



9/10/17 Mt. 18:15-20 & Ezek. 33: 7-9

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Link to [Beck](#) (paywall) other [Beck](#)

Stone, Naomi. [The Revelation of Freedom](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. On [Carrying Ecclesiastical Tension](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

[You tube link](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

These days we hear of the need for each person to take responsibility for the welfare of the community. All across the world people are identifying the ways people abuse and use each other, and finding ways to address the wrong doing. Jesus in this teaching outlines a method that seems to legitimate casting out the wrong doer. Yet when we look to the ways that he actually treats the pagans and tax collectors we are confronted with our need to forgive. Once again we bump into the reality that God's will is for each of his beloved to be united in love.

Mt. 18:15-20

15 If your **brother sins** against **you**, go and show him his **fault**, just between the **two of you**. If he **listens** to **you**, **you have won**

your **brother** over. 16 But if he will **not listen**, take **one** or **two others** along, so that 'every matter may be **established** by the **testimony** of two or three **witnesses**.' 17 If he **refuses** to **listen** to them, **tell it** to the **church**; and if he **refuses** to **listen** even to the **church**, treat him as you would a **pagan** or a **tax collector**. 18 I tell **you** the truth, whatever you **bind** on **earth** will be **bound** in **heaven**, and whatever **you loose** on **earth** will be **loosed** in **heaven**. 19 Again, I tell **you** that if **two of you** on **earth agree** about anything you **ask for**, it **will be done** for **you** by my Father in **heaven**. 20 For where **two** or **three come together** in my **name**, there am **I with them**."

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Jesus longs to win over the hearts of those who we think have chosen a wrong path. Have you ever tried his method to do that and if so how did it go?

PRAYER: Peacemaker Jesus, once in a while something happens that threatens my relationship with someone. I treasure that relationship and I need a way to speak my truth or the relationship begins to die so what do I do? You walk me through a process that can name the problem and still find a solution. Help me as I try this process. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

BROTHER / OTHERS / CHURCH: Jesus teaches that correcting a grave fault is a process that begins at a one to one level. Failing that, move next to a select few to help in the process. Finally, the entire faith community is to apply the extreme medicine of excommunication.

How do you feel about this advice?

SINS / FAULT: When dealing with an issue that threatens the integrity of the faith community a person must identify the fault and judge it to be dangerous if left un-addressed.

What issues have this divisive power in your faith community today?

YOU: Matthew has Jesus using the word *you* ten times in this short passage. If you are the one who has identified the fault/sin, it becomes imperative that *you* not ignore it and hope it will just go away.

How do you know when it is up to you today or do something to correct a wrong?

TWO / ONE: In order to fulfill Dt. 17:1-7 at least two witnesses must testify to the same thing. This is a very serious matter (Ex. 20:16; Acts 6:13; Dt. 19:15-21), which has life threatening consequences for all concerned.

Who would you go to for help in confronting a wrong? Why did you choose that person?

LISTENS / NOT LISTEN: Hopefully when approached, the person accepts the feedback from the one who wants to maintain a healthy relationship. There are frequent references in early church documents to suggest that settling grave issues was a persistent problem. (See references below)

Are there issues facing the church community today that make it hard for you to listen? If so, what are they and why do they challenge you?

WON: To engage in a struggle and ultimately to prevail is to have won. An archaic use of the word includes dwelling, abiding, or staying. This use of the word fits well with the ultimate consequence if the matter cannot be settled.

Have you ever had to go this entire route in order to 'win' back a relationship? Does this passage give you any new ideas on how to go about this tough struggle?

ESTABLISHED: Acts that threaten the stability of a relationship or a community are at issue in this teaching. Once the matter is successfully corrected we speak of an establishment of harmony/unity.

How well 'established' are your connections with those you live and worship with?

TESTIMONY / TELL IT: To openly proclaim something to be true involves risk. Being a Christian in Matthew's time was a very risky business.

Have you ever had to risk something because of your faith? Did you then need to tell it to someone in order to claim your truth?

WITNESSES: A witness is someone who has personally seen/experienced something.

Have you ever been a witness to something that eventually called you to testify to it? If so, what was it?

REFUSES: To refuse is to decline, to bend or curve back. All these words indicate a reversal of sorts.

When was the last time you declined or turned back on an offer of reconciliation? Can you remember why you were not able to accept the offer?

PAGAN / TAX COLLECTOR: In Matthew's Jewish Christian community, these words were code words for people outside of his understanding of God.

How did Jesus deal with pagan and tax collectors? Who are the pagans/tax collectors of our day? What makes them outsiders?

BIND / BOUND / LOSE / LOOSED: Once again we are told that it is up to us to decide what we will choose to hold on to and what we will let go free.

Who has the power under this system? What is Jesus saying about God by repeating this teaching?

EARTH / HEAVEN: Jesus links everything and all time together by using these terms.

Is your understanding of reality linked together in one undivided whole, or do you separate things? If you do separate things, how does that help? Hurt?

AGREE / COME TOGETHER: To agree is a form of coming together. There are some things that can only be held together/ agreed upon within the grace of God.

Can you remember a time when this was true for you? How did it turn out?

ASK FOR: Jesus recognizes that serious issues will emerge that will take communal prayer for God's help in order to hold on to truth.

When confronting an issue that has the potential to fragment a relationship, do you take the time to bring it to God in prayer before attempting reconciliation?

WILL BE DONE: Another way of saying truth is to say God's will be done.

Do you have a lively sense that God's will is the same thing as truth?

NAME / I AM WITH YOU: One of Jesus' names is Emmanuel; that is, God is with us.

Have you ever felt Jesus' presence with you as you confronted someone with truth in love? If so, how did that awareness enable you to 'win' your relationship?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Mt. 18: 15 // Lev. 19:17; Sir. 19:13; Gal. 6:1; Mt. 18:16 // Dt. 19:15; Jn. 8:17; 1 Tim. 5:19f; Mt. 18: 17 // 1 Cor. 5:9-13; Mt. 18:18 // Jn. 20:23; Mt. 18:19 // Mt. 7:7f; Jn. 15:7; Mt. 18:20 // 1 Cor. 5:4;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK: Ezek. 33:7-9; [Ps. 95: 1-2, 6-9](#); Rom. 13: 8-10; Mt. 18: 15-20; Revised Common Lectionary: Ex. 12:1-14; [Ps. 149](#); Rom. 13:8-14; Mt. 18: 15-20;

SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

Many people who have suffered the most horrendous rejections and been subject to the most cruel torture are able to choose love. By choosing love they become witnesses not only to enormous human resiliency but also to the divine love that transcends all human loves. Those who choose, even on a small scale, to love in the midst of hatred and fear are the people who offer true hope to our world. Henri Nouwen

Choices. Choices make the difference. Two people are in the same accident and severely wounded. They did not choose to be in the accident. It happened to them. But one of them chose to live the experience in bitterness, the other in gratitude. These choices radically influenced their lives and the lives of their families and friends. We have very little control over what happens in our lives, but we have a lot of control over how we integrate and remember what happens. It is precisely these spiritual choices that determine whether we live our lives with dignity. Henri Nouwen

Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. -Elie Wiesel

In perplexities - when we cannot tell what to do, when we cannot understand what is going on around us -let us be calmed and steadied and made patient by the thought that what is hidden from us is not hidden from Him. Frances Ridley Havergal

Every action of our lives touches on some chord that will vibrate in eternity.... Edwin Hubbel Chapin (1814-1880)

How can we forgive those who do not want to be forgiven? Our deepest desire is that the forgiveness we offer will be received. This mutuality between giving and receiving is what creates peace and harmony. But if our condition for giving forgiveness is that it will be received, we seldom will forgive! Forgiving the other is first and foremost an inner movement. It is an act that removes anger, bitterness, and the desire for revenge from our hearts and helps us to reclaim our human dignity. We cannot force those we want to forgive into accepting our forgiveness. They might not be able or willing to do so. They may not even know or feel that they have wounded us. The only people we can really change are ourselves. Forgiving others is first and foremost healing our own hearts. Henri Nouwen

Forgiveness means tapping into a wellspring of compassion that encompasses the hurt and sucks the venom out, so that we can go forward making a positive contribution without hatred. Elizabeth Johnson

I believe with all my heart that the Gospel is all about the mystery of forgiveness. When you "get" forgiveness, you get it. We use the phrase "falling in love." I think forgiveness is almost the same thing. It's a mystery we fall into: the mystery is God. Richard Rohr

The community as a fraternal communion of love in the Spirit, is a *God-enlightened space in which to experience the hidden presence of the Risen Lord (Vita Consecrata 42; Mt. 18:20). Pg. 237.*

Olivera, Bernardo, O.C.S. O. *The Search for God: Conference, letters, and homilies.* Kalamazoo, MI. Cistercian Pub. 2002.

Rabbinical Saying: "When two sit together, and the words of the Law are between them, the Shekinah is in their midst."

The mark of a faithful community is not similarity of its members, but how it loves. [Fr. Jonah Wharff 5/2/16](#)

More than letting go of offences, forgiveness achieves consubstantiality. To forgive is to humble oneself before the other, to serve the other, to place the other before oneself. It is to overcome all that comes between oneself and the other – all the ego's defense strategies, all contra-dictions, contra – thoughts, and contra – feelings. It is to have overcome the fear of death as the great separator and destroyer of trust so as to be able to give oneself wholly and unconditionally to the other in service and love. Only then can one co-speak with one voice. Bamford, Christopher. *The Joy of Two.* Parabola. Winter 2004. Pg. 13.

Reading 66 Chapter 10 [The Didascalia](#) (A third century document that served as a church manual)

As a heathen," thus, "and as a publican let him be accounted by you" who has been convicted of evil deeds and of falsehood. And afterwards, if he promise to repent as in the case when the heathen desire and promise to repent, and say "we believe," we receive them into the congregation that they may hear the word. But we do not communicate with them until they receive the seal and become perfected. Thus also do we not communicate with these until they show the fruits of repentance. But let them certainly come in, if they wish to hear the word that they may not completely perish. But let them not communicate in prayer, but go outside. For they also, when they have seen that they do not communicate with the church, will subdue themselves, and repent of their former deeds, and strive to be received into the church for prayer. And again they likewise who see and hear them go forth like the heathen and publicans, will fear and take warning to take heed to themselves not to sin, lest it happens thus to them also, and being convicted of sin or falsehood they go out from the church. Ehrman, Bart. *After the New Testament.* NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1999. Pg. 357.

Gentiles and tax collectors for Jesus were objects of mission, people to be won over to the community of disciples. The community was to focus its attention on reconciliation (finding and bringing back the lost sheep). The teaching of Jesus reverses the expectation of

retaliation invoked by the reference. The reversal in turn confirms the inhibition of expected revenge exhibited in Matthew's plot. Significantly, this text belongs to a family of scenarios that preview the possibilities of negotiation and non-retaliation. (Note) Precedent is found in scenarios of negotiation vs. deliverance (5: 25) resistance vs. nonresistance (5: 39-40) and negotiation vs. banishment (18: 15-17). Endorsement is found in the convergence between non-retaliation and forgiveness, when seen in terms of cyclical violence. Beck, Robert R. The Banished Prince: Nonviolent Resolution of Conflict in the Doubled Plot of Matthew.. 2002

Long-suffering and readiness to forgive curb anger; love and compassion wither it. St. Thalassios the Libyan

The person who loves God cannot help loving every man as himself, even though he is grieved by the passions of those who are not yet purified. But when they amend their lives, his delight is indescribable and knows no bounds. We actively manifest love in forbearance and patience towards our neighbor, in genuinely desiring his good, and in the right use of material things. . St Maximos the confessor

A man who has been assiduous in acquiring the fruits of love will not cease loving even if he suffers a thousand calamities. Let Stephen, the disciple of Christ, and others like him persuade you of the truth of this (Acts 7:60). Our Lord Himself prayed for His murderers and asked the Father to forgive them because they did not know what they were doing (Luke 23:34). . St Maximos the confessor

There is a story of Gandhi that reveals how profound and daring his sense of compassion was. It occurred during one of his famous hunger strikes. A man whose daughter was killed came in anguish, saying to Gandhi that he would stop fighting if the great soul would eat. But Gandhi knew the healing was deeper than just stopping the violence, and so he told the man he would eat only when the tormented father embraced the man who killed his daughter.

Nepo, Mark. The Book of Awakening. Berkeley, CA. Conari Press. 2000. Pg. 179.

There is a big peace. There is a little peace. But there is no little quarrel – even a matchstick can burn down an entire village. Amadou Hampate Ba

Every man seeks peace by waging war, but no man seeks war by waging peace. Augustine

Do you know that you are never absolutely sure you're right when you're living in faith? That's exactly why it's called "faith!" I wonder where this modern demand for certitude came from, which has produced fundamentalism? At the crucial moments in your life's decision making, you are always trusting in God's guidance and mercy and not in your own perfect understanding. You're always "falling into the hands of the living God," as Hebrew 10:31 says, letting God's knowing suffice and God's arms save. Although, it does say in the same verse that it is a "scary" or "awesome" thing to do.

Richard Rohr: Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality, p. 136

Rabbinic sources indicated that a person should never shame another publicly or he/she could be excluded from the world to come (*b.Sanh. 107a*). Two or *three witnesses*, Jewish law required witnesses for a charge to be leveled (Duet 17: 6-7; 19: 15' cf. *t. Sanh. 9:3*; Rev 11) Gentiles and tax collectors, people requiring evangelization. Bind loose, see 16:19. *Two or three are gathered*, rabbinic teachings stated that the Divine (Heb "*shekinah*") is present when people study Torah (m. Avot 3.2,6)_ Pgs. 33-34.

[The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

I felt angry toward my friend, I told my wrath. My wrath did end. I felt angry toward my foe. I told him not. My wrath did grow. William Blake

He who thinks that loving one's enemies is impractical doesn't take into account the practical consequences of hating one's enemies. Erich Fried

The gospel tells us, "*But to those who did accept Him He gave the power to **become**...*" (Jn 1:12). It tells us that, by entering into a relationship, we can become something we are not now. In that relationship we will receive a good we do not now have, but which we desire. Fr. Jonah Wharff

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2014. Pgs. 172-176. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2008. Pgs. 142-147. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

Beck, Robert. Sunday Homilies: Cycle A 2001. Pgs. 138-140. To order contact [Carol Oberfoell](#)

White, William R Stories for the Gathering_ Augsburg Pub. House. Minneapolis, MN. 1997. FAMILY FEUD. Pages 78f.

William R. White, Stories for the Journey Augsburg Pub. House, Minneapolis, MN. 1988. **Leaking Sins**. Page 47.

Aurelio, John R. Fables for God's People_ Crossroad, NY. 1988. THE SACK Pages 25-27.

Greeley, Andrew_When Life Hurts_ Chicago. Thomas More Press. 1988. . **Settling our Quarrels**. Pages 40ff.

Bayton, Bishop John. **Making the Points of Transition. Parabola**. Spring 2000. Pages 90ff.