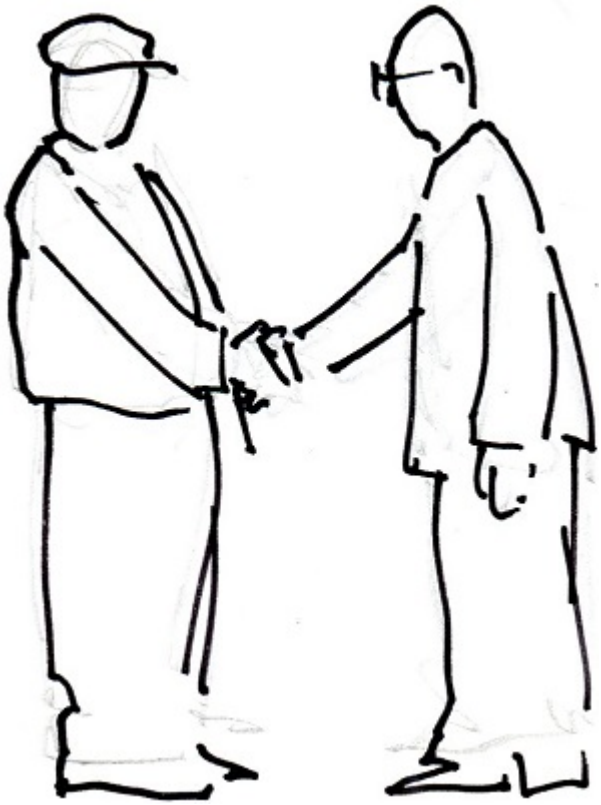
Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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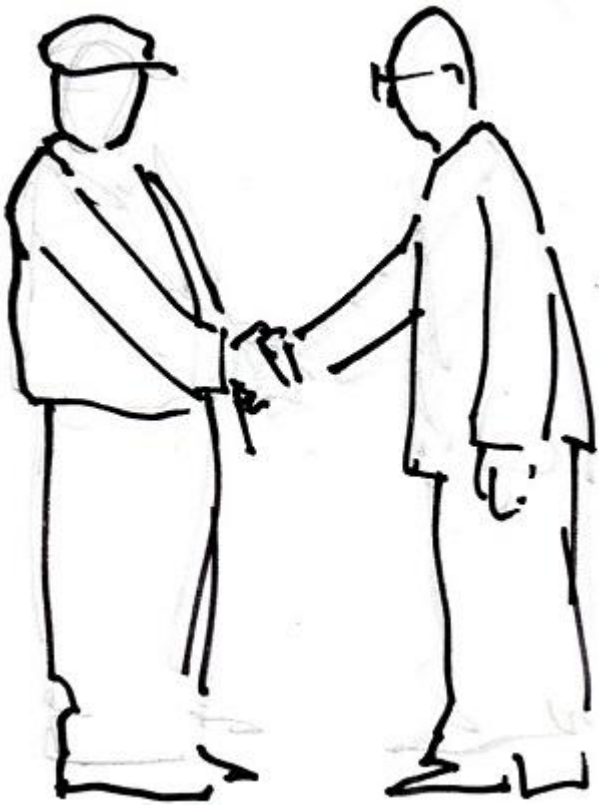

“Settle early with your opponent on the way to court” (Matt 5:25).

*1 Kgs 18:41-46; Mt 5:20-26*

If the Sermon on the Mount represents the heart of Jesus’ teaching, then today’s passage about forgiveness from Chapter 5 of Matthew’s Gospel is essential to his message.

Jesus’ emphasis on forgiveness shows his awareness that an unresolved quarrel ruins our ability to pray and that failure to reconcile quickly can bury a conflict in our psyche. The author of Ephesians offers the same insight: “Do not let the sun go down on your anger” (4:26). How many marriages have been saved by the time-honored ritual of a candle on either side of the bed lit to signal the desire to settle before sleep?

Jesus tells his disciples to leave their prayers at the altar and first go and settle with a brother or sister. Peace with God and peace with one another go together.  Human pride drags opponents to court who might have settled on the way. Judgment imposes a steep fine and self-imprisonment until the last penny is paid. What a perfect description of the brooding descent into bitterness people choose over a simple “I’m sorry,” still the best “Get Out of Jail Free” card there is.

I am told that a common Russian greeting is “Please forgive me.”  To begin and end every encounter with such a profound courtesy would bring heaven to earth. This was Jesus’ message, and he offers it to us because he wants us to be happy and at peace.  Isn’t this the joy of the Gospel?

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