

keep bringing up their mistakes, continually condemning them. I'm sure forgiveness and reconciliation will be on the forefront of the agenda. If you treat someone with dignity you wouldn't debase them as a mere sexual object. You wouldn't cast them off because you felt like something new or had a better offer. If you treat someone with dignity you'll be honest and say what you mean; always speaking the truth in love.

That reminds me of Paul in his letter to the community of faith in the city of Ephesus where he wrote urging us to do what is best for the other person, according to their needs at our

expense. (Eph. 4:29) Then you'll be treating the other person with dignity.

Do you think treating another person with dignity would leave them feeling welcome? I do.

This week may you be living out Jesus welcome as you focus on him; not any other arteria motive. May you be living out Jesus welcome living as friends introducing your friend Jesus to those you meet. May you live out Jesus welcome as you treat all the people you meet with dignity; the dignity you have from Jesus.

This week invite Jesus to send the Spirit to grow you to greater maturity in him; knowing him more intimately, hearing his voice clearly, sharing all of your joys and sorrows with him in that wonderful intimate bond of love and affection that he has created through his crucifixion. I'm sure a by-product of this relationship, of this life, will be people feeling wanted, welcomed, wanting to be one of Jesus' friends.

9 February 2020

WELCOMING—2

1 Corinthians 3:1-9



What might we learn from our readings for today regarding being welcoming?

In the reading from Deuteronomy we heard; "Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses." (Deut. 30:19) Now that's a powerful choice; life and death, blessings and curses. Which would you choose?

"Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live! You can make this choice by loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life." (Deut. 30:19,20)

I'd say if it is the key to life it is also the key to being a

welcoming community. Let our welcome be an expression of our relationship with God. This statement from Moses echoes the first commandment; to have the LORD as God, and none other. He's our focus, the one who gives us value, identity, worth, life.

The trap would be to be welcoming so that we attract people; attracting people can easily become our God, our focus, how we judge ourselves. Of course once that has happened we have a very unhealthy agenda; we're not welcoming people, we're seeking something for ourselves. We end up using people to get what we want.

Does that sound healthy, let alone welcoming?

As Jesus' community of faith, he's the focus, he's the reason we live, he's the one who gives us our identity, purpose, worth, our life. Our goal isn't numbers, our goal is living that wonderful relationship of love and affection that Jesus has created.

Our welcome then is the first step in introducing Jesus to the people we meet. Which isn't manipulation or some hidden agenda; it is what you do with a friend. You introduce a friend to the people you meet, and Jesus is our friend. What a blessing it is to introduce people to Jesus, and a first step is being welcoming. Because

Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am
Pastor: Tim 0427326553



Jesus' disciples multiplying disciples

we're introducing our friend, our welcome is genuine, not using people to meet my need.

And as you introduce people to Jesus you are also giving them the choice between life and death, between blessing and curses. Knowing Jesus is life. What a precious gift to offer; Jesus, and relationships often begin with an introduction, with a welcome.

The second reading for today was from one of Paul's letters to the community of faith in the town of Corinth. And sadly that was a divided community; which when you think about it isn't very welcoming.

What sort of welcome is it when you're asked to take sides? I don't find it welcoming, being drawn into conflict; bitching and biting each other. That's a

turn off, not a welcome.

Where are we tempted to take sides? Where are you tempted to take sides?

In any community you won't agree on everything with everybody; but when you focus on what

Friends

divides you and go into battle to win your point, you don't have a welcoming community.

I like hearing the opening words of this reading; "Right now, friends". Paul is talking with his friends; he began this letter praying for them. "I always thank my God for you and the gracious gifts he has given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus." (1 Cor. 1:4)

In Jesus that is what we are, a community of friends. A community of friends who are encouraged to be talking with Jesus, inviting him to bless our friends, bringing their needs to him, celebrating their joys with him. Talking with Jesus about where we differ seeking his guidance.

In Jesus we are a community of friends.

That doesn't mean we agree on everything, but

in Jesus we are united. In Jesus we are called to love one another, care for one another, forgive one another, be patient with one another, and importantly we are empowered with the Spirit to do this. I'm not relying on my brilliance; I've got the Spirit to call on, to talk with.

When I rely on my brilliance, I find that is the first step in division!

When I take centre stage disaster happens, division happens, for if you don't agree with my brilliance you're a problem that needs to be dealt with.

I love the way Paul explains things; "We each carried out our servant assignment." Notice Paul isn't the brilliant one and Apollos the trouble maker. They are both servants. Servants to who?

They are servants of Jesus. And Jesus is the important one for he's the one who makes things grow. Jesus is the one who breathes his life into us so that we are living in that wonderful relationship of love and affection with Father that Jesus has given his life for us to enjoy together.

Actually in Jesus we are more than friends; we are united in him. We share life together with Jesus

in an intimate relationship of love and affection with our heavenly Father. What a precious relationship we share. What a treasure to enjoy and foster, to grow into.

Are their areas or people who rub you the wrong way that Jesus is calling you

Servants

to forgive? Our unity in Jesus makes his community attractive. When we live divided and hostile we are anything but welcoming. Thank God, in Jesus, we can draw on his strength, and in him be that community of friends he's given his life for.

Who is Jesus inviting you to be patient with, to forgive, to pray for? You don't have to agree, but treat them as the precious,

loved children of God that they are.

The word sacrifice comes to mind; not me sacrificing the other person, but me sacrificing so that Jesus loving nature finds living expression through me, through us as a community. I reckon Jesus loving nature being experienced through us would be quit welcoming.

Finally our Gospel reading reminded

me to treat people with dignity.

Do I like them? Doesn't matter, treat people with dignity. Have they earned it? Doesn't matter, treat people with dignity. Will they treat me the same way? Doesn't matter, treat people with dignity.

If you treat someone with dignity you won't murder them; or vomit over them in an angry tirade. If you treat someone with dignity you won't