

Matthew 16:13-19
Flesh and Blood
12th Sunday after Pentecost
August 22, 23 2020
Prince of Peace, Topeka

August 27, 2017
Meade, KS
August 24, 2014
Peace, Andover
August 21, 2005
St. Andrews, Wichita
Mission Festival
Confession of St. Peter

Epiphany – 2
January 18, 2003
Redeemer, Atwood

When we hear the words “flesh and blood” most of us think of family. We have a special kind of relationship with these “flesh and blood” relatives. We feel a special bond to them. Even when family feuds force us apart, we always will feel a special kind of attachment to them. Or, when we lose one of these important people in death, we feel a great sense of loss. We feel as though a part of our own “flesh and blood” has been amputated.

While we associate positive attributes to the phrase “flesh and blood”, Jesus used the same phrase differently in our text. In responding to Peter’s confession of faith Jesus said (as translated in the RSV) “Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you.” In other words, Jesus was saying Peter didn’t get his bold confession of faith from “people” but from God.

“Flesh and blood” could not have revealed and did not understand who Jesus was. To understand who Jesus was took a divine revelation to Peter. Sadly, people still don’t understand.

While most of us view “flesh and blood” positively – it was from our family that we inherited this weakness we call sin. On our own we cannot know who Jesus is. Family cannot reveal to us the means of our salvation.

I think it is interesting that the conflicts that occur between family are sometimes the most severe we encounter in this world. We may love family. We may fight for family. But way too often we fight with family.

Think about the last really big conflict you had with someone. My hunch is that most of us here had that last big conflict either with the family we were born into or the family we married. Jesus knew that there was an inherent weakness in our “flesh and blood.”

The other area where I too frequently see conflict is within the church. We often fight with our brothers and sisters of the faith. This congregation has a history of conflict. Sin can destroy relationships even within the church.

Yet it was through the church and “flesh and blood” that we were saved. Jesus took on our “flesh and blood.” He came as a baby into our world. He grew up as a real live “flesh and blood” man. He felt heat and cold, hunger and thirst, pleasure and pain. He made friends with people who turned against him, denied him and betrayed him. His flesh was nailed to a cross and his blood ran from his wounds. His “flesh and blood” was shed so that all of our sins could be forgiven.

The “flesh and blood” of this world could not reveal who Jesus was – yet it was his own “flesh and blood” that became the means of our salvation. Through our families we inherited the sin that causes conflict in our relationships with one another – that are so painfully present sometimes within our own families. Through Jesus “flesh and blood” we inherit the adoption as God’s children – and find a means to heal the conflict that has existed since the fall between God and human kind – and we can even begin to find the means to heal the conflicts that exist between one another in this world.

Isn't it remarkable that Jesus would give us his very "flesh and blood" as a permanent reminder of his sacrifice! As we eat his body and drink his blood, we are more than reminded that Jesus gave his life so that our sins are forgiven – we are re-forgiven.

The spell check on my computer informed me that "re-forgiven" is NOT a word. But I think it should be a word and this won't be the last time I use it and I have instructed my computer to learn it.

Each time I receive the "flesh and blood" of Jesus I am re-forgiven. Not just re-minded of a forgiveness over 2000 years old – but a new forgiveness for the sins I have committed this day. And not only that – I am re-forgiven each time I hear the words of absolution and each time I reach out for forgiveness in prayer. I am re-forgiven frequently. You are re-forgiven frequently.

Our "re-forgiveness" isn't something God needs. He doesn't need us to come to him. He doesn't need – We need. We need to hear the words of re-forgiveness. We need to experience re-forgiveness as we kneel at the altar and receive his body and blood. We need re-forgiveness because our "flesh and blood" is weak.

Jesus has redeemed "flesh and blood" for you and me. What was weak – has become the means of salvation. Peter's faith may not have come by means of "flesh and blood" but without "flesh and blood" Peter's faith would have been impossible.

And now I am talking about more than the "flesh and blood" of Jesus. Certainly the Holy Spirit brought faith into Peter's life – but it was the human brothers and sisters in Christ which nourished that Holy Spirited faith in Peter's life.

It took more than human beings to create faith in your heart – but human beings carried you to a baptismal font, taught you in Sunday School, gave you your first communion and continues to nourish your faith today.

“Flesh and blood” may not have revealed “who Jesus was” – but flesh and blood can learn who Jesus was and is and can teach it and can tell it and can sing it and can shout it from the highest mountains.

I am painfully aware of how our human weakness can put us in conflict with the God who loves us and even with our family who loves us. Jesus died to end the conflict we have God – he died also to end any conflict we have with one another.

If Jesus can redeem “flesh and blood” from something weak into a source of salvation for us – Jesus can redeem any conflict you may experience with your family – be they flesh and blood family, friends, members of this congregation, coworkers or neighbors.

People may be too weak to reveal who Jesus was and is in this world – but our redeemed “flesh and blood” can – by the power of the Holy Spirit – reveal Jesus to a world of people who are hurting and need their “flesh and blood” redeemed.

We are re-forgiven people – and we have the capacity to re-forgive one another and the capacity to tell others how they can be re-forgiven people as well. If my computer can learn that – so can you!

Amen.