

***Simple Prayer, Simple Praise:***  
**A Worship Service for Sunday, September 6, 2020**

**Opening Acclamation: (Percy Dearmer: priest, writer, social justice advocate, 1867-1936)**

Draw us in the Spirit's tether, For when humbly in Thy name,  
Two or three are met together Thou are in the midst of them;  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Touch we now Thy garment's hem.

As the brethren used to gather In the name of Christ to sup,  
Then with thanks to God the Father Break the bread and bless the cup,  
Alleluia! Alleluia! So knit Thou our friendship up.

All our meals and all our living Make as sacraments of Thee,  
That by caring, helping, giving We may true disciples be.  
Alleluia! Alleluia! We will serve Thee faithfully.

**The Gospel According to Matthew 18:15-20**

*Jesus said, "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."*

**Meditation: *The Art of Correction* (The Rev. Jack Marshall, Rector, St. Mark's, Orchard Park)**

We should be well practiced in the art of correction. We are a society of Christians, following the way of Jesus. That society engages a whole rainbow of people so there's bound to be some 'ups and downs', and differences of opinion. Christian correction doesn't deal in opinion very much; it deals with ethics, morality and doctrine.

If a member of the community commits adultery for example, he or she knows this is wrong. Despite the issues of justice to the existing relationship, the spouse, and sometimes the kids, the adulterer does it anyway out of selfishness.

The friend sees what's happening and talks to the offender, trying to show the reality of what is happening. If the offender is willing to change course, "Bless the Lord! It worked". If not, the friend may call for back up, looking up mutual Facebook buddies and get two or three of them

to help. After all it meets the requirements of the OT law. If the adulterer still won't stop destructive ways, then it's time to unfriend this one.

We can't just *loose* this one. We must pray and continue to reach out because this member of the Christian Community is bound to Christ, but just not acting that way right now. To bind and to loose was a normal rabbinical function, to be used with discretion for the good of the community. At the present moment we need to do this to build on trust. The decision might be made to loose; to distance ourselves from the current pressure, to see ourselves more clearly.

The reality for me is that the art of correction is first and foremost internal and individual. We know what we're doing before we do it and need to take responsibility for our actions in forethought. We need to be free with ourselves about what is important in our life and faith and bind or limit what takes away from that. The Hebrew concept of death was not so much about what kills you, but extends to what diminishes you.

We should practice this art on ourselves and then a brother or sister. Taken in context, the scripture also says, "Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own?" Matt 7:3. It is important to correct what is wrong, just be careful that you see things clearly enough in your own life before you click 'unfriend'.



**Prayer:**

*Almighty God, you created us to love and care for one another but we often miss the mark. Envelope us in your grace so that we may see ourselves with clarity and honesty; send us friends and loved ones who are gifted at helping us recognize our mistakes, and bless us with the capacity to turn away from those things which diminish us, and to turn instead toward those good things which honor and dignify the people of your creation. Help us to remember our own value in your eyes, that even when two or three gathered you will be in our midst; this we ask in Jesus' name, **Amen.***

Take a moment now for silent reflection. Think of the people and things that cause you worry or concern; think of the things for which you are grateful. Raise them up in prayer using the words our Savior Christ taught us:

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name,  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

**Grace: (BCP p. 815)**

*O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and peoples may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*



Think for a moments how you are empowered to witness God's power in your own ministry and vocation. Pray for all who are dependent upon the ministries your region's congregations support: food pantries, clothing ministries, feeding programs, and social justice work.

Each Sunday at 10 a.m., Bishop Sean and other leaders from WNY and NWPA will lead worship via the Zoom platform. Anyone can join the service via phone by calling **646-876-9923** use **code 127336938#**. Those wishing to join by instead of video can use this link: <https://zoom.us/j/127336938> If you are asked for a password, use **lakeerie**.

*Simple Prayer, Simple Praise* is produced for The Episcopal Dioceses of NWPA and WNY by the Rev. Steve Lane and the Rev. Claudia Scheda, and guest contributors as noted. September 2020.