

Seedling Group Questions for the 6th Sunday after the Epiphany - "Reconciling Accounts"
(February 16, 2020)

The sermon can be found at www.lipstosing.wordpress.com

Questions for Opening Up

What is your experience with finance and business? Where did you come to learn what you know?

When has someone kept a promise to you that was meaningful, or when have you been able to keep a significant promise to another person?

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

You might have seen a bumper sticker that says, "If God is your co-pilot, you need to switch seats," which seems to mean God should be more in control than we are. Practically, there is a way in which we balance knowing that God is in control of our mission and also knowing that we're called to make decisions and choices. How do we balance these two truths well?

Paul uses three great images for the church: That we are God's servants, God's field, and God's building. Which one of these images speaks to you the most? What wisdom can we glean from the image you chose about who we're called to be?

Read Matthew 5:21-37

Jesus' teaching shows that he fulfills the law and that his authority supersedes the law. Does Jesus really expect his community to live by these standards? Why do you think so or why do you think not?

Rather than just being concerned about the outward law, Jesus' attention for the community is on the condition of the heart and the intimate activity of our desires and hopes. Why does it matter so much to Jesus what is going on in our hearts and minds?

Putting Things Together

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul encourages the community away from jealousy and faction and quarrelling. What group or team in our congregation have you witnessed doing a particularly good job of working together for a common purpose?

Joseph suggests that it is good news that Jesus' account of our life is that our words and relationships matter, what we think about matters, how we feel matters – and that in his love for us, Jesus accounts for the totality of our lives, and we are joined to community where we can be honest and candid about our lives. What are the conditions that help a group be vulnerable and honest with one another?

Making It Personal

Pastor Joseph makes the case that the heart of the gospel passage is, "First, be reconciled to your sister or brother," and this is definitely part of Jesus' command, but Jesus doesn't say much explicitly about how to do that. Do you have any experience reconciling to someone with whom you've had uneasy relations? If so, what practical advice do you have to add about how to make reconciliation happen?

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:1-9 And so, brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.² I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready,³ for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations?⁴ For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human?

⁵ What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷ So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each.⁹ For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building.

Gospel: Matthew 5:21-37

²¹ "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' ²² But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister,³ you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³ So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.²⁵ Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison.²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹ "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'³² But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

³³ "Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.'³⁴ But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.³⁷ Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one.