

The Rev. Kristin Krantz
St. James' Church
9/13/15

Proper 19/B
Proverbs 1:20-33
James 3:1-12
Mark 8:27-38

**Gracious God, take our minds and think through them;
take our hands and work through them;
take our hearts and set them on fire.
Amen.**

Sometimes it's as simple as one sentence that seems to almost **make** you pay attention to it.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

How many times have I read or heard this Gospel passage, and that sentence has been lost behind "*Who do you say that I am?*" and "*If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.*"

These are the powerhouses – these are the ones rich for exploring the identity of Jesus and our call as disciples.

And yet maybe it's not so strange that that *other* sentence is what grabbed my heart this week, as my mind has been focused on community, on relationship, on how we are followers of Christ together.

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By now I hope you have had a chance to see the list of ten norms that I shared in this month's Shell newsletter. If not, or if you would like a hard copy, you can grab a handout from the table at the back.

I was first introduced to the 10 Rules for Respect when the Interim Rector brought them to the parish where I was serving as Associate. They crystalized for the leadership of that congregation ways to communicate and hold each other accountable after a period of time a few years earlier known as 'the troubles.'

They are simple and to the point, and while I know St. James' is a healthy parish that has done extensive work on group norms and accountability, as I join the St. James' family I offer them to you. Transitions can be tricky, so my hope is these can offer some clarity.

1. If you have a problem with me, come to me. (privately)
2. If I have a problem with you, I will come to you. (privately)
3. If someone has a problem with me and comes to you, send them to me.
(I'll do the same for you)
4. If someone consistently will not come to me, say, "Let's go to Kristin together. I'm sure she will see us about this." (I will do the same for you)
5. Be careful how you interpret me – I'd rather do that. On matters that are unclear do not feel pressured to interpret my feelings or thoughts. It is easy to misinterpret intentions.
6. I will be careful how I interpret you.

7. If it's confidential, don't tell. If you or anyone comes to me in confidence, I won't tell unless: a) the person is going to harm him/herself, b) the person is going to physically harm someone else, or c) a child has been physically or sexually abused. I expect the same from you.
8. I do not read unsigned letters or notes.
9. I do not manipulate; I will not be manipulated; do not let others manipulate you. Do not let others manipulate me through you. I will not preach "at you." I will leave conviction to the Holy Spirit (she does it better anyway!).
10. When in doubt, just say it. The only dumb questions are those that don't get asked. Our relationships with one another, at the end of the day, are the most important things, so if you have a concern, pray, and then (if led) speak up. If I can answer it without misrepresenting something, someone, or breaking confidence, I will.

These 10 Rules for Respect were originally posted in an article by Church of the Nazarene Pastor Charles Christian, and The Rt. Rev. Greg Rickel, Bishop of the Diocese of Olympia, is whom my colleague Jim got them from.

The Very Rev. Mike Kinman, Dean of Christ Church Cathedral in St. Louis, MO, has edited the list, adding an eleventh rule calling for us to continually hold each other in prayer – and I very much like that. And I hope they offer something for you as well as we begin to know each other. Please know I have an open door policy and welcome conversation, questions, and concerns at all times.

Oddly enough, that takes us back to where we began.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

At this halfway point in Mark's Gospel we get Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Messiah.

Prior to this, Mark's Gospel interweaves two narrative threads: growing affirmation of Jesus' gifts as a teacher and healer, on the one hand, and building tension between him and the religious authorities, on the other.

Following this passage, Jesus and the disciples head for Jerusalem, in a journey that seems to move at an ever faster pace – a downhill run to its inevitable conclusion on the cross, with only the enigmatic tomb for solace.¹

But what one would imagine as the high point – the proclamation of the Messiah – is met by Jesus with assent, but also with a stern order to not tell anyone this good news, and what is more, it is followed by Jesus teaching them about his upcoming suffering, death, and resurrection.

Peter wouldn't be Peter if he didn't push back in that headstrong way of his.

And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

And yet...

2. If I have a problem with you, I will come to you. (privately)

¹ Ringe, Sharon, Exegetical Perspective, *Feasting on the Word, Year B, Volume 4*.

This far into the Gospel story, those closest to Jesus are not merely his followers any longer, they are his friends.

Their relationship is no longer new, but it is renewed with how they continue to create community, relate to one another, and figure out what it means to trust Jesus.

And so it was that Peter pulled Jesus aside to let him know he has a problem with him. On the one hand I can barely fathom what it took to *rebuke Jesus!* On the other hand, props to Peter for having good norms!

Except while he got it right about going to Jesus privately with his concern, he dropped the ball on being careful how you interpret someone.

It appears that while Peter got the title correct, he got the meaning wrong. The title Messiah would not mean triumphant power, but instead would be associated with suffering, rejection, and public execution.

And so it was that Jesus rebuked him right back – reminding him what it was to hold each other in right relationship.

I believe this idea of being in right relationship – with God, with each other, and with creation – is at the heart of what it means to be a disciple.

When we make it our norm to treat others with respect and keep the lines of communication open, when we hold each other accountable (perhaps in gentler ways and with less rebuking!), then it makes the other work of discipleship that much easier.

It is with trust – in God, ourselves, and our companions along the way – that we find the ability to deny ourselves and put divine things before human things.

It is that trust which gives us the strength to pick up the cross and journey with Jesus every year, and with our whole lives, following him to Jerusalem.

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Author Brennan Manning, in his book *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, wrote, “Jesus had no romantic notion of the cost of discipleship. He knew that following Him was as unsentimental as duty, as demanding as love.”

That says as much to me about living in Christian community as it does about individual discipleship.

We share our time and talents and resources here at St. James’ for unsentimental reasons – the bills have to be paid, someone has to do this or that or it won’t get done – and also because our love of what we’ve found in God and each other in this place demands us to give of our passions.

And so the lights stay on, children are taught; the rain garden blooms and the dishes get done; music is made and we feed one another.

These things and countless more are the real backbone of our “norms”, our respect for each other. They are greater than any list. They are rooted in faith and discipleship and they show forth *who* and *whose* we are.

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I am so happy to join this community, to be a disciple with you and to walk the road of faithfulness together. My hope is that in the coming weeks, months, and years we will grow together in God’s love and walk in God’s grace – as individuals and as a family of faith.

~ AMEN ~