

## **REMEMBER**

A Sermon by Rev. Dawn Allen-Herron, with  
the People of St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Anchorage  
Sunday, August 8, 2021  
Scripture: Ephesians 4:25-5:2; John 6:35, 41-51

I've learned from my colleague Rev. Catherine Amy Kropp, over the last 2 years, the importance of beginning any moment by recognizing where we are at this moment. As I have prepared for today, two things have grounded where I am.

*First*, I am weary and frustrated. More specifically, I am TIRED of the pandemic, and FRUSTRATED that just when it seemed that we were turning our **faces** toward unmasked realities and our **selves** toward less fear, an aptly named Delta variant has changed that.

I suspect that I'm not alone. I don't really want to do any of this anymore.

*Second*, these last two weeks, it's been hard to miss the Tokyo Olympics.

And the Summer Olympics always remind me of the time I spent coaching the Ketchikan High School swim team (KayHi). It was as fun and challenging as any task I've ever signed up for.

In that context, I hear the letter written to the Ephesians. The people of Ephesus were living through a difficult time that shares some realities with our own time and place.

Both in the church and in the wider culture, the context of Ephesians is a time of stress between various cultures and micro-cultures. The Roman-Jewish war had heightened tensions between Jews and Gentiles. In addition, as the Church grew, the diversity of the members increased. This is good, of course—but not so easy to live through.

They must have blamed each other for realities that they lived with.

They must have been tired. And frustrated.

So it's no wonder that Ephesians, along with other letters in Scripture, has a section of very specific guidance about how to get along.

They've always come across to me as RULES.

And rules are tough. Most of us don't like them. Somehow, they often seem to imply that we aren't quite wise enough to figure out how to live our own lives.

As a swim coach, I didn't really have to make a lot of rules. The school district had some, the team agreed upon others, and mostly, I ran workouts and the swimmers didn't have a lot of time for mischief. 😊

Until.....until we prepared for our first ferry travel.

In SouthEast Alaska, many of you know, we travel for most competitions. Often the travel is on the state ferries. In this case, I was preparing to travel for 36 hours with 30 of my favorite teenagers.

We had a team meeting that went well, I thought. I thought that we were finished and was wrapping things up....and I could see a jillion non-verbal cues that something was wrong. I finally asked.

*"Um....Coach Dawn, where are the RULES?"*

*"Rules?"*

*"Yea, like 'don't dye each others' hair in the restrooms,' and don't duct tape teammates to chairs.' You know...rules."*

I bought myself a day to construct the rules; this is when I learned that I like rules even LESS when I'm supposed to create them.

I found that my ability to creatively consider possibilities would likely function to give the swimmers more ideas than guidance, and that reducing complexities to bullet points was beyond my ability.

As we gathered at the ferry terminal, I handed the swimmers a page with one rule: *Please behave in ways that mean that the ship's crew will have NO REASON to page the Coach of the KayHi Swim Team.*

As it turned out, this worked rather well, but it seemed a little bit lame, even to me.

During the weekend, one of the swimmers found a moment and said,

*“You know the thing about rules? What my parents say, every time I leave the house, or every time they drop me off, is:*

*“Remember who you are. Remember where you are going.”*

I thought about that as I read and re-read today’s lesson from Ephesians.

I’ve normally heard the rules—both positive and negative—most loudly.

- “Don’t lie.
- Speak the truth to our neighbors
- Don’t let anger smolder and linger,
  - Or become a springboard for sin
- Don’t steal
- Work honestly with your own hands
- Let no evil talk come out of your mouths,
- Speak what is useful for building up, as there is need
- Put away from you all
  - bitterness and
  - wrath and
  - anger and
  - wrangling and
  - slander,
  - and all malice,
- Be kind,
  - tenderhearted,
- forgive
- live in love

But the more interesting part, and perhaps more useful, are the REASONS...

- we are members of one another.
- so as to have something to share with the needy.

- so that your words may give grace to those who hear.
- Forgive, as God in Christ has forgiven you.
- live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

The drumbeat, the cadence, of these are the ongoing relationships that we have with a Triune God, and with each other.

Of course.

We know that our conduct is both reflects and shapes who we are.

In this section of Ephesians, Christians are urged to remember who they were,

What God has done,

And who they are becoming.

Remember who you are.

Created in the imagination of a good and loving God.

Remember where you have been.

Led by Jesus, who leads us in love, and who finds us when we go astray.

Remember where you are going.

Going, together with all of the cosmos, toward reconciliation and wholeness.

