

Home Sunday Worship for July 26, 2020

Call to Worship

Give thanks to the Lord and call on God's name!
We will praise our God and tell of all God's wonderful works.
Let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.
We will give glory to God's holy name!
Seek the Lord, God's strength and presence continually.
We will remember God's mercy and justice in worship and praise.

Prayer

God of the past, present and future,
we marvel at the wonder of your creation.
We praise you for the blessings of this season, for gardens growing, birds singing,
shouts of joy in times of play and restful evening sunsets.
Such good gifts all around us remind us of your faithfulness to us.
You promise us a life beyond anything we can hope or imagine,
a kingdom marked by grace, love and justice for all.
In Jesus' name, by the power of the Spirit breathing within us,
We praise you for your loving kindness and the hope it brings to us day by day.

As we consider your faithfulness to us,
we cannot but help think about the ways we have not lived faithfully.
So we confess together:

Merciful God:

We confess that we feel more comfortable with the way things are,
rather than live out the challenges we meet in Jesus.
Tempted by the promises of our culture,
we rely on the status quo to protect and prosper some but not all.
Turning away from the cries of the hurting,
we fail to stand up for the justice they seek.
Afraid to speak of our faith and hope in you,
we remain silent and complacent.
Forgive us all the ways we let you down.

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn us? Only Christ—
And Christ died for us; Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. Friends,
believe the good news of the gospel. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free by God's
generous grace. Thanks be to God!

Scripture Reading:

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." *Luke 19: 1-10*

Sermon: God Working in our midst (Derek Wilson, Youth and Children Coordinator, St. Andrew's)

If you grew up in the church or attended bible camps in your youth, you might remember this song.

Zacchaeus was a wee little man,
And a wee little man was he.
He climbed up in a sycamore tree
For the Lord he wanted to see.
And as the Savior passed that way
He looked up in the tree and he said,
"Zacchaeus you come down, For I'm going to your house today!"
For I'm going to your house today!
Zacchaeus was a wee little man,
But a happy man was he,
For he had seen the Lord that day
And a happy man was he;
And a very happy man was he.

When I was younger I lived in a city called Thunder Bay in one of the less nice areas. My mom being a single mother raises 2 kids decided to start a woman's bible studies out of our house for the other ladies in the area. These were some tough ladies. I remember one having a tattoo of the f word on her arm. One of the ladies as named Joy, Joy loved deeply and and a get heart for people, but she was rough and tough. I was scared of her for a while while I was a kid. Joy lived with a man named Tommy. Joy accepted Jesus through my mom's little bible study and started coming to church. When i was a teen sometimes I would be given the opportunity to preach at church and whenever I did Tommy would come to church with Joy, he never came any other time. Joy told Tommy she wouldn't marry him until he became a Christian, but he was reluctant to. While I was a away at Bible College Tommy was diagnosed with a few types of cancer and not given very long to live. Tommy accepted Jesus and that summer while I was home Tommy and Joy got married in the hospital. It was a beautiful wedding, nurses brought some of their own table clothes for the reception, it was in the news even all the way in Toronto. Although Tommy was sick and close to the end, the joy and happiness of that wedding is something I will never forget.

A few days later Joy called me and asked me to lead Tommy and Joy in communion. So I went to the hospital with some crackers and juice and we partook in the Lord's Supper together. A few days after that Tommy passed away.

I didn't see at the time how God was moving and working in all the lives that were involved in Tommy's life. I didn't see at the time how special that last communion was with Tommy. It's funny how we can miss what God is doing in our midst if we are not paying attention.

The story of Zacchaeus reminds me of the story of Tommy. Zacchaeus and Tommy remind me to look for God moving in our midst because He is and if I can't see it, I had should find a better perspective.

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but because he was short it was hard for him to see over the crowd. Sometimes it's hard to see Jesus moving amongst us. Sometimes it's hard to see what God is doing in our midst. I know for me sometimes I let pride and selfishness get in the way.

Sometimes I like anger, jealousy or even complacency get in the way of seeing God work. Just like Zacchaeus I want to see God work, but I can't see over the huddles I have placed in front of me. It's possible to also use excuses like the Covid situation that we find ourselves in. The separation we feel to distance ourselves from others, using that as an excuse to not see what God is doing in us and through us during this time. God is with us, He is doing stuff in our lives, churches and communities. Do we have eyes to see and ears to hear Him.

Sometimes we need a little help to see God moving. Like Zacchaeus climbing the tree, we need help to see what God is doing. That's why the church is so important and the fellowship we have with each other. You sharing how God is working in your life, gives me a different perspective on seeing God's work. Reading your bible and reading those that have studied it, gives me the opportunity to learn more about God. Praying alone and together as the body of Christ gives me a different vantage point to see how God is working in our midst. So stay in community, stay together even though we are distant from each other, so that we may share with each other about what God is doing in our midst.

As Jesus is walking by he see Zacchaeus and calls to him Zacchaeus "Come down quickly, I must stay at your house today". I don't know who needs to hear this, but Jesus has time for you and wants you to get to know you. He sees you and wants to spend time with you.

Zacchaeus was not a good guy, he was a tax collector and what that meant during these days was that he collected taxes for Rome. Once Rome conquered a place they wanted that people's money, so they employed people from that place to collect tax. The collectors could collect as much money as they wanted as often as they wanted. As long as Rome got what was owed to them, the tax collector keep what was over and above that. Tax collectors we known for taking advantage of people, taking it all from the fellow countrymen and making themselves rich and the bible says Zacchaeus was wealthy. This is what Zacchaeus did, not only is this what he did, but he was the Chief tax collector. He had been doing this job for a while, which means he had been destroying people lives and robbing them for a while.

Imagine a mobster who charges businesses for protection from that same mobster or they will burn that business down. Those feelings or thoughts you are getting about them being a thug and taking advantage of helpless families, robbing people of their money so they become poor. That is close to how a first century Jew would have thought of tax collectors.

Jesus seeing this tax collector and says “Hey, I want to stay your place”. Nobody wanted to stay at Zacchaeus’ house because everyone hated him. But Jesus the big show in town, the guy everyone was there to see did. Amazing! I would have loved to have been there and seen the shock on his face, but all we get is “He welcomed him gladly”.

Jesus eats with Zacchaeus and back then eating together meant more than it does now. To eat with someone or stay with them, meant you were in fellowship with them and supported them. Which is why it was so scandalous that Jesus would eat with sinners. Here’s the thing Jesus doesn’t care what people think, he loves you. Just like Zacchaeus he wants you to know him more. You could have been a Christian your whole life, Jesus wants you to know him more. You may be new to this whole Christian thing; Jesus wants you to know him more. It doesn’t matter what you have done in the past, like Zacchaeus being a tax collector. Jesus is here now and wants to stay with you. He wants to be involved in your life. Involved in the day to day interactions you have with people, involved in your work and your family and your home. He has called you by name and wants to go to your house today, will you invite him.

Zacchaeus responds to Jesus staying at his house by saying “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Spending time with Jesus transforms people. Asking for forgiveness and settling wrong doings is powerful when I come to community. I wonder after Zacchaeus gave his money away if people in the community forgave him and saw what Jesus did. Did they understand what was happening in front of them or did they let pride and selfishness, hatred and unforgiveness prevent them from seeing God moving in their midst. Did they become like Zacchaeus who was unable to see Jesus moving and they needed some help to get a better perspective.

God is involved with us moving through us and in us. He is not a God that set the world up like a clock and watches it outside of time tick away, never intervening. He is with us in our community in our churches in our lives calling to us “I want to stay at your place today”. I want to have a friendship/ relationship with you. Will you let me in? Will you invite me in to your house into your life, into these things you keep separated from your “Christian life”?

If you do let him in watch things transform in your life and those around you. You can know about Jesus like Zacchaeus had heard about him, but still not know Him. You can work to get a better view of Jesus and see what all this fuss is about. Is being a Christian just a Sunday thing? we come to church, join the crowd, sing some songs, hear about Jesus and that’s it? If he asks to come into areas of your life are you ready to be transformed. It may cost something Zacchaeus gave back half of his wealth and gave back 4 times what he had wronged people. What in my life and yours is the cost of following Jesus?

Finally, God is moving with us and involved in our lives. Pay attention to what he is doing. Talk and pray with one another so that we may see him clearer and understand Him deeper. We are in this together and I need you, I need you to be that tree that can lift me up and see Jesus.

Blessings to you all and may God open our eyes to what he is doing in our midst and may we have the courage and faith to follow him.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession (Sandra Kroek, Session Clerk St. Andrew's)

Father God,

Thank you for your presence with us, your love and faithfulness to us. You are the amazing, eternal God. You pour out water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground. Lord we are dry; we are thirsty for You. You said, "I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessings on your descendants." Your love never ceases; your faithfulness never ends. Thank you, Lord. We need Your Spirit, courage and love to face into these days. Days of mourning, uncertainty, world unrest. Days of disappointment over not being able to be together on special days. Lord we need You as we find new ways to celebrate, new places of joy and expectation, new ways to love those around us. You only can fill us. You are the Hope for all. You are ahead, behind and beside us this we know.

Praise You Lord. "Hallelujah! For the Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him the glory!"

Amen

Benediction

Grace of God the Father, the love of God the Son and the comfort of God the Spirit rest upon you all the days of your lives now and forevermore. Amen.