

CCMC Weekly 58  
January 9, 2017

Dear Christ Community,

Once I read part of a novel entitled *Gilead* by UCC minister Marilynne Robinson. I don't think I finished it but there was one part that I always remember. The narrator of the book was a preacher's kid, and one day as a child he and another child got the idea to baptize kittens. By sprinkling, not dunking! Now the mother cat wasn't too fond of this and took the kittens back, and the kid's father ended up giving him a lecture about respecting the sacraments, but the child did it with the utmost sovereignty and respect. He recalled the way the warm little brows felt as he touched them with the pure intention of blessing them. Very different than a regular petting stroke.

May we all find times to approach those we encounter with the same sacred solemnity and tenderness with which this narrator encountered those kittens. I also appreciate the ways in which humor is intermingled with spiritual reverence in the innocence of this encounter. As an Anabaptist, I can't help but wonder what this child had been taught about baptism that he was concerned about the souls of the kittens, but I admire his welcoming heart. As we strive to walk with Jesus in 2017, may we bless and welcome and laugh in the name of Jesus.

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LAST SUNDAY

We read the scripture from the book of Acts where Peter visits Cornelius and has a vision and proclaims the gospel as accessible to gentiles (Read it here: Acts 10:34-43 <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%2010:34-43>). We talked about how both Peter and Cornelius listened and trusted God enough to get outside of their comfort zone and to make space for the Holy Spirit to work upon them. As believers we have to be devoted and open enough to God, to receive learning even when God sends unexpected messengers. This scripture challenges our perceptions of who is insider and who is outsider. Christ breaks down restrictive boundaries. And so then we too must think about what boundaries God may be preparing us to transcend, and witness the possibilities of salvation that are at hand.

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NEXT SUNDAY

John 2:13-25

13 The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14 In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.

15 Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. 16 He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" 17 His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." 18 The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" 19 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." 20 The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" 21 But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 22 After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

23 When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing. 24 But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people 25 and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone.

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#### STUDY QUESTIONS

- How did Jesus feel in this passage? How much did he tell the people what was going to happen? How much do you think he wanted to tell?
- How do you think people responded to Jesus' actions here? What did it recall for the disciples?
- How does this image of Jesus challenge or affirm our understanding of Christ as peacemaker?
- How did the words of Christ speak to their present understanding and their future?
- What do you make of this idea that Jesus didn't trust the people?

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Have a nice end of the week.

Love, Amy