

The Question of the Week

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.
If he listens... If he does not listen....”

Matthew 18 15-16

Jesus presents some practical advice to his listeners. He recognizes that we do not always get along in families or with our neighbors. He recognizes that disputes happen. He realizes that we do not always treat others fairly, justly or adequately. He recognizes that issues arise between family members, between brothers and between sisters. Jesus gives some counsel. Go to the person. Tell them. We do not always do this. Sometimes we go to someone else and complain about what this person has done to us, how they have mistreated us or treated us dismissively or unfairly. We seek to garner others to share in our grievance, to be on our side, so to speak.

But Jesus us bids us go to the person. Tell the person. Do not expect them to know. Do not expect them to be able to read your mind. Do not expect them to have the identical perception of things that you have. Do not judge them. Try to find a way to get the issue resolved. If you do, the relationship is made firm, restored. But Jesus has a contingency plan if that approach does not work out. Then what? Enlist the assistance of a few others who recognize what needs to be resolved and have them share their viewpoints with the other person.

If that is not successful? Go to the Church? The Church? Are you kidding? Isn't this kind of situation why we have courts and judges? To get justice (like Swartz-Culleton, or at least a large cash settlement) we sue the other person. Even in families. But Jesus is saying that we should go to our faith leaders, present our case and ask them to resolve the matter. Why do this? Because Jesus believes that such matters should be able to be resolved within the believing community. Yeah, but what if they aren't? Well, as a last resort you can always do what the pagans do. BUT. Isn't our faith in Jesus and his way better than “doing what the pagans do?” Well, isn't it? That is the question of the week.