

Good morning! One of the greatest joys of what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called “Life Together” is open and honest fellowship. Pam and I are extraordinarily blessed to have a number of very close friendships that have endured for thirty or forty years or longer. We also have other friendships of a much shorter duration that are wonderfully life-giving. In a world where so many people feel very much alone we are grateful. We treasure these relationships---they are life to us! Relationships can be problematic, though. We want to hide the bad stuff so people won't reject us. We want to talk about the good stuff so people will think we're better than we think we are. Sometimes we find ourselves in conflict and that undercurrent of discord can poison our relationships. The Bible has a lot to say about relationships! Let's read two passages together this morning:

So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. **1 Cor. 11:27-29**

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. Matt. 5:21-24

For many years Pam and I attended a small church near Unionville, VA. The pastor when we first arrived was a great guy named Dave Butt. We celebrated the Lord's Supper each Sunday, which was a little unusual at the time, but which was at the center of our worship service. While that little church had its problems (as all churches do) it had wonderful worship, wonderful preaching and the Lord's Supper. Each Sunday, before

communion, Dave would read today's first passage...then he would wait patiently, allowing time, not just for reflection, but for action. As we sat, we would often hear people weeping as, under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, they would get up and go get a relationship straightened out, confess sin, ask (or grant) forgiveness. It was a powerful time and we'll always remember it. In today's second passage, Jesus reminds us that disrupted relationships have consequences and that God wants us to take the time to get them resolved. He says, *"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift."* Remember the rule? "When the Bible says 'Therefore', read back to see what it is there for." In this case, reading back, Jesus says, "Anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment." and, "Anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." Yipes! I'm talking to someone this morning. You have a damaged relationship and have been avoiding dealing with it and God wants you to get it straightened out. Let me encourage you that even though it might be frightening, it's the best way---the only way. I promise you that God will help you. Don't be trapped in your unhappiness. Go and be reconciled...it's the Jesus way!