



# Table Talk

The Sixth Sunday after Epiphany, A

February 16, 2020

**Matthew 5:21-37**  
**“First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” Vs. 24**



Jesus was concerned in the previous week’s text (Mt. 5:13-20) to expose our sinful manipulation of the Law (cf. Mt. 5:18-19). In this week’s text, Jesus reveals that simple outward obedience doesn’t satisfy the demand of the Law. Obedience must be inward as well. He delivers teaching on relationships with neighbors, on matters pertaining to sex and marriage, and on matters pertaining to oaths and covenants. One of these matters has been incorporated into our liturgical practice.

“Be reconciled with your brother!” (cf. vs. 24). In these two verses (23 & 24), Jesus commands, “No enmity!” between those who would be his brothers or sisters. Enmity among the brothers and sisters of Christ pollutes their gifts... taints their offerings... and demands reconciliation. This reconciliation has been incorporated liturgically into the worship service as “The Sharing of the Peace.” This liturgical action anticipates the presence of the brothers and sisters of Christ so that enmity between them can be canceled by reconciliation among them. No one’s gift need be polluted nor tainted by what one brother or one sister

holds against the other. Reconciliation is there for all as the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ is shared among them.

The service begins with the great leveling of everyone’s circumstances in the Confession and Absolution of Sin. Each brother or sister is nothing more than a forgiven sinner gathered at the foot of the cross to receive the gifts of Christ. When Christ’s gift of peace is shared between them, it is the embodiment of our prayer: “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” The giving-andreceiving of the Lord’s peace announces among neighbors that we hold nothing against them and that they hold nothing against us. The physical act, whether it be a handshake, hug, or the “kiss of peace” (2 Cor. 13:12), makes visible the reconciliation pronounced in the words, “The peace of Christ be with you.” As reconciled brothers and sisters, this body of Christ (meaning you) can then present its offerings legitimately.

**Table Talk:** Discuss the liturgical necessity of the sharing of the peace.

**Pray:** Heavenly Father, grant that I and my neighbors share Christ’s peace. Amen

Written by Rev. Timothy J. Swenson  
Dean of Chapel for the Institute of Lutheran Theology

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21 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’

22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.

23 So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you,

24 leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

25 Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison.

26 Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’

28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

31 “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’

32 But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

33 “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’

34 But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,

35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.

36 And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.

37 Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.



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