

FCCS May 17, 2019
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“LOVE, four simple letters”
John 13:31-35

Be patient, be patient, don't be in such a hurry. When you get impatient, you only start to worry. Remember, remember, that God has patience too and think of all the other times we had to wait for you. (Christian Camp Song)

Ah, the imperfection of us all. As we get older, isn't it nice to be around people who are not afraid to admit when they get it all wrong?

Admitting I was wrong used to be so much harder when I was young, I was taught that to admit you were wrong was a sign of weakness. Now it happens at least three times before breakfast. And boy can I get **people** wrong, I don't love that about myself, but I have to admit it is true. I can get people really, really wrong. What is that old saying, “Don't judge a book by its cover.”

Bob Woodward, Pulitzer prize winning journalist and author has written a new book about the current administration and is making the talk show rounds. Woodward is perhaps best known for his 1972 Watergate expose, “All the Presidents Men.” His new book is called “Fear; Trump in the Whitehouse,” sounds interesting, but what caught my attention in the interview I caught on KALW this week, was his candid admission of how he had gotten someone completely wrong. It was Gerald Ford, he had gotten Gerard Ford all wrong.

“You get them wrong before you meet them, while you're anticipating meeting them; you get them wrong while you're with them; and then you go home to tell somebody else about the meeting and you get them all wrong again.”
Philip Roth

Based on the lies and half-truths proliferated by Nixon and those closely linked to him, Woodward had judged Ford to be one of the good old boys, a power monger, and a cheat. In his book about the fall of Nixon, Woodward as much said that Ford and Nixon had a back room dealing that ushered Ford into the presidency, a role Woodward assumed Ford had wanted all along.

When then President Gerald Ford pardoned “Tricky Dick” in 1974 Woodward, along with the rest of the nation, roundly condemned his actions.

In 2001, Woodward received a phone call from Caroline Kennedy, telling him that Gerald Ford had been selected to receive the John F. Kennedy Profile in

Courage award, which had only ever been given to one other Republican Sen John McCain.

Caroline Kennedy said that with his "controversial decision of conscience" Mr. Ford had proved that "politics can be a noble profession."

Senator Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts told the audience: "I was one of those who spoke out against his action then. But time has a way of clarifying past events, and now we see that President Ford was right. His courage and dedication to our country made it possible for us to begin the process of healing and put the tragedy of Watergate behind us."

Courage is not something to be gauged in a poll or located in a focus group. No adviser can spin it. No historian can backdate it. For, in the age-old contest between popularity and principle, only those willing to lose for their convictions are deserving of posterity's approval. (excerpted from the 2001 Kennedy award ceremony)

It turns out that Ford never aspired to the Presidency. Moreover, when he found himself in the role, he made countless unheralded efforts to pursue international peace and repair the damage from Nixon's time in office. Bob Woodward had to admit he had been blinded by the person he thought Ford was. "Boy was that a wakeup call."

*"The fact remains that getting people **right** is not what living is all about anyway. (says Roth) It's getting them **wrong** that is living, getting them wrong and wrong and wrong and then, on careful reconsideration, getting them wrong again. That's how we know we're alive: **we're wrong.**"*

In today's scripture, Jesus altars the course of religious history forever. He does so with three simple words; "love one another." Up to now the way of law set out in the Torah had served as the only true path to faithful Jewish living, and then along came another commandment in those three simple words; love one another. Nothing would ever be the same. Now the question had to be, does the law stand in the way of loving one another? Laws that stand in the way of loving one another as we have been loved by the likes of Jesus, those are not God's law, for God's law is love. Three simple words, love one another.

Now we all know that those very words commanding us to love one another have been used plenty to do just the opposite. And one is left to wonder how we could have gotten it so wrong.

*(Roth) That's how we know we're alive: **we're wrong.***"

It's like Jesus left out the most important part of the new commandment, or at the very least the footnote; Love one another as I have loved you, **and you will get it wrong.**

See, if he had just added that last bit... you will get it wrong, over and over again, it might have served as encouragement to stick with it a little longer. Right, because what we learn in this life is that it ain't about how many times you fall down, its about how many times you get back up.

Maybe the best thing would be to forget being right or wrong about people and just go along for the ride. (Roth) But if you can do that -- well, lucky you.

I have a hunch that for every time I have gotten someone else wrong, someone has gotten me wrong too. But you learn pretty quickly that you can't make much of a life out of feeling misunderstood.

Faith is about playing the long game; we love and we get loved, we hurt and we get hurt and we keep on going forward down the road. The song doesn't say, they will know we are Christians cause we're right, always right... It says instead, *they will know we are Christians by our love, by our love, yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.*

Amen