



Christ Preaches the Apostles, Duccio Di Buoninsegna, 1255-1260 to 1318-1319

Greetings!

Please read [John 15: 12-17](#)

Often for devotions I turn to hymns. *The United Methodist Hymnal* offers a wide variety of hymns from multiple traditions and nationalities of the church. In *The United Methodist Hymnal* are multiple indexes for use to find alternative tunes, topics and scriptures. Each index helps the worship planner, the musician and others to enhance their experience in faith development.



Such is the case of the text and the song I am sharing with you today. John 15:12-17 is known as the “farewell discourse” of Jesus. This section of text stretching from chapter 14-17 is the Lord’s message to the disciples with instruction about how the ministry center is going to move from Jesus to the disciples who will be led and guided by the Holy Spirit. Jesus promises to send the Holy

Spirit to remind the disciples of all the Lord said and did during their ministry time together. Some of the most poignant scenes of scripture are found in the discourse including, Peace Be with You, the Vine and the Branches narrative, Words about Persecution and the holy meal that the disciples shared together that we call The Last Supper.

Recently our world has been rocked by many events, stories, and happenings. Fire

and wind and storms all over the world. The Earth's climate appears to be changing. Is it at our own hand? There is divisive debate about that very question.

Likewise, debates on the Novel Coronavirus continue well into the second year with new variants causing havoc on young and old alike. Masks and vaccine controversies divide us instead of bringing our human community together. School boards, city councils, state and national leaders of elected and non-elected people are in an uproar and foment.

The human tragedy of the withdrawal and end of a 20-year war including the latest number of US and Afghan deaths, injury and sadness has shocked the world. The optics are difficult. Multiple sides are engaged in finger pointing. But we all know that finger pointing will not assuage grief, no matter how hard you point or how many times you change your position. The attempts to cover up previously held positions with rhetoric or double talk is devoid of any sense of honor or morality. Continued struggles about race, identity and gender equity continue to be impacted by institutional racism, sexism and lgbtqia+ phobias. Chaos, anger and bitterness are just some of the feelings experienced and all point towards the human condition - a humanity with deep needs that cannot be self-supplied.

Is there no end in sight for our deep desire for bringing *retribution to each other* for holding an opposing view? Will we, even as Christians, always look for someone to blame for our lot in life? Will we live out our selfish notions of putting ourselves before others, even when the precepts of faith we proclaim teach us in the words of the Apostle Paul, *a more excellent way (1 Cor: 13)*?

I wonder if you and I can give ourselves and those around us a collective break. This doesn't mean that we ignore our differences or try to meld the human community into one culturally insensitive "melting pot." But rather, is it possible to do as the James text from last week reminded us and I loosely paraphrase – "Can we listen more and talk less?"

In the mid-1970's, Fred Kaan, a hymn writer, pastor and ecumenicist wrote a song called *Help Us Accept Each Other* and wondered just that – Can we listen more? Can we accept each other? Like today, the '70's were a divisive time. Kaan's hymn text and hymn tune created by Ohio native John Ness Beck, invite the reader, listener, singer, to consider the notion of acceptance through the lens of Jesus' acceptance of you and me. But the suggestion of the text is not a specific *us*, rather "*each person to embrace*" as we ask the Lord to "*teach us to care for people, for all, not just for some, to love them as we find them, or as they may become.*"

Maybe amid our human overload we might find a moment to dive into Jesus' farewell discourse and sing a hymn. [Click here](#) to listen to the Chicago Temple Women's Choir sing *Help Us Accept Each Other*.

Peace,

Todd

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