

Do Unto Others #4: Respect

1 Corinthians 12:1-31

September 29, 2024

Rev. Dr. Chris Keating

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And when we apply these words to churches, we bring with us these same assumptions about beautiful, well-coordinated bodies. We hear Paul's words as a call to ecclesiastical physical fitness – let's trim away the extra body fat, strengthen the ligaments and muscles, increase our capacity to work and above all make sure the body is attractive and good looking on the outside. After all, no one is lining up to join an out of shape, flabby and anemic church.

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Parker Palmer calls “remembering that we are all in this together” the key to restoring the heart of our democracy. It’s the sort of experience Arthur Brooks mentions in his book, “Love Your Enemies.” Brooks tells a story of how Hawk Newsome, a leader in New York City’s Black Lives Matter movement, and a few of his followers stumbled upon a rally organized by a contingent of supporters of Donald Trump. Hawk came to that rally expecting a confrontation, certainly a hostile rejection and probably a violent response. As Hawk and his friends stood near the sides with their Black Lives Matter signs, that was indeed the initial response. But the organizer of the Trump rally invited Hawk to speak. “We’re going to give you two minutes to get your message out,” the leader said. At first, the crowd cursed at Hawk, who freely admitted he was ready to fight back. But Newsome, a committed Christian, began first by saying a silent prayer. And then he began talking softly by saying, “My name is Hawk Newsome, and I am president of Black Lives Matter. I am and American.” Suddenly the crowd grew quiet. “And the beauty of

America is that when you see something broken, you can mobilize to fix it.” And then he began to speak about why he was trying to fix what he saw as broken in America. In the end, there was no “kum by yah” moment, but there were people who set aside their personal agendas for a moment and began to seek peace.

Arther De Boers has written a little book about conflict he called “Never Call Them Jerks.” Deboers tells a story of a man driving through an unfamiliar part of town. It was a place he did not feel comfortable in, so he made sure his doors were locked and his eyes were fixed on the road ahead. Sure enough, his assumptions were correct: not long after driving down the street he began to notice people waving their arms at him, screaming at him. “Typical,” he said, “Just what I thought: these people are unwelcoming and want to hurt me.” This continued for several blocks until the man realized he had been driving the wrong way on a one-way street!

Respect seems to happen when we take a breath, and begin to gather a new perspective about the person we perceive as different. It begins as we regain what Paul calls our primary awareness of God’s reconciling work in the world: the promise that we are each valued.

Amen.