

Sunday Message

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year A • 6 September 2026 Psalter Week 3



LESSONS IN PEACEMAKING

MATTHEW 18:15-20

Today's Gospel offers practical advice on dealing with disagreements within the community. The early Christians did not just gather for the Eucharist or for common prayer. They often lived in the same area of a town or city.

They shared their property with one another, looked after their sick, and kept an open door for other Christians on their travels. In such close-knit communities, disagreements between individuals can poison the atmosphere for others.

Jesus proposes a three-step process to solve such disputes. In step one, those in disagreement are expected to meet to clear the air. This reminds us of Jesus' advice in the Sermon on the Mount that when 'you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you... first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.'

If this doesn't work, the disputants should invite two or three others to act as brokers. If this fails, the third step is to submit the dispute to a meeting of the whole church community to find a solution. If either party refuses to accept mediation, they are to be excluded. This is a drastic step, but it recognises that if action is not taken and bitterness is allowed to simmer, it has the potential to destroy the life of a close-knit community.

Jesus is reminding us that, as Christians, we must never turn a blind eye to anything that harms another person or damages the community. To really love another means sometimes having to say difficult and painful things. It means speaking candidly and honestly, even at the risk of losing the friendship. It means sometimes having to show tough love. ■

SAY

'Lord, help me to speak your truth at all times. Amen.'

DO

How do you respond when arguments or disputes break out? Are you a peacemaker?

PRAY

It is not easy to challenge someone or point out their faults. Pray for the strength to take the loving course of action in your dealings with others.



LEARN

As Christians, we have a responsibility for each other. We have a duty to point out each other's wrongdoing, and to do all we can to promote forgiveness and reconciliation.

True love hurts sometimes.

REFLECT

The Reverend Harold Good is one of the main architects of the Irish peace process. A former president of the Methodist Church in Ireland, he was, with Fr Alex Reid, one of two independent eyewitnesses to the decommissioning of IRA arms in 2005. For decades, he worked quietly behind the scenes to bring the opposing sides together. During that time, he learned several lessons about reconciliation and peacemaking, lessons he has also used to help resolve conflicts in Spain and Colombia. He calls them his four T's.

The first T stands for 'talk.' Without the willingness to talk, to engage with the other, conflict resolution will be impossible. Whether it is a violent conflict like the 'Troubles' or a local or family dispute, dialogue is the only effective dynamic for peaceful conflict resolution. Real dialogue

involves face-to-face communication between those in conflict. The first and most important part of dialogue is listening. Its purpose is to uncover common ground that will enable all concerned to build an agreement that resolves their conflict. For agreement to take place, there must be a willingness to sit down and talk.

The second T stands for 'truth.' If talks are to be fruitful, they must be honest. Both sides must be completely sincere with each other, however uncomfortable that might be. If we are not upfront with each other, if we don't speak our truth clearly and honestly, then mistrust will remain, and any lasting understanding or agreement will be impossible.

The third T is 'trust.' Without trust, there can be no resolution or settlement. If we doubt the sincerity of the other side, or they doubt our truthfulness and sincerity, deep

suspensions will remain, and peacemaking will fail.

The fourth T is 'time.' To build trust, one must be prepared to invest as much time as it takes. Patience is necessary. It took many, many years before the parties in the North trusted one another enough to sign the Good Friday Agreement. The four Ts made agreement possible.

Harold Good often adds a fifth T: 'tea.' If people are willing to literally break bread together, reaching an agreement or settlement will be more likely. Table fellowship helps to break down barriers.

Rev Good's lessons mirror Jesus' advice for resolving disputes. No matter what dispute we find ourselves caught up in, we must trust in God's presence, be willing to talk and speak the truth, and be ready to spend time listening. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*You are just, O Lord, and your judgement is right;
treat your servant in accord with your merciful love.*

COLLECT

O God, by whom we are redeemed and receive adoption,
look graciously upon your beloved sons and daughters,
that those who believe in Christ
may receive true freedom
and an everlasting inheritance.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

FIRST READING Ezekiel 33:7-9

A reading from the Prophet Ezekiel.

Thus says the Lord: 'So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.'

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 95(94):1-2. 6-7b. 7c-9. R. 7c, 8a

*R: O that today you would listen to his voice!
'Harden not your hearts.'*

1. Come, let us ring out our joy to the LORD;
hail the rock who saves us.
Let us come into his presence, giving thanks;
let us hail him with a song of praise. **R.**
2. O come; let us bow and bend low.
Let us kneel before the LORD who made us,
for he is our God, and we the people,
the people of his pasture, the flock of his hand. **R.**
3. O that today you would listen to his voice!
'Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as on that day at Massah in the desert
when your forebears put me to the test;
when they tried me, though they saw my work.' **R.**

SECOND READING Romans 13:8-10

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

Brothers and sisters: Owe no one anything, except to love each other. For the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet', and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: 'You

shall love your neighbour as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL 2 Corinthians 5:19

R: Alleluia, alleluia.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself,
and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

R: Alleluia.

GOSPEL Matthew 18:15-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples, 'If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O God, who give us the gift of true prayer and of peace,
graciously grant that, through this offering,
we may do fitting homage to your divine majesty
and, by partaking of the sacred mystery,
we may be faithfully united in mind and heart.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*Like the deer that yearns for running streams,
so my soul is yearning for you, my God;
my soul is thirsting for God, the living God.*

Or

*I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
whoever follows me will not walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Grant that your faithful, O Lord,
whom you nourish and endow with life
through the food of your Word and heavenly Sacrament,
may so benefit from your beloved Son's great gifts
that we may merit an eternal share in his life.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Amen.