

Sunday August 30, 2020 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church

**Bible Study – Matthew 16:21-28; Romans 12:9-21
“Holding Fast**

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, have each participant answer the question, “If you could get revenge from one person or one situation, which one would it be? How would it feel?”

Matthew 16:21-28. Context: After Peter confessed Jesus as Messiah (king) and “son of the living God” in the shadow of tetrarch (king) Philip’s palace at Caesarea Philippi and near the temple dedicated to Julius Caesar who was proclaimed a god upon his death, Jesus began to spell out the implications of Peter’s confession. Peter objects and Jesus rebukes him, calling him “satan,” a Hebrew word here meaning 'tempter.' The true disciples of Jesus will be those who not only make the proper confession, but give their lives in pursuit of the kingdom of God. Jesus, along with Matthew’s community, truly believed that the kingdom was very close at hand. We can interpret this opinion two ways: either Jesus and the early Christians were wrong; or the kingdom is even closer now than it was then!

Romans 12:9-21. Context: This week’s reading continues Paul’s teaching about what governs the Christian life, both with respect to the Christian community and to the rest of the world beyond it. Loving one another seems a given; but what about those outside the Christian community? If there is one teaching of Jesus and the early Christians that departs from traditional values it is blessing even your enemies: give them food and drink when they need it. There is no room for vengeance in the Christian life. Will it change the hearts of your enemy? Maybe, but the outcome is properly God’s business: just do what you know is right.

Read Matthew 16:21-28 Romans 12:9-21

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

Read Matthew 16:21-28; Romans 12:9-21 again

Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- How does the Romans 12:9 verse function as a general statement that the rest of the passage specifies how it is lived out? [For example, our love is genuine when we show others honor, and so forth.]
- In the list that Paul gives in this passage (Romans 12:9-21), which do you think is most at odds (contrary) with our culture?
- Why might the feeling of getting revenge be fleeting? (vv. 19-20) Why would overcoming evil with good be the best solution?
- Just moments after declaring Jesus as Messiah and Son of the Living God, Peter is rebuked by Jesus. What is Peter missing? [Hint: Think of how Jesus comes.] How are we often guilty of making Jesus into our image?
- How are Jesus' teachings (especially in vv. 24-26), life, death, and resurrection the foundation for what Paul can teach in Romans 12?
- Where is Jesus calling you to "hold fast" to love?

Read Matthew 16:21-28; Romans 12:9-21 again

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Each person prays sharing their answer the following statements:

I ask God for....

I thank God for.....

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

Eternal God of Hope, empower us to hold fast to your gracious and loving presence. In our holding on, give us the courage to reach out in mercy and forgiveness so that others might feel the light and warmth of your love. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.