

## Seven Steps to a New Life

Week 5: *Become a Lover* | February 5, 2012

### Scripture

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#### **Hebrews 10:19-25**

Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

#### **Matthew 16:13-20**

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

# Questions

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- 1.) The Hebrews passage refers to what was a crucial piece of Jewish life: sacrificing animals for atonement with God. The author of Hebrews interprets Jesus as both High Priest and as sacrifice. According to this passage, what does Jesus do for us?
- 2.) What does the author of Hebrews encourage us to then do? What might it look like for First Church today to do these things? What are some examples amongst us that already exist of these actions? What would we like to see more of in our church of these things?
- 3.) Taking on the question Jesus posts in Matthew, who do people in Seattle say Jesus is? Who do we as United Methodists say who Jesus is? Who do you say that Jesus is?
- 4.) God created us as social animals. Sandy gave an example of his missionary friend in Africa being invited to live in close proximity with fellow women. John was so close to Jesus that he rested his head on his chest. This is very counter cultural to Pacific Northwesterners; we have “body bubbles” or personal space. Does God call us out of our bubble? If so, what might that look like at First Church?
- 5.) The Church is not a building. The Church is not a consumer organization. The Church is not an enforcer of doctrine. What is the Church? Do we at First Church treat it as such?
- 6.) Dietrich Bonhoeffer said something to the effect that every so often, someone knocks on the door of the Church, challenging her to love. This person is the face of Jesus. Who challenges us personally to love? Who is challenging all of First Church to love?

**Prayer:** *God, thank you for the gift of each other. Give us the vision and grace to accept ourselves and accept others. Flow, Holy Spirit through us. May we increase as vessels of Your all-encompassing love. Amen.*