

**Don't Fit In**  
**A Reflection for Confirmation Sunday**  
From the Bible: Matthew 5: 14-16

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May 6, 2018

I am certain you already know this, but just to make sure.

I speak for Kathy as well as myself when I say that when she and I talk with you about what it means to follow Jesus or about how we think about and imagine God, it is more than just words and more than just what we are supposed to say or do. In all the conversations we had over the last year, we were sharing with you something that is an important part of our lives. Something she and I take seriously and, even though, like you, she and I still have a lot to learn, our faith is something we do our best to put into practice each day. For us God is not a man in the sky. Or a woman, for that matter. Or a person with a beard. Or a person period. A force, maybe. A presence, yes. At least for me. I can tell you there have been times in my life when I felt there was something more with me or around me or holding me up or pushing me forward.

But most of the time, for me, my faith in God and following Jesus is a choice I make. A choice about the type of person I want to be and about how I want to live and about how I want the world to be and not about believing a certain list of things or feeling a certain way or making it to heaven someday. Getting to knowing you from our Sunday conversations and reading through your Statements of Faith, I think you get that.

So, here is what I want to say to you today

Starting with a snapshot of the world in which you live.

From the hallways of your schools to the seats of power and probably everywhere in between there are people who put other people down.

Who think it is okay to make jokes about those who are different.

Or, exclude those who don't quite fit in.

All to make themselves look better or feel superior or maintain their place in the pecking order.

And, racism is real and racist incidents are on the rise.

As are attacks, both physical and verbal, on Jews. On Muslims.

On immigrants. On those who don't have what you and I have.

And, there are some people use religion like a wedge.

Or, a hammer. Or even as a weapon.

My way or no way.

My way of thinking or believing or acting or you are wrong or bad or going to hell.

So, get out of the way.

And, all that is only a start.

I find all that hard to understand when I believe all of us  
Each and every one of us  
Is a child of God. Made in God's image.  
I find all that hard to reconcile with the Bible when it says God is love.  
And, with what I know about Jesus who included those whom others did their best to ignore or  
to turn away or to exclude.

So, I am going to ask you to do something and to be something I am not sure I was able to do  
or be when I was 14 or 15. But, I am going to ask anyway.  
And, that is don't fit in.  
Dare to be different.  
Dare to think differently. Dare to believe differently. Dare to act differently,.  
Take what we have talked about this year and what you wrote about in your Statements of Faith  
And transform those words into actions.  
Make them a part of who you are and how you try to live each and every day.

And, don't just be kind.  
Be courageously kind.  
Even if it means standing up or speaking out.  
Don't just be nice young men.  
Treat others...all others...with respect.  
Treat others...all others...the way you would like to be treated if you were in their shoes.  
Take what you know about God...  
Take what you understand about what it means to follow Jesus  
And live it.  
Lead the way.  
Whether about gun violence or inclusion or the environment.  
Or, about racism or sexism or how you answer the question "Who is my neighbor?"

Do that.  
Then, push me and others to follow.  
Please.