

FAITH @ HOME

Week of August 23, 2020

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Matthew 16:13-20

REFLECT: This week, young children are either back to school or are preparing to start a new school year. A question I hear every August is, “Who is my teacher?” A close second is the question, “Who are the friends in my class?” Jesus asks similar questions this week of his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” and “Who do you say that I am?”

The disciples quickly tell Jesus that people don’t understand who he is yet. They think he might be John the Baptist or a prophet from ancient Israel. Jesus’ message hasn’t spread enough yet, so people just don’t know who he is. Similarly, we might not know enough information to answer our children’s questions about their teacher. We can respond honestly with “your teacher will be loving and kind,” much like the disciples answering Jesus’ first question. Thankfully, we can boldly answer Jesus’ second question with the same conviction as Peter. Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is the Son of God.

RESPOND: Ask children how they would describe Jesus, if someone asked them, “Who is Jesus?” What would they say? What would you say? After Peter answers Jesus’ second question, Jesus calls Peter his rock. Peter is like a powerful and sturdy rock, and Jesus will build the church upon it. As children begin a new school year, remind them that they, too, can be Jesus’ rock. They are strong, brave, and know who Jesus is.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: ALLISON LILES



The Rev. Allison Sandlin Liles is a wife, mother, peacemaker, and priest learning to navigate life in the suburban wilds of Dallas, Texas. After working as Episcopal Peace Fellowship’s Executive Director for six years, Allison has re-entered parish ministry in the Diocese of Fort Worth. She currently serves as the Priest-in-Charge of St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church in Hurst, Texas and the editor of Grow Christians, a ministry of Forward Movement.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Exodus 1:8-2:10

REFLECT: When you think of something powerful, what do you think? Something BIG or LOUD? Someone who has lots of people to command or someone who has a lot of money? But is this God's power? Often in the Bible, God doesn't speak in a booming voice or throw lightning bolts. God comes upon people who are unaware they are even dealing with God! God is subtle, God presents in small ways. God helps regular people do extraordinary things. In this story, Pharaoh – who we think of as being very powerful – commands that all Hebrew baby boys be killed. It is grossly unfair. Babies are the opposite of powerful; they are helpless. And the midwives – women who assist when babies are born – aren't powerful in the way we usually think of power. And yet, in this story the midwives are incredibly powerful in a quiet but undeniable way. They make sure that the babies aren't killed but survive! And one of those babies grows up to be Moses, a leader not like a leader Pharaoh with wealth and an army, but a leader who brings freedom to his people. He becomes the kind of leader who shows God's power.

RESPOND: Try this game. Set up a simple obstacle course. First, have the "leader" sit on the side and give directions like "take three steps, stop, turn left..." to another player who is blindfolded. Then, have the leader put on the blindfold and hold hands with the other player, relying on them for assistance to get through the course. How do these experiences feel different? Who has "power" in these situations and how do they use it? How does it make each player feel about the game?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: LISA BROWN



Lisa Brown is the Director of Digital Ministry for Membership Vision. She is passionate about enriching the spiritual lives of people of all ages, facilitating immersive learning opportunities, collaborative art installations, and digital engagement. Her book, *The Best VBS Workbook Ever!* was published in 2017 and she is also a contributing writer to John Roberto's book, "Faith Formation with a New Generation" and 2020 InsideOut camp curriculum. Lisa continues to grow in personal faith and understanding through her participation in Education for Ministry (EfM), and earned a Certification in Leadership in Lifelong Faith Formation from Virginia Theological Seminary and Forma. A native of Pittsburgh, Lisa enjoys hiking the woods of Western Pennsylvania.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Matthew 16:13-20

REFLECT: News travels fast. We watch it on television and on many social media platforms. This area provides an opportunity for the general public to give their opinion of how they view the situation at hand. In the midst of it all there will be truth and untruth. It leaves many to separate truth from untruth.

In today's reading, Jesus asks a question: "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" (Matthew 16:13, NRSV) In this scenario, many around had different opinions. Peter chimed in: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16, NRSV)

Peter's response comes from a growing connection between both persons- a relationship.

Who do you have a relationship with? Do you truly know the people? Can you identify the true identity of such people? There is a saying: "you are known by the company you keep." Who do people say that you are?

RESPOND: Write a descriptive paragraph. Come up with some characteristics that best describe you. In a circle with family or friends, go around the room and get a sense of who these people identify you to be. Our character gives the world a glimpse of God living among us. This might help you to brush up on some rough edges and give your best for God.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: TREVAUGHN TODMAN



Trevaughn Todman is the Diocesan Youth Representative for the Episcopal Diocese of the Virgin Islands. Trevaughn loves playing and listening to music and spending time with colleagues and family. His life is based around God, music, and youth. He describes his calling with these lyrics from Charles Wesley: "To serve the present age, my calling to fulfill; O may it all my powers engage to do the Master's will."

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Matthew 15:21-28

REFLECT: One of my favorite things about this Gospel reading is that Jesus' mind is changed by the pleading of the woman. At the start he seems set on his course, it is not necessary for him to help her. Yet, her response calls him to see things in a new light. He heals her daughter when at first, he had planned to send her away. We know that God is powerful and Jesus demonstrates this power through healing throughout his ministry. But in this story, we learn that power can be influenced. It is up to the people without power to speak their needs aloud in the hope of mercy and grace. Sometimes the voice of justice and righteousness comes from the least expected place. In this story even Jesus needed a reminder that God's love is for all people and to not withhold the healing power of God.

RESPOND: Lately I've heard from several sources about not withholding that which we would want for ourselves. Basically, this is the Golden Rule but stretched a bit further. Think about the things that you want for yourself and for your loved ones: food, security, health, and the like. How can you help to make those things a reality for all people in your community? Take some time this week to look for opportunities to get involved in making sure every person in your city or town has food to eat, a place to sleep, access to health care, or some other need you have named as important.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: SAMANTHA CLARE



Samantha Clare serves as the Director of Christian Formation at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Fayetteville, AR. She has a passion for spreading Jesus' call for social justice and she helps people to make connections between their daily and spiritual lives so that they can bring their whole and authentic selves to the world. You can find more of her writing at samanthaclare.me.

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