



Reflection for September 6

By Bishop Jung



'If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector. (Matthew 18:15-17)

The year 2020 has been hard on almost everyone, and we all deal with difficulty, stress, and anxiety in different ways. We have seen great works of generosity, community, and kindness, but we have also seen grave injustice, terrible violence, and suffered incredible loss. Many of our disagreements and differences have erupted in conflict and anger. Very few people operate well under stress, and it is very easy to become emotional and reactive.

The author of Matthew's gospel reminds us of instructions he heard Jesus share in the first century, where there were significant divisions between Jew and Gentile, and despised categories of people, such as tax collectors and prostitutes. The heart of Jesus' teaching is to address differences between people with respect, directly and with community support. Additionally, every effort should be taken for reconciliation and repair. First, we try to heal the relationship one-on-one. If the situation cannot be resolved, we enlist one or two impartial members of the community. If this fails, then and only then, we make the conflict public with the entire community of faith. Only after every attempt at healing, reconciliation, and communal intervention do we finally give up and separate.

The essence of this teaching is radical compassion and total commitment to healing relationships. There may be rare occasions when this cannot occur, but in most instances where we treat other people with respect, civility, patience, and kindness, forgiveness and reconciliation occur. This is true for individuals, and it can be true for groups, nations, and countries as well. My ongoing prayer is for reconciliation and reunification in my homeland Korea. I pray for unity and restoration in our United Methodist Church. I pray for grace and harmony in our Wisconsin Conference. And I pray for radical inclusion and racial justice in our United States. I believe that God is constantly working in us and through us to heal all divisions and injuries, curing us of the sins that tear us apart through grace and love.

Prayer: God who is love, God who loves, God who teaches us how to love, let us truly care for each other in meaningful and transformative ways. Make our love unconditional. Make our love inclusive. Make our love a healing

force in a world where people argue, fight, insult, and injure. Unite us in your love, gracious God. Amen.

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May this devotion provide you with a moment of faithful reflection and care. You are involved in ministries of justice and witness, in ministries of standing up and standing with people working to create better systems and communities, in ministries of learning and searching and researching to become more aware and awakened, more technologically savvy and proficient, more virtually and personally present in your churches and communities and world. Each of us who serve as members of your Wisconsin Cabinet write these devotions in grateful prayer for you – for sustenance and buoyancy, for strength and courage, for safety and just actions, and for faith and love to be full and fulfilled in your daily lives. God’s grace and blessings, God’s challenge and healthy discomfort, God’s Spirit and energy be with you, in the hope Christ offers us all.

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