

**Pentecost 14 2020**  
Sunday, September 6, 2020  
**Worship Devotional**  
**Opening the Door to Reconciliation**

**Ezekiel 33:7-11   Romans 13:8-14   Matthew 18:15-20**

This week's Bible text seek to shape how we think about our community, how we live together amid the stress that test our human relationships. It comes in this pandemic. It comes through our families. It is present in our congregations. It touches our world.

What kind of community do we want to be?

I am thinking of our church community, but we could also enlarge that to speak to our nation, or the world, and maybe that is too much, so we could make it smaller and ask it as a personal question.

What kind of person do you want to be?

What are your convictions, beliefs, moral and ethical values? How do those shape your relationship with God and with others? How do we enter the conversation that opens us to live our lives with integrity, wholeness, and purpose?

The lesson from Matthew encourages us to be about truth-telling. It may even feel a bit confrontational, but the goal is to enliven the estranged relationship, to listen first, and then to act in love, putting the other person first, before our own needs of "being right". That is hard stuff for us.

Paul knows that all too well, as he shares in his letter to the Romans. *"Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law."* (13:10) Last week, we heard a similar note, *"Let love be genuine"* (12:9) and then Paul suggested some of the things we could do to make that happen. *Hate evil, hold fast to what is good, be ardent in spirit, rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, perseverer in prayer.*



Matthew's gospel is a little more direct when it comes to working through tough relationships, as he offers a prescription from Jesus that suggests a two way conversation, and an acknowledgement of the failure in the relationship, call that truth-telling, and then an honest back and forth with the goal of restoring the relationship. Again, this is hard to do, and as such, requires that we seek a better understanding of the other person and the situation at hand.

It is a conflict resolution process and let's be frank about this, most of us do not like confrontation. But this confrontation is to be different. Once again, the goal is for reconciliation. That changes the dynamics of the conversational encounter.

All of this is done, so that as a Christian community, where "two or three are gathered", we might flourish and grow in our love for one another and in the hope of projecting a spirit-filled community in Christ Jesus to an even larger community.

In the joy of our community, in Christ,  
Pastor Dave Beard