

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski
21st Sunday after Pentecost - October 30, 2022

Words of Welcome

Do you feel seen, sought after, cared about? Regardless of how you answer, know that God is looking for you, sees you, and cares. There is more to say about that, so join me in a call to worship.

Call to Worship

We gather in awe
**standing in the presence of the One
who crafted the stars, the mountains, the seas.**

We gather in faith,
**trusting that the One who has held little children
holds our lives in the heart of God.**

We gather in need,
**seeking the One who longs for justice
to grace each and every person in creation.**

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Hymn

Jesus, the very thought of thee

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| 1. Jesus, the very thought of thee
with sweetness fills my breast,
but sweeter far thy face to see,
and in thy presence rest. | 2. Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,
nor can the memory find
a sweeter sound than thy blest name,
O Saviour dear and kind. |
| 3. O hope of every contrite heart,
O joy of all the meek,
to those who fall how kind thou art,
how good to those who seek! | 4. But what to those who find? Ah, this
nor tongue nor pen can show;
the love of Jesus, what it is
none but the loved ones know. |
| 5. Jesus, our only joy be thou,
as thou our prize wilt be;
Jesus, be thou our glory now
and through eternity. | |

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Opening Prayer

You stirred the dust and created us for service;
you breathed into our lungs so we could share your good news;
you shape our hearts with the tools of compassion so we will seek justice for all.
We thank you, God of gifts.

In the hospitality of Zaccheus, we see your openness for all who are different;
in the grumbling of his neighbors, we hear the echoes of our own prejudices

and fears; in his transformation into a new person, we see your grace which is prepared for us.

We thank you, Companion of the poor.

You cradle us in the peace of the resting night; you awaken us with the light of dawn and the warmth of your gentleness; you walk with us through each day, nudging us to be that blessing we are called to be to others.

We thank you, Surprising Spirit.

God in Community, Holy in One,
we lift our thanks to you, even as we pray as Jesus teaches,

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Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen

Call to Confession

How patient is God! We run around trying to do everything our way, and God just waits. We try to buy life and happiness, and God waits. We hurt others and walk away from those in need, and God waits. God waits, and upon hearing our heartfelt prayers and cries for help, God touches us with forgiveness and new life. Come, join me as we pray to the One who waits to hear - from us!

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Prayer of Confession

Surrounded by so many seductions, Patient God, we find it difficult to see you in our lives. Justice has a hard time surviving when there is so much persecution and affliction towards the little ones of the world. Our neighborhoods, our families, even our churches, are filled with strife and contention.

We cry for help, Listening God; forgive us! As we wait for your grace to fill our lives, may we open our hearts to your hope and healing, always giving thanks for Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

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Assurance of Forgiveness

Rich, poor; young, old; sinner, saint. We are all God's children, and God transforms each of us into the people we are meant to be.

Broken, we are mended; separated from others, we are made one; longing to serve, we are sent forth. Thanks be to God, we are forgiven. Amen.

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Scripture Reading Luke 19:1-10

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. ²A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵When 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." ⁶So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." ⁸Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." ⁹Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

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The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Message Man out on a limb

Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, rich, and despised. He cheated people. He was part of the bureaucracy and power that took what little many people had and lined their own pockets without guilt or remorse. When it says he was small in stature, it may be referring to what most of us from our Sunday school lessons were led to believe, that Zacchaeus was short. The word used for small in stature can also mean that Zacchaeus was small in the eyes of the world. He was scum.

Who would be that person in your own life? Is it a boss, a company that you work for, or others in your life that have taken advantage of you and what you have to offer. Sometimes it may be hard to think of those who take advantage of others as someone that might be despised by others. Our culture's love of money and power often idolizes those who have much like an Elon Musk or Jeff Bazos. They are revered rather than despised.

There are politicians, musicians, actors, leaders, and entrepreneurs who catch our attention because they have become famous in their field. We hold them up as a measure of success without considering whether or not they are examples of how to live one's life in and with the knowledge of others who are less fortunate. Others who may be suffering because of the love of money, power, and prestige of one person or a group of people. The rich, famous, and powerful are held up as icons and idols due to society's desires for such things.

And please do not misunderstand, this is not about bashing those who have been successful. If we think about Zacchaeus, Jesus did not ask him to give up his wealth, to change his job, but rather it was about justice, fairness, kindness, and transformation. Even John the Baptist told the tax collectors in Luke 3:13, after they came to be baptized

and asked him, "Teacher, what should we do? He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." This was not about Zacchaeus work; this was about his life.

It might be interesting for you to take a moment to hear the story again and see where you find yourself. Do you identify with Zacchaeus, with Jesus, or with the crowd. Let's try that. Listen again, this time using words from The Message. Place yourself in the story.

Then Jesus entered and walked through Jericho. ² There was a man there, his name Zacchaeus, the head tax man and quite rich. ³ He wanted desperately to see Jesus, but the crowd was in his way - he was a short man and couldn't see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up in a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus when he came by. ⁵ When Jesus got to the tree, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry down. Today is my day to be a guest in your home." ⁶ Zacchaeus scrambled out of the tree, hardly believing his good luck, delighted to take Jesus home with him. ⁷ Everyone who saw the incident was indignant and grumped, "What business does he have getting cozy with this crook?" ⁸ Zacchaeus just stood there, a little stunned. He stammered apologetically, "Master, I give away half my income to the poor - and if I'm caught cheating, I pay four times the damages." ⁹ Jesus said, "Today is salvation day in this home! Here he is: Zacchaeus, son of Abraham! ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to find and restore the lost."¹

Now that you have listened it again, where did you find yourself? It may have been easy to find yourself identifying with the crowd. Oh, how we like to judge others. Everyone of us is good at that, even if we don't actually speak our judgement out loud to another. We think that God has got to have standards. You can't just accept anyone into the fold or the family or where would the church be?

But this story demonstrates that God's thoughts are not our thoughts. Who is in and who is out just doesn't jive with God's love for all. Everyone is welcome in God's kingdom; everyone is supposed to be welcome in our churches. Often, we fall short in our welcome. We like to think we are welcoming people, welcoming congregations, but how often do people feel the sting of our judgement or wonder as we stare or glare at them because they just don't get that there is a standard of behaviour and decorum expected. I say this knowing that we are imperfect people and not all relationships work out, in the church and outside of the church, but there should be an effort to welcome and to love.

One may not think they are judgemental or even on the extreme, racist, but it may be interesting to examine your thoughts. What do you think when you see a homeless person approach you? And in the community of Thunder Bay, what if that someone is also indigenous? How about the person that you believe thinks too highly of themselves

¹ [The Message](#) (MSG). Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

or you know to be a cheat, a player, or just mean...what are your thoughts then? Do you believe God has room for them, is willing to see further than you see?

Every person walking the face of the earth is a son or daughter of Abraham. We all have a place in God's kingdom here on earth and in heaven.

Maybe you identify more with Zacchaeus. You feel on the margins, not accepted, not seen as someone with value. Maybe you have done things that you think God could never forgive or believe that you are not worthy of the love and forgiveness that is offered to every person, regardless of what you bring. Know, as it was for Zacchaeus, you are seen, you are heard, you are worthy to be with. Just as Jesus dined and stayed at the house of Zacchaeus, ignoring the grumblings of the crowd who snidely remarked, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." (v7)

Newsflash, we are all sinners. Not one of us sitting here today is immune to sin, of failing ourselves, others, and God miserably. I think of the joy, the love, the acceptance, and maybe even relief that Zacchaeus experienced knowing that this man Jesus, cared enough, was able to see past all the inequity and come and be with Zacchaeus.

Jesus is that person for each and everyone of us. Jesus came to show us the extent of God's love. Jesus may not have asked anything of Zacchaeus, but we are not likely to stay the same when we experience Jesus in scripture, in others, in the work of the Holy Spirit. At least not when we are looking for it, just as Zacchaeus went out on a limb in order to see Jesus.

And let me add, that for a grown man with Zacchaeus' reputation to make a mockery of himself by climbing the tree to see Jesus, whether it was because he was short or because the crowd wouldn't let him get close, well, that says a lot. Zacchaeus may not have wanted to draw attention to himself, he likely didn't even think that Jesus would pay attention to him, but as Zacchaeus was looking for Jesus and Jesus was looking for the lost. He understood Zacchaeus to be lost. You may be looking for Jesus, trying to understand this and other stories from scripture. You may be wondering why you haven't felt Jesus with you or that anything in your life has changed, but know that Jesus is looking for you. God is seeking you out. Saving the lost. So, if you are feeling lost, hopeless, overwhelmed, angry, or whatever it is for you, God is searching for you. Maybe you need to go out on a limb and look.

This story has many questions that could be asked, details that are left out, but regardless the purpose of the story remains. We are to come away knowing that "the Son of Man [Jesus] came to seek out and save the lost."

Each of us feels lost at times. You and I are included in this story, so are those who are despised, those we judge and think unworthy. God doesn't distinguish between your need and that of another. All are sought out, all are lost, all can be saved in and through God's grace and love.

Go out on a limb to see God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit at work in your life and that of others. God out on a limb to be the light of Christ in the lives of others. It may be that you are the one God is using so that others will see Jesus and experience the gift of being seen, welcomed, and loved.

We do it all, we live it all, in the love of God, the grace of Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers of the People

O great God, glorify yourself in all the earth.
Be glorified in creation, be glorified in your church,
be glorified in our worship here this very morning.
Though we are so small and you are so grand,
help us nevertheless to magnify your name.
Help us to make your name and the nature of your grace
larger and easier for people to see.
Help us to live and to worship in such a way
that we become like magnifying glasses
through which our neighbors and coworkers and children and friends
can see you come into focus in ways they may not have seen before.
When people ask for an explanation of the hope we have,
give us the words to answer thoughtfully and well.
When people wonder out loud who Jesus is and why he matters,
help us to reply in words that will echo the sweetness of your gospel.
Help us to magnify your name, O Lord,
so that you may be glorified in all the earth.

Almighty God, gracious Creator
in the presence of your bounty keep us humble,
in the presence of all people's needs make us compassionate and caring.

Give us faith in our praying and love in our serving,
knowing that by your power
all may find a new balance in living and be transformed in adversity.

We pray for all unhappy lives,
those who are bitter and resentful, feeling life has given them a raw deal,
those who are sensitive to criticism and quick to take offense,
those who desire their own way, whatever the inconvenience or cost to others.
May your judgment and mercy be for their healing.

We pray for those who are lonely, who are shy and self-conscious,
who find it hard to make friends; those who are nervous and timid,
who ever feel themselves strangers in a world they can scarcely understand.
May your presence inspire confidence and ensure companionship.

We pray for those who live with bitter regrets,
for loving relationships brought to ruin,
for opportunities freely given and woefully abused,
for the bitterness of defeat or betrayal at another's hand,
or for failure in personal integrity.
May your grace give new hope to find victory in the very scene of failure.

We pray for all in illness and pain,
weary of the day and fearful of the night.
Grant healing, if it be your will,
and at all times through faith the gift of your indwelling peace.

Bless the company of Christ's folk, the church in every land.
Make the church eager in worship,
fearless in proclamation of the gospel, and passionate for caring.

Bless our country. Bless our leaders,
especially those who have been newly elected in municipal elections.
Bless our children and grant us peace within our borders.
Grant us a nation to be found effective in establishing peace
throughout the world.

Bless us, each one, in the communion of the saints,
and keep us ever mindful of your greatness,
while we struggle to see you and be seen.

Be with us when we go out on a limb,
may Jesus Christ, our Lord see us and call us to himself. **Amen.**

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Invitation to the offering

How easily we overlook the Zaccheus in our midst - the father short of money, the woman short of hope, the children short of food. As we offer our gifts, may God open our hearts to recognize all around us, especially those looking for God in us.

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If you consider St. Andrew's your church, regardless of where you live, would like to learn more about St. Andrew's, get involved in our ministry and work, or make a donation toward the life and ministry of St. Andrew's Presbyterian, in Thunder Bay visit our website at <http://standrewspres-tbay.ca>

Hymn

Amazing Grace

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1. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found
was blind, but now I see.

2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed.

3. Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'tis grace that brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.
4. The Lord has promised good to me:
this word my hope secures;
God will my shield and portion be,
as long as life endures.
5. What thanks I owe you, and what love—
a boundless, endless store—
shall echo through the realms above
when time shall be no more.
6. When we've been there ten thousand years,
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise than
when we'd first begun.

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Benediction

God gives us the vision,
so let us go to see others as our sisters and brothers.
Jesus gives us the eyes,
**so let us look in all the unexpected places
to welcome all into our lives.**
The Spirit calls us to watch,
**so let us bear witness to the justice and hope
coming into our shattered world.**

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