

Ordinary time: Extra-Ordinary Days

"The Rule of Christ"

Matthew 18:15-20 (21-22)

- i. This is not about either/or and excommunication.
- ii. The context of the passage. Matthew 18 lists five core teachings:
 - a. Cultivate childlike humility and welcome children-v 1-5
 - b. Avoid stumbling blocks for little ones-v.6-9.
 - c. Treat every little one like a loving shepherd-v.10-14.
 - d. Resolve disagreements in a lovingly and redemptive manner (today)
 - e. Offer forgiveness for as long as it takes in a relational and not a transactional manner-v.21-35.
- iii. The nuances of the specific teaching:
 - a. This is one of two times the word "church" is used in the Gospels.
 - b. The focus is on humility, reconciliation and not punishment, the goal is to regain.
 - c. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
- iv. The context of today:
 - a. We live in a social media "fame-shame" culture.
 - b. The church is called not to yell, scream, storm off, slander, or leave but to care for one another.
 - c. What makes us Christian is not whether we disagree, hurt or wound one another, but how we go about resolving hurt feelings, because we do not have all of the information.
- v. A folk story called *Maybe*. The point of the story is that no one has all of the information, ever.

FOUR BEST PRACTICES IN RESOLVING HURT FEELINGS AND DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS...

- I. THE HURT PERSON TALKS TO THE OFFENDER
- II. THE HURT PERSON BRINGS ALONG A COUPLE OF FRIENDS
- III. THE HURT PERSON TALKS TO THE CHURCH
- IV. PURSUE FORGIVENESS FOR AS LONG AS IT TAKES

Whether disagreements about race relations, politics, theology, money and resources, inter-personal relationships, vision, mission or anything at all it is up to the offended to take the initial first steps and always with a view to reconciliation and reparation.

Key questions: How do we use our individual and public platforms to promote reconciliation? What kind of community could we create if, even at the height of disagreement, we viewed others not as enemies but as "persons of restorative action?"