

# From Conflict to Reconciliation

## September 6, 2020

**Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church    Pastor Tyson Labuhn**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Whether or not it's the Coronavirus threatening our way of life – as well as the threat to our physical and emotional well-being. Whether or not it's the violent conflicts brought about by reports of racism, or the festering political tensions being brought to light because of our upcoming national election. It seems like we all need to take a moment this Labor Day weekend and find a way to deal with all the conflict in our lives.

The Lord knows that there are conflicts that exist even among believers. Each of us has been given a vocation in which to use our gifts and talents. And yet, when, and how we use these gifts and talents can at times bring about conflict in our lives and the lives of others.

Take for instance Jesus' disciples. For the most part, they were a bunch of seemingly unruly fisherman – then, throw in a zealot, a despised tax collector, and two brothers that were known as the Sons of Thunder, and what do you get? Well, you don't exactly get a picture of perfect harmony...I'm sure that there must've been days when Jesus felt like He would have been better off on His own.

In our Gospel reading for today, when Jesus' disciples come to Him with a seemingly simple question, ***“Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?”*** Most likely there was some kind of ongoing conflict among His disciples. And

so, Jesus uses the opportunity to talk to them about how believers ought to act toward one another. He does so by talking about humility, temptations to sin, the need to save the lost, and the way to bring about forgiveness within a community of believers.

Now conflict by itself is neither good nor bad, but rather it's how we react to and handle conflict that can either bring us closer together or drive a wedge that tears us apart. Maybe that was what was happening to His disciples when they were discussing ***“Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?”*** Because Jesus first addresses their pridefulness by using the example of a humble child. The greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven is the one who is like a humble child – not necessarily by age or mental ability – who is dependent on and faithfully trusts for the things that they need.

You know listening is hard at times especially when you're in conflict. Jesus calls us to humbly listen to understand the other's position rather than acting out or thinking about the next point we're going to make. So that we come alongside someone in conflict and protect those who are most vulnerable. And when temptations to sin come about, they don't come through us.

God hates sin. And yet, there are times when we get so caught up in a conflict that it seems we aren't ourselves. We can become short and defensive, even prideful rather than open and humble. Even with the best intentions, amid a heated conflict, it can seem as if we lose our minds. Tempting us to say and do things that under normal circumstances would never be the case. Causing us to grieve and lament our sins.

God listens and hears our prayers for mercy. Jesus goes on to share with His disciples and with us the parable of the lost sheep that compares God's love for each of us to the one who has gone astray. In the shepherd's love for the lost, He leaves the 99 on a mountain and searches for the one who has gone astray. It is never the will of the Father that one of His own would perish. That's why Jesus, the Son of the Living God, was sent to be one of us. As we listen to the Words of Jesus, we come to know God's will for us. He comes to walk alongside us and be with us so that through His death on the cross, we might be forgiven and reconciled to God once again. It's through His death and resurrection that we truly come to personally know the depth of His Love that He has for every one of us. And in doing so, He moves us from conflict to reconciliation.

Forgiveness, love, and reconciliation is a vital part of any church's ministry. However, it would be foolish to believe that there would never be conflict both within and outside of a church. So, Jesus goes on to share what to do if a brother or sister sins against you. It follows the example of the shepherd who searches for the lost one by humbly and lovingly listening and speaking to the one who has offended. It's through this ministry of reconciliation, given to us through His precious gifts of love and forgiveness, that the door to heaven is open.

Whether or not it's the Coronavirus threatening our way of life – as well as its threat to our physical and emotional well-being. Whether or not it's the violent conflicts brought about by reports of racism, or the festering political tensions being brought to light because of our upcoming national election. We take a moment to reflect this Labor Day weekend and listen to our Lord Jesus share

with us how to deal with the conflict in our lives. And in doing so, He moves us from conflict to reconciliation, with Him and with one another.

And now may that peace which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in that same Christ Jesus, until He comes again to take us all home to be with Him in Heaven.

In Jesus' name, Amen.