

**Ì Finding a Faith that Mattersî
Ì Communion in the Midst of Conflictî**

We have begun a new sermon series Ì Finding a Faith that Matters.î This sermon series will invite us to recommit our lives to Christ, who has come to offer light and life and love. Last week we focused on our call to authentic faith. We are called and claimed people. This week, we are looking at find a faith that matters in the midst of conflict. Truly we live in a very conflicted time and culture. Paul reminds us that Christ is our peace, all of us coming from many different places. We find Ì Communion in the Midst of Conflictî through the breaking of bread and sharing of the cup. May we be challenged this week to find that peace as citizens of the reign of God. ---Pastor Cindy

Things Íd like to remember from todayís sermon: **Ì Communion in the Midst of Conflictî**

Prayer for the Week

God of the universe, who considers every person on earth your child, we confess that we have ignored the ancient spiritual instruction to do justice, love kindness, and especially, to walk humbly. Guide us as we seek a gentler and more respectful path, to retain the passion to right the wrongs we see, as Zechariah tells us, Ì not by might, nor by powerî but by your spirit living in us. Amen. (from Novena in Time of War: Soul-searching Prayers and Meditations, by Jim Mechoirre)

This weekís sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, February 6 Matthew 20: 20-23

The interaction between Jesus and the mother of James and John and the two of them comes right after Jesus tells a parable about workers in the vineyard. They all receive the same pay, even though some worked longer than others. Jesus then shares about his death and resurrection. Did James and John's mother hear the parable or was it just the two of them? She wants James and John to have the two seats of power in Christ's kingdom. She doesn't ask what it means or the sacrifice it will take, only asks for the best seats for her children. When asked if they are able they respond, we can. Like many, James and John didn't understand what Jesus believed about leadership and about what it means to serve God. Have there been times in your life when you easily said you could do something, but later found out you couldn't? How do you understand this request and Jesus' response?

Tuesday, February 7 Matthew 20: 24-28

The other disciples are furious. It must have felt like James and John were trying an end run around the rest of them to end up on the top of leader's board. The truth is that all of them had trouble understanding Jesus' style of ministry. Jesus pushed that leaders are servants, and it is not about whether or not you are on top, but whether or not you are willing to serve. Even now, that is a difficult concept for human beings. Conflicts arise over who is recognized, who is most important, who has the status and who is being rewarded. Jesus notes he did not come to be served, but serve. How have you learned to serve instead of being served? Was it hard to let go of the need to be recognized or be in charge?

Wednesday, February 8 Ephesians 4: 14-16

In verses eleven through thirteen Paul describes how the church is made up of both Gentiles and Jews, the former not knowing or being part of God's covenant with Israel and the latter being made one with them. In these verses Paul is clear that Christ is the peace and makes one group out of many. Coming to Christ from two such different cultures can make it difficult to find common ground. That is as true then as it is now. Christ is the peace, says Paul, Christ is what holds church together. When have you struggled with finding common ground with another Christian? What do you do to find peace in your relationship through Christ?

Thursday, February 9 Ephesians 4: 17-19

These verses must have come as some surprise to the early church. The equality of the community no matter how they came to faith in Christ was a new understanding. Certainly Jesus talked about being servants and all of his followers not looking to be first or the best but rather finding ways to serve. According to Paul, everyone has the same access to God and no one is a stranger or alien but fellow citizens in God's household. In this day and age, this is still fairly shocking. Equality through Christ is who the church, the community of faith is called to be. How do you see that community, that oneness in Christ being made real? Where is it lacking?

Friday, February 10 Ephesians 4: 20-22

As the second chapter ends, Paul uses the metaphor of a building to speak to the truth that each one is integral in the body of Christ. This building, includes the prophets and the apostles and all who have gone before. Christ is the cornerstone and building a place where each one, no matter where they came from, is part of a place where God lives through the Spirit. There are