

St. Martin's Episcopal Church
Youth Sunday September 30, 2018
Homily Given and Preached by 12 yr. old SMEC Youth

Message: Golden Rule? Be at peace with people? No reason to be at odds with other religious faiths. Spirituality comes in many flavors. Christianity also comes in many flavors (ex. Lutheran, Catholic, Episcopalian, Baptist, Non-Denominational and more.)Hassan/ Muslim

Raise your hand if you like frozen treats (after response- I should see more hands than that! I saw many of y'all in Miles Hall a few weeks ago eating sundaes.) Now I know some of y'all like chocolate ice cream. There might be a certain Ambler who *really* likes chocolate. And there might be some ladies in here right now who are not ashamed of buying the gallon size ice cream...and they live alone. Or my personal favorite, all you parents out there who say you're buying popsicles *for the kids* (quotations with hand.) and the kids only get two out of box of 12. Or maybe you're one of those people who buy strawberry cheesecake Ben & Jerry's and think you're hiding it under the frozen broccoli so your daughter can't find it. (look at dad and say mhm.) Ice cream comes in different flavors, just like Christianity. You can have very vanilla, you can have rocky road, or maybe you prefer lactose-free. I'll let you think about which denominations are vanilla and rocky road. But what if you like a little frozen yogurt instead of ice cream? What if you like Italian ice? Does that make it less effective in hitting that sweet spot, less authentic?

In our Gospel lesson today, the disciples asked Jesus what they're supposed to do about a man casting out demons without using Christ's name. Were they jealous of the attention this man was receiving? Were they trying to have a monopoly on the "Demon Exorcising Business?" It might have been a little bit of both, or it might have been another demonstration of how young their faith was. These verses come after the story of when the disciples were asking Jesus to settle a dispute of who is going to be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Of course, Jesus's response is that they need to humble themselves because His leadership style is one of servitude.

Our church is really good at participating in ministries involving other Christian organizations. We even participate occasionally with some interfaith ministries. But what would happen if a Muslim group asked us to partner with them? Who would hesitate? Would you question whether we serve the same God and just maybe call him by a different name? What if a group with no religious ties asked for our partnership? Many of us would have no problem working with them, but some of us might be a little hesitant. If God is love and people are doing good in the name of love, who are we to stop them? Shouldn't we support them too?

Jesus goes on in verse 42 to warn the disciples not to be a stumbling block to somebody else's faith. Many interpret Jesus's warning not to harm the little ones as a reference to true believers, not actual children. If we consider his reference to little children as a representation

of people new to faith or starting to explore faith, his warning takes on some serious responsibility. The way that we treat other people, the kindness we show or withhold, the opinions we express, the judgement we give about important things and the little things, could all steer somebody toward or away from the Love of God.

Our next-door neighbors, my brother's best friend, are Muslim. The love and kindness they show us strengthens my relationship with God. And not because we share the same faith or support the same causes, and not just because they cook the BEST food, but because they do everything in love. And God is love.

I wonder how many people without a religious faith watch the way we treat others. How to treat people and talk about people regardless of their religion, their race, their age, nationality, regardless of what language they speak, regardless of their sexuality, their gender identity, their political party, their abilities, their past, poor decisions, social class, education, regardless if they even believe in God. Does society see God's love in us in the way we speak and in the way we treat others? How about the way we treat ourselves?

Jesus tells his disciples that if a hand, or a foot, or an eye causes you to sin, cut it off or pluck it out. We're not talking about self-maiming here. We're talking about those prejudices, that ignorance, those labels we place on others, and sometimes on ourselves, that keep us from loving the way Christ loves us. Jesus also tells his disciples, salt is good and we're supposed to be salty ourselves. Now I'm not talking about the salt on my daddy's homemade potato chips. I'm talking about the spirit of God! God's word and God's spirit produce godly character, which allows us to act as a preservative in society. With all the division, and the animosity, and the hate we see in our society, our society has the potential to rot away like stale beef. Just as salt prevents meat from rotting, so should we work to preserve humanity.

We are called to live at peace with everyone. We are called to love people who are unlovable. We are called to live at peace with people who seem to try everything in their power to not live at peace with us. And we are called to support everyone who is spreading kindness and love in the world, even if they are practicing under a religious flavor that is not our own.

Look at the people around you. If you had to choose between chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry, what would you choose? Raise your hand if you would choose chocolate. Raise your hand if you would choose vanilla. Raise your hand if you would choose strawberry. Now raise your hand if you would swirl it all together and top it with fudge and rainbow sprinkles. Look at that! We all have different preferences and yet we manage to worship together every Sunday. Our society needs to see us getting over the labels and working for the good of humanity. I challenge you to examine your own heart for what labels you use to judge others. Can you get over that for the sake of the good?

Miss Mattie Smith