

Choosing Life – *You're Siblings, You're Supposed to Love Each Other*

So, I'm sure we're all aware that there is an important event taking place today.

It's the big one!

That's right, the Kelce Family Football Championship, Jason Kelce with Philadelphia, and Travis Kelce with Kansas City will be battling it out on the gridiron to determine who is the best Kelce brother!

It's one of the most spectacularly well publicized displays of sibling rivalry this decade.

This almost certainly isn't the first time the two have gone head-to-head though, I've had to learn through the years teaching preschool and as a parent of two that there is apparently nothing more irritating to a child than the simple presence of their sibling.

More than once I have caught myself thinking, "you're brothers! You're supposed to love each other!"

I imagine Moses and Jesus can relate to that sentiment...

In the reading from Deuteronomy Moses is giving his final farewell to the people of Israel. Like a dad dropping his kids off at college in another state he is there with them on the banks of the River Jordan, about to say goodbye as they move on to the next phase of their lives, without him. He is trying to remind them about all that he has tried to teach them over the past decades.

Caring for the poor in chapter 15...

Don't let wealth corrupt justice in chapter 16...

And paying a fair wage; leaving enough for everyone; and caring for widows, orphans, and foreigners all in chapter 24...

We hear all these admonitions of the Law and we might think they're about loving our neighbors, but Moses is saying it's about loving God. Because living into who God created us to be is about loving others. It's about choosing life.

Jesus said, just a few lines before what we read in the Gospel today, "I came not to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it." reminding us that all his talk of...

"You have heard it said... but I tell you..."

...is not a replacement for the Law, but a new way of understanding God's purpose for us. God's plan has always been for us to exist in relationship. We are created in the image of God who is relationship, that's a big part of the doctrine of the Trinity, three in one,

always in relationship with one another. My oldest, Charlie, says God is lucky because they always have someone to play games with.

Look, I'm not going to explain the Trinity here, we do have a game to watch after all, maybe Dawn will do that next week when we read about the Transfiguration.

What Jesus is saying here, isn't that the Law is imperfect, he's reminding his disciples what the point of the Law that God gave to Moses is.

It's not about legalism and strict adherence to human ideas of how we should be...
It's about making the effort at every level to choose what nurtures relationship...
It's about choosing life.

Jesus is telling us that we are siblings, and we're supposed to love each other.

When we hold on to grudges, or we fail to make amends when we hurt others, or when we objectify and dehumanize each other... Basically when we choose to put our own selfish interests at the center of our actions and decision making, we are failing to choose life.

Jesus says it would be better to be physically maimed than to make these choices. As Rev. Michael is fond of reminding us... it is in fact "Poke Your Eye Out Sunday."

Jesus and Moses both have really high expectations, and it can seem almost impossible to meet them.

Can any of us sitting here today honestly say there's not someone out there that we are still holding a grudge against? Or someone we have wronged that we are avoiding as a result?

If we want to do what Jesus is telling us here, a lot of us should be jumping up and running out the door to apologize to someone before the offering plates are passed.

In our society it's easy to be angry, to watch the news and let the politics and culture war infect our hearts with wrath. Or to be exposed to marketing campaigns meant to elicit just the kind of visceral objectification of others mentioned in the Gospel.

The psalmist gives voice to the struggle we experience in choosing life when they say,

"Oh that my ways were made so direct that I might keep your statutes.
Then I should not be put to shame when I regard all your commandments"

If Moses and Jesus have high expectations, Paul, in the Epistle this morning, is acknowledging that it's not something we can do alone. We do it together, in communion

with God and with each other. Each planting, nurturing, or growing in the light of God's will for us.

I find it fascinating that Paul chooses to use imagery of children here, when he's talking about people being infants in Christ. One of the key things that I was taught as an early childhood educator is that we have to give the kids a fresh start every day. It doesn't matter if a kid kicked and screamed all day while refusing to participate; the next day that kid gets a big smile and a happy welcome, because when we give kids the benefit of a fresh start, we are fostering a sense of safety, of being loved, and we are building positive relationships.

When I'm feeling at my lowest, and just can't let go of the shame over my inability to live into who God is creating me to be, there is nothing quite as healing as being reminded that God meets us every day with a fresh start. And that every day we try again and choose life, God nurtures that seed, growing in us a new creation.

As we come to the table prepared for us, uniting together with one another and with Christ in the celebration of the Eucharist, take the time to reflect on who you need to forgive, and who you need to seek forgiveness from. Set it before God. Where in our lives do we need a fresh start, and who do we need to give a fresh start to? Remember that we are all siblings, and we are supposed choose life and love each other.

Yes, even people rooting for Kansas City...

Amen