



October 2025

"If another member of the church sins against you..."
Matthew 18

Matthew 18 feels like Jesus is sitting us down and saying, "Let's talk about what it really means to live together." This whole chapter is about community, and at the center of it is reconciliation—how we deal with hurt, conflict, and forgiveness when things go wrong. And let's be honest: in any community, things do go wrong.

Right in the middle of the chapter is the parable of the lost sheep. This is one of those stories we never get tired of hearing: a shepherd leaves ninety-nine sheep to search for the one that wandered off. Why? Because every single person matters. God doesn't write people off, and that's the same spirit we're supposed to carry into reconciliation.

Jesus then gets super practical: "If someone sins against you, go talk to them directly." (He probably shouldn't have said "if" but "when!") No gossip. No threats. No social media. No letters. Just you and them, face to face. If that doesn't work, bring a couple of others. If that still doesn't work, bring it before the community. It takes a lot of trust when we feel vulnerable or hurt. It's a slow, thoughtful process, and the goal is both accountability and restoration—not shaming, not punishing, not winning an argument.

Reconciliation, according to Matthew 18, isn't optional. It's the heartbeat of Christian community. It means starting with humility, pursuing one another like God pursues the lost, having honest conversations, and practicing forgiveness over and over again.

When Peter asked the question everyone was thinking, "Okay, but how many times do I have to forgive? Seven times?" (He probably thought that was generous.) Jesus replies, "Not seven—seventy times seven." In other words, stop counting. Forgiveness isn't a math problem; it's a way of life.

Our world is quick to cancel, quick to divide, quick to walk away. Jesus calls us to be different. He calls us to do the hard work of mending, forgiving, and restoring. That's what reconciliation looks like, and it's the way God's kin-dom comes alive right here among us.

Thanksgiving blessings to you all,

Bishop Irish