

**Better Together**  
**Church of the Advent**  
**Sunday, Sept 4, 2011**

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Rev. Ken Gray

NOTES ONLY

### WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

When things go wrong in communities - and they sometimes do, speak the truth in love

Ephesians 4:15-16 (S)peaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

- Growth, reconciliation, re-gathering, are mature acts
- Such a process is not human induced (Godly initiative) but humanly managed (responsible citizenship)
- Analogy of the human body an ideal application - read both ways

MATTHEW provides a first-century reconciliation process

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. 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. 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.

### Literal Reading

- follow the procedure, someone will win, someone will lose, factions remain
- consequence of literal practice is shunning

Shunning is the act of social rejection, the deliberate avoiding association with, and habitually keeping away from, an individual or group. It is a sanction against association, often associated with religious groups and other tightly knit organizations and communities. Targets of shunning can include, but are not limited to, apostates, whistleblowers, dissidents, people classified as "sinners" or "traitors" and other people who defy or who fail to comply with the standards established by the shunning group(s).

- Not a social solution but a conduit for continuing anger
- Transfers from a generation to the next via negative memory
- well referenced in literature
  1. Fiddler on the Roof, third daughter, Chava, who marries a Russian gentile, Russian Jewry
  2. Miriam Toews (Complicated kindness), Mennonites
  3. Half Broke Horses, Jeanette Walls' fictionalization of her grandmother's life, Mormons

Social rejection was and is a punishment used by many customary legal systems. Such sanctions include the ostracism of ancient Athens and the still-used kasepekang in Balinese society.

Sometimes combined with isolation in contemporary aboriginal legal processes

#### WHEN THINGS GO RIGHT - OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

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. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'

- Literal reading, agree and request granted; life, love, and God are not that simple
- Primacy of love in good times and in bad; vis. Paul to the Romans

Owe no one anything, except to **love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.** The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet'; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' **Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.**

#### BETTER TOGETHER

- in projects where vision is shared
- in family circles - family games at the Gray household
- in musical performance
  - drums, Jazz, Choral music
- in church, even on Sunday mornings
  - a priority ? can this be true?
  - What I increasingly hear is: "What's in it for me" Consumer language

- Better question: “Why am I here? Communal language
- recent experiment with prayers shows we have ideas, needs, feelings, desires, and we’re not scared to share them in a safe and sincere place
- Sum of Communal language: **Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them**
- A special presence found in gathering, because **we are better together.**