

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, October 30th, 2022
Rev. Gerry Gallant

With Haste
Proper 26
Luke 19:1-10

Welcome

Announcements

- Study Club for Students!!!! M&W 3-5.
- Halloween
- Salvation Army Bell ringers

Call to Worship

Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength.
They shall mount up with wings as eagles;

They shall run and not be weary;
They shall walk and not faint.

In the company of all God's saints and pilgrims, come and worship.
We come with prayer and praise to find our strength renewed!

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

Ancient of days,
God of our everyday lives,
we praise you for your guidance and care in every generation,
and for the example of those who have gone before us,
who taught us your name and brought us to faith.
In the great mystery of your love,
we know these saints gather with,
to praise and adore you for
your wisdom that instructs,
your grace that redeems,
your Spirit who guides us, and for
the comfort and hope we claim
in the knowledge that neither death nor life
can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn #64: “Be Still and Know that I Am God”

Be still and know that I am God.
 Be still and know that I am God.
 Be still and know that I am God.

I am the Lord that healeth thee.
 I am the Lord that healeth thee.
 I am the Lord that healeth thee.

In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.
 In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.
 In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.

Call to Confession**Prayer of Confession**

Gracious God,
 you have been faithful to us in every generation.
 Yet we confess that we are not so faithful to you.
 We shrink from costly discipleship
 and we seek cheap grace.
 Forgive our fleeting enthusiasms
 and our shallow commitments.
 And guide us always
 with the love and mercy we witness in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Dear friends, while it is true that we have all sinned,
 It is a greater truth that we are forgiven through God’s love in Jesus Christ.
 Be at peace with God, with yourself and with one another.

The Lord’s Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
 Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
 For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
 Forever and ever. Amen.**

Music Ministry: “I Surrender, Lord” by Choir**Responsive Reading**

Question 89. What is the forgiveness of sins?

Forgiveness is God's costly act in Jesus Christ to pardon sinners and to restore our broken relationships both with God and with one another. Faith, repentance and baptism are the means by which we receive forgiveness. In forgiving others we share the peace of Christ. Acts 13:38-39, 1 Pet 1:19, 2 Cor 5:19, Mt 18:21-22, 26:28; Mk 1:4, 11:25; Lk 3:3; Acts 2:38, 5:31; Col 1:14; Rom 5:8-10; Eph 2:8; Col 3:13; Heb 9:22, 12:14.

Question 90. Which two other words are sometimes used to express the wonder and reality of forgiveness?

The Bible speaks of "justification" and "sanctification". They describe God's gracious work of forgiveness, a work which is one and inseparable and yet has two distinct aspects to it. Rom 3:28, Rom 5:1, 1 Cor 1:30, 1 Cor 6:11

Children's Hymn #78: "This Is the Day"

This is the day, this is the day
that the Lord has made,
that the Lord has made.
We will rejoice, we will rejoice
and be glad in it, and be glad in it.
This is the day that the Lord has made;
we will rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day, this is the day
that the Lord has made.

Open to us, open to us
the gates of God,
the gates of God;
we will go in, we will go in
and praise the Lord, and praise the Lord.
Open to us the gates of God;
we will go in and praise the Lord.
Open to us, open to us
the gates of God.

You are our God, you are our God;
we will praise your name,
we will praise your name;
we will give thanks, we will give thanks
for your faithfulness, for your faithfulness.
You are our God; we will praise your name;
we will give thanks for your faithfulness.
You are our God, you are our God;
we will praise your name.

Children's Lesson

Prayer for illumination (Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Luke 19:1-10

Jesus and Zacchaeus

19 He entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³ And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. ⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." ⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." ⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." ⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Sermon

'Zacchaeus was a wee little man, and a wee little man was he!' This is how many of us remember who Zacchaeus was in the bible. We recall the name from the Sunday school song we sang and that is about the extent of our knowledge of who Zacchaeus was in the scripture. Because of this we tend to be dismissive of the story of Zacchaeus in the scripture because when we were young, we focused solely on his physical stature and not on his character. However, there is actually a lot which we can learn from Zacchaeus in his story about what it means to be a faithful follower of Christ. Even though Zacchaeus was a small man in stature, he was actually quite large in character, and in his story, he displays many of the traits of personality and faith that Christians need in their day to day walk with Christ in the modern world.

The scripture begins by telling us that Zacchaeus was a tax collector, not just any tax collector though, he was the chief tax collector in the city of Jericho. This meant that he must have been a very wealthy man. As you know from last weeks sermon that tax collectors were famous for pocketing extra taxes off the people, well the chief tax collector pocketed the extra taxes off the people and the other tax collectors.

And the fact that Zacchaeus made money by lying and cheating the Israelites was a bit of a contradiction for him. Zacchaeus was essentially a fraud, liar, and thief; the top of

the pyramid scheme that served the Roman government to keep the Israelites enslaved, yet his name meant 'righteous one; in Hebrew. There is irony in the fact that the one who was financially enslaving his people to the Romans was called 'righteous one' in their own language. People of that day, and many still today, will make a judgement of someone based off their name. Many parents spend days discussing names, wanting to ensure that they choose the right name for their child, and this is likely what Zacchaeus parents had done. They had pondered all of the possible name choices and chosen to name their son, 'Zacchaeus – the righteous one of God'. They probably chose this name because they wanted their son to carry on the religious life of the family, walking always in the ways of the Lord, however, it seems that Zacchaeus, regardless of his parents wishes, had wandered away from the path of the Lord at some point and become a slave of the pursuit of wealth and power.

There were likely points in his life when Zacchaeus was troubled by the meaning of his name and the fact that he had not lived up to the wishes of his parents. In fact, he was probably troubled in his heart at times because he knew that he had not only failed his parents, but in fact he had failed God. Perhaps when we heard that Zacchaeus was a wee little man it was speaking of both his physical stature and his spiritual state of being.

The truth is that anyone who is living their life outside of God's will is often in a spiritual battle with themselves and with the sins of this world. They are constantly being cut down from any spiritual growth by the false idols and sins that cause them to act in ways that hurts their relationship with the people of this world and with God. We see this clearly in people who have come to know who Christ is in their lives and struggle against him, they fall away to false idols and sin and often feel spiritually wounded and ashamed when they do so, they become almost fearful of returning to their relationship with God because they fear that he will cast his judgement upon them for their weakness. In a sense they feel very much like Zacchaeus likely did, spiritually small and ashamed of their own behavior. This often results in an attempt to hide our sins from others, to even try to hide our sins from ourselves, by excusing them or justifying them, we even try to hide our sin from God, even though we know that we cannot.

This was the state of mind that Zacchaeus lived in every day, torn between the upbringing in the Lord that his parents had given him and the desire to be wealthy and possess power in the world. Yet, on the day that he learned that Jesus was passing through the city of Jericho everything changed for him. That small spiritual spark that was in his being was ignited by the desire to see this man they called the Messiah. He knew in his whole being that if Jesus was the Messiah that he could overcome his desire for the things of this world and begin to live up to the name which his parents had given him at his birth. He knew that if Jesus was the Messiah, he could remove all of the spiritual pain and spiritual shame that he had been living with every day.

So, Zacchaeus dropped his work for the day and left to see the man they called Jesus of Nazareth. However, he did not walk over there call and collected with an air of superiority like he usually did while travelling in the city collecting the taxes. Instead, he took off at a full run, trying to get to where Jesus was as quickly as possible. Think how foolish he must have appeared to the people he ran past as he hurried to see Jesus with his robes hiked up over his calves, how foolish he must have looked as he struggled to climb up that sycamore tree to get a perch from where he could see the Messiah.

Remember that men usually did not run in Jewish culture, especially important men and yet here was Zacchaeus running through the crowd like a young boy who had just hear the bells of an ice cream truck a block away. There was something in the hope of seeing the Messiah that gave Zacchaeus the heart to go and see him regardless of what he had to do or how he looked to everyone else in the city of Jericho. Are you beginning to see that although Zacchaeus may have been small in stature and spirit at that moment, his character was starting to show that he was going to be much more than the arrogant cheat of a tax collector that everyone believed he was.

There are many people who are like Zacchaeus in this world. They started off knowing who Jesus Christ was, they knew him as the Lord and Messiah and there for some reason they feel away into the ways of the world and gave into the persecutions, persuasions, and temptations of sin. There are many people in this world who are torn between the call of Christ on their hearts and the desire to follow their own worldly desires. Every human knows the struggle between these two sides of our character. This is the number one reason that many people give for not becoming Christian, they find it too hard to change, too hard to stand up for the scripture, too hard to resist the temptations of the world, too hard to give up the sins they enjoy. Many of these people let the people around them and their opinions of who they are and who Christians are to hinder their ability to walk with God.

Zacchaeus could have done this. He could have easily justified not going to see Christ. He knew that he would not be welcomed by the Israelites who were already walking with the Messiah, they all hated him, they all believed that as a tax collector he was beyond salvation. He knew that he would be getting side glances and looks of disgust, he knew there would be whispers about him and who he was as he approached, he knew that some may even try to prevent him from seeing Christ.

Zacchaeus could have just as easily given up on his faith in Christ. Blaming his parents for giving him that name he could never live up to. Blaming the scriptures for making his life difficult, blaming God for making him the way he was and saying that God should just love him the way he is, after all God made him that way. He could have pushed back against religion and against God and no one would have cared.

Then there were the actually physical challenges of a small man like Zacchaeus actually getting to see Christ. Everyone in the crowd that was already gathered was taller than

him, he could have just walked up and said, it was too difficult today and walked away. The crowd was dense, and he could have used his having to work his way through the crowd as an excuse to not see Jesus. There are a million different excuses that Zacchaeus could have given for giving up on seeing Christ before he even left his home and a million more, he could have used once he got to where the crowds were gathered. Yet, this man who was small in stature and small in spirit do not give up, he persevered and mustered all of his strength to make his way through the crowd of onlookers and to the base of the sycamore tree, which he struggled to climb so that he could see Jesus as he passed.

The biblical commentator Matthew Henry said it this way, ‘those who sincerely desire a sight of Christ will use proper means for gaining a sight of Him and will break through a deal of difficulty and opposition and be willing to take pains to see Him.’ In plain language, if you want to get to know Christ you will do what it takes to get to know Christ, even if you have to fight through trouble, even if you have to endure sufferings or even if you have to give up things which you value. That is what Zacchaeus knew when his heart called for him to seek out Christ that fateful day, no physical limitation was going to keep him away, no hate from others was going to keep him away and even if it ended up costing him all of his massed wealth or even his life, he knew that seeing Christ that day would be worth that loss.

That is why Zacchaeus worked his way through the crowd and up the sycamore tree that day, he knew that he would experience God. He believed that he was going to find God, however, if you read the scripture, it was not Zacchaeus that found God, but God that found him. Jesus was the one who looked up from under the sycamore tree to the foolish looking chief tax collector of Jericho and called out to him. Jesus was the one who pulled on Zacchaeus heart and called him and gave him the strength to endure whatever pains and obstacles it took to come to Jesus.

Romans teaches us:

Romans 3:9-12

⁹What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰as it is written:

“None is righteous, no, not one;

¹¹no one understands;

no one seeks for God.

¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;

no one does good,

not even one.”

Even in the earliest of scriptures, the story of creation itself it is not Adam and Eve who seek out the Lord after they eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve hide from God, ashamed of themselves and their sin against God, it is God who seeks them out, calling out to them, 'Where are you?' (Gen 3:9)

Gen 3:9

⁹ But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?"

That is the same question that Jesus sent to the heart of Zacchaeus and the same question that God is asking of many in the world even today.

Rev 3:20 says;

Rev 3:20

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

Jesus is seeking his people, he is seeking his church, he is looking to have a personal relationship with his chosen people and yet there are many who have closed the door and shut him out of their lives because of their own personal sinful desires or because of love or fear of the ways of this world. Jesus is asking all of us to do exactly what Zacchaeus did, put in some effort to get to him, open that door to our hearts and invite him into their life each and every day. There are many people who call themselves Christian because they believe in Christ, but they have him standing on the other side of the door knocking and asking to be let in. They know who Jesus is and believe in him, the same way that Satan knows who Jesus is and believes in him, they just choose to not open the door and let him in because of the lifestyles they want to live, because they do not desire Christ enough to endure the trials, tribulations and temptations that draw them away from him in this world. They are not willing to open the door and invite Christ into their lives allowing him to make changes in them as he spends time in fellowship with them.

Zacchaeus was willing, and he did spend time in real physically fellowship with Jesus. Zacchaeus came down from the tree and invited Jesus into his home and shared a meal with him. Also note that Jesus called out to Zacchaeus by name, Jesus knows his people, he calls to them by name and as he knocks upon the door.

Also make note of Zacchaeus response to the knock on the door of his life by Christ. He does not make an excuse about not being prepared for guests, or not having enough food, or his house being dirty or small. Zacchaeus responds by hurrying down out of the tree quickly and joyfully inviting Jesus to his home. Jesus wants to be invited into our hearts so that he can bring us joy, Jesus is the only real source of Joy in this world. Many people confuse happiness and joy. Happiness is dependent on what is happening to us and around us and can change as the circumstances change. The joy that Jesus

gives his followers is not dependent on what is happening in our lives, it is completely independent of the circumstances that we find ourselves in, it is what helps us find stability in this unstable world, what gives meaning to seemingly meaningless events in our life, it is what changes the chaos of this world into something we can understand in context and we begin to see God behind it all, God is in control and that gives us peace in our lives. Jesus wants to bring this peace and joy into the life of anyone who is willing to answer the knock upon the door that he delivers.

Even when Zacchaeus has invited Jesus into his life and his home there are still those who oppose, there are still challenges that he needs to overcome. The gathered crowd responds with anger, with contempt, how dare Jesus the Messiah go to the home of the sinful heathen, the tax collector cannot be saved. They really believed tax collectors were beyond salvation.

Zacchaeus knew this would happen, he knew this is how people would react to him being there and how they would react to Christ interacting with him. Zacchaeus could have chosen to give into the crowd, he could have made an excuse for Jesus not to come to his house, he could have declined Jesus' entry to his home, he could have tried to convince Jesus to go home with someone more worthy. Yet once again Zacchaeus does none of these things, instead he ignores the calls and stereotypes and focuses solely on Jesus. Zacchaeus could have easily let how others viewed him, or how others viewed Jesus impact his relationship with Jesus, but he did not, he focused on Jesus and the value of that relationship.

This is a powerful lesson for the world today, where the opinions and stereotypes of that crowd are amplified in the modern world by social media. How many people are swayed in their relationship with God either because of the way that the world views them or because of the way that the world views Christ and Christians. I have personally met people who felt that they were too sinful to be saved, people who had been struggling against the same sin their entire lives, and I know that they are wrong, Jesus offers salvation to any who come to him regardless of their physical stature, regardless of their spiritual stature, regardless of the state of sin in their lives. The same is true for those who are swayed by the opinions of the world, those who are fearful of answering the knock on the door because of the world's opinions of Christ and Christians, those who fear that their lives will somehow be worse if they were to invite Christ into their lives, again I know that they are wrong, They may suffer some persecution here on earth for their faith, they may lose some of the things that enjoy, but that is a small price to pay in a life that goes on for eternity and the joy and peace we will have for all time in Christ's presence.

Zacchaeus may have been a man who was small in stature and small in spirit before he met Christ, but he was strong in character because he refused to have his focus on Jesus taken away by anything of this world. And it was that focus on Christ that changed him forever. When he forced his way through the crowd, and their opinions of him, when he

struggled to climb that sycamore tree, when he sat and ate with Christ he was forever changed. He gave up his old ways and began to walk the path of righteousness. He set aside his pride and his dignity and humbled himself before God, he came to God knowing he was a sinful man, and he could only be saved through his relationship with Jesus. And we see immediate evidence of that change in Zacchaeus, promises to right the wrongs he has made while chief tax collector, not because he wants to buy his way into salvation but because of the heartfelt compassion he now has for others because of the grace, love, and mercy that Jesus had shown him.

Zacchaeus was a wee man who did not hesitate in getting close to God. He was a wee man who would not let his own failings and challenges in physical stature or spiritual stature stand in the way of him seeking Jesus with everything he could muster. The truth is that it is often those who think they have it all figured out that find the excuses to now pursue Jesus. Like the pharisee from the scripture we looked at last week, they are often too busy in the back of their house doing the things that they want to do, the things they take pleasure in, and they fail to hear or choose to ignore when Jesus knocks upon their door.

This is why we need to learn from Zacchaeus, we need to be zealous, to have a boiling passion, for Christ and our relationship with him. We need to be like Zacchaeus, seeking our relationship with Jesus in everything we do, inviting him into every aspect of our lives. We all need to be like Zacchaeus, knowing that we are not perfect, and that we never will be, knowing that we will always be challenged to overcome those things which making living our lives as Christians difficult, but that should not prevent us from seeking a stronger relationship with Jesus. We all need to be like Zacchaeus and be willing to overcome our own spiritual shortcomings, overcome the challenges of this life, and make haste to God.

We cannot save ourselves; we can only be saved by Jesus Christ and there is nothing in this world that should keep us from coming to him in repentance and worshipping him and praising him as our Lord and Saviour. So, if you feel spiritually small at times, get up, fight against the things which are pushing you down, overcome the judgement of others, overcome how you think of yourself, overcome how the world thinks of Christians and make haste, run, to Jesus as fast as you can. Open wide the door to your life and invite Jesus to enter into fellowship with you so that he can ease your burdens and help you find peace and eternal joy with God.

Let us come together now in the fellowship of Jesus Christ and open our hearts in prayer to our Lord and Saviour,

Give Us Your Righteousness

God,

source of perfect blessedness,

you teach your faithful people to walk in your laws,

to search your testimonies,
 to keep your commands;
 Give us your righteousness,
 that we may seek you with our whole hearts;
 that we, who often have wandered like lost sheep,
 may be restored by your kind arms,
 and rejoice in the glories of Paradise,
 through Jesus Christ your Son.
 Amen.

Source: Sarum Breviary

Ministry of Music: “Unworthy” by Brenda Richmond

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3). We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer:

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewsperthoffering@gmail.com If you have an Offering Envelope #, please include it in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (e.g., Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Offertory Prayer

(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn: “Wonderful Merciful Saviour”

Wonderful, merciful Savior
 Precious Redeemer and Friend
 Who would have thought that a Lamb
 Could rescue the souls of men
 Oh, You rescue the souls of men

Counselor, Comforter, Keeper
 Spirit we long to embrace
 You offer hope when our hearts have
 Hopelessly lost our way
 Oh, we've hopelessly lost the way

You are the One that we praise
 You are the One we adore
 You give the healing and grace
 Our hearts always hunger for
 Oh, our hearts always hunger for

Almighty, infinite Father
 Faithfully loving Your own
 Here in our weakness You find us
 Falling before Your throne
 Oh, we're falling before Your throne

You are the One that we praise
 You are the One we adore
 You give the healing and grace
 Our hearts always hunger for
 Oh, our hearts always hunger for

Pastoral Prayer

No matter where we are, where we are going, or what we are doing,
 we know that we find our help in you, our Lord.
 You are the creator and sustainer of all
 that has been made and will be made.
 And yet, the immensity of creation does not distract you
 from caring personally for every person in it.
 We know that is true of your care for us too!
 You do not daydream or become weary in that care.
 We thank you that you not only watch over us with diligence
 but that you will guide us so that we will not fall—
 so that we won't even stumble.
 Whether we are awake or asleep, you are there,
 sheltering and protecting us from all that would hurt us.
 We know that you watch over all our living—
 you have in the past, and we know you are now.
 Your promise holds for the future and for eternity,
 and we praise and thank you for that. **Amen.**

Benediction

May our Lord Jesus Christ,
 the one who came with grace and truth,
 also fill your hearts with grace and truth,
 as you serve him in the days ahead.
 And may the joy of the Lord—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—
 be your strength. **Amen.**