look forward to our Dialogue Sermon this [Friday, September 4, at 7:00 p.m.](#) live on Zoom. Please go to the website to find sermons you might have missed.

The gospel for this week is Matthew 18:15-20. Jesus tells us - if a member of the church offends you, go and point out the fault, first alone, then with others, then among the congregation. These words seem like precise instructions for how to deal with someone in the congregation with whom we have found "fault". It is so tempting to use these "instructions" as a literal guide for how to deal with someone we don't like, or someone with whom we disagree! Alas! Before we get sidetracked on what seems a simple directive, it is important to understand the context of the writing. Remember that before the gospels were written, the oral and written traditions of the Hebrew scriptures were observed as proscriptive 'Law.' In that context, the Law used in this passage comes directly from the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy 19:15.

A single witness shall not suffice to convict a person of any crime ... Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be sustained.

This 'Law', as written in Deuteronomy, was used in courts and synagogues as directions on the procedure for determining guilt or innocence. Jesus' intent in the context of the Deuteronomy passage is reminding the crowd (and us) not to make judgements quickly or without the counsel of others. He is giving instructions for expanding evidence by increasing the number of witnesses. It is not our custom to think of the church as a substitute for a court of law. On the other hand, aren't we making public our (the churches') convictions on moral and ethical grounds often and in public?

What do we do with Matthew's words in 2020? I think they are there to help us define for ourselves and our communities who we are, our identity. The Black Lives Matter movement, for example,

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**FRIDAY NIGHT Live
Zoom Service this week
only at [7:00 pm](#) Friday,
September 4, 2020**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/92875129920?pwd=Nfh4Y25QSTg1ci9HcVBuT1c0Y3QrUT09>

Meeting ID: 928 7512 9920

Passcode: 900493

Coffee Hour follows our live Zoom Service. (It is not recorded)

**After 10:00 pm on
Friday, view the TAPED
service anytime via our
YouTube site:**

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCEQm5KH2wGB_XbZ8h9jldhA

Have a comment on our service/sermon dialog?

We welcome your feedback on our YouTube page. Have a question for next week? Email us at: info@emmanuelwr.org

gives us a moral and ethical identity. When we say that we do not tolerate racism, or sexism or homophobia in our community, we define ourselves. And we define ourselves as follower of Jesus Christ. Jesus' remarks call us to expand our 'witnesses', to open our dialogue, to measure our judgments carefully and to work for justice.

The epistle from Romans gives the instrument of measure, love. "Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the Law." Perhaps if we focused more intently on that Law, we would find fewer 'faults' in others.

From one who joins the struggles with you, peace,

The Rev. Dr. Joyce Caggiano

More News:

As some of you may know, Rev. Joyce is not only a talented seamstress, but she is also a gifted artist. She is featured in a recent edition of the Dedham Art Association newsletter as "Artist of the Month". Read here:

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