



still waters

home church studies

Psalm 149

[Worship]

1 Praise the LORD! Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful. 2 Let Israel be glad in its Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King. 3 Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre. 4 For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with victory. 5 Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their couches. 6 Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, 7 to execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, 8 to bind their kings with fetters and their nobles with chains of iron, 9 to execute on them the judgment decreed. This is glory for all his faithful ones. Praise the LORD!

Consider:

[Think & Pray...]

Again we meditate on this saying of Jesus: "Whatever you shall bind shall be bound; what you loose shall be set free."

A triumphant, risen Jesus spoke this at Pentecost in John's gospel. Today we see that Matthew has used the same saying, putting it in the context of Jesus giving rules for the conduct of the church.

Matthew's community must be in conflict: trying to understand how to deal lovingly with breaks and tears in its own fabric as time passes and Jesus hasn't returned. How do we live when we hurt and anger each other? How do we live the gospel daily?

These readings answer that question: We maintain our common meal, our sign of unity and redemption. We love each other and follow God's commands. When relationships break down, we do our best to resolve conflicts in love: We talk to our opponent. We invite others to join in the dialogue. If all else fails, we resort not to blood-letting but to silence.

Church structure and discipline are always hard. How can we judge others? Especially when we've seen judgment so misused? How can we submit ourselves to judgment? We are reminded here that as community we are not only to nurture and affirm each other, but also to guide, teach, and dispute. Behind every action, however, must always be the rule of love. Love is the measure, even of our discipline.



by Shelley Douglass

[The Scripture]

Matthew 18.15-20

15 "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. 16 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. 17 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. 18 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. 19 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. 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."