

**THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY
AFTER PENTECOST
OCTOBER 30, 2022**



**LUKE 19:1-10
WELCOME JESUS**

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CALL TO WORSHIP:

One: We climb up through Scripture so we can see God's presence.

Many: We climb down in prayer so we can meet God's love.

One: We come into sacrament so we can entertain God's forgiveness.

Many: We come out in offering so we can give ourselves to others in repentance and joy.

One: Remembering Zaccheus of long ago – let us worship together.

INVOCATION:

Seeking God, call us down from the trees where we hide and observe. Choose us to welcome you and turn our lives upside down. Amen.

CALL TO CONFESSION:

We approach God with our words of confession and with the deeds that prove our lives are changed.

CONFESSION:

Gentle God, we bring before you our sinful selves and our need for reconciliation with others. WE have done deeds we deeply regret. We have spoken words that have hurt others. We have trapped ourselves in false expectations, and we have accepted transient goods to satisfy our deepest longings.

We have failed to reach out hand and heart to others in need. We have been silent when our words could have made a difference. We have not believed in ourselves.

Call us to salvation, God, and help us be at peace with all your children. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GRACE:

Salvation comes to us. We who were lost are found. We who had too much can give again.

GLORIA:

**Glory to the Creator,
and the Christ and the Spirit so near.
As it was from the start so it shall be forever,
One God always here. (repeat two more times.)
(end) One God always here. One God always here.**

SCRIPTURE LESSONS: First Testament

Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

1 The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet saw.

The prophet complains

² LORD, how long will I call for help and you not listen?
I cry out to you, "Violence!"
but you don't deliver us.

³ Why do you show me injustice and look at anguish
so that devastation and violence are before me?
There is strife, and conflict abounds.

⁴ The Instruction is ineffective.
Justice does not endure
because the wicked surround the righteous.
Justice becomes warped.

2 I will take my post;
I will position myself on the fortress.
I will keep watch to see what the Lord says to me
and how he^[a] will respond to my complaint.

The LORD responds

² Then the LORD answered me and said,
Write a vision, and make it plain upon a tablet
so that a runner can read it.^[b]

³ There is still a vision for the appointed time;
it testifies to the end; it does not deceive.^[c]
If it delays, wait for it; for it is surely coming;
it will not be late.

⁴ Some people's desires are truly audacious;^[d]
they don't do the right thing.
But the righteous person will live honestly.

EPISTLE READING: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12

Greeting

1 From Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy:
To the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God
our Father, and in the Lord Jesus Christ.² Grace and
peace to all of you from God our Father and the Lord
Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving and encouragement

³ Brothers and sisters, we must always thank God for you. This is only right because your faithfulness is growing by leaps and bounds, and the love that all of you have for each other is increasing. ⁴ That's why we ourselves are bragging about you in God's churches. We tell about your endurance and faithfulness in all the harassments and trouble that you have put up with.

¹¹ We are constantly praying for you for this: that our God will make you worthy of his calling and accomplish every good desire and faithful work by his power. ¹² Then the name of our Lord Jesus will be honored by you, and you will be honored by him, consistent with the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 19:1-10

A rich tax collector

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through town. ² A man there named Zacchaeus, a ruler among tax collectors, was rich. ³ He was trying to see who Jesus was, but, being a short man, he couldn't because of the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. ⁵ When Jesus came to that

spot, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down at once. I must stay in your home today." ⁶ So Zacchaeus came down at once, happy to welcome Jesus.

⁷ Everyone who saw this grumbled, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

⁸ Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my possessions to the poor. And if I have cheated anyone, I repay them four times as much."

⁹ Jesus said to him, "Today, salvation has come to this household because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ The Human One came to seek and save the lost."

RESPONSE: This is the Word of God.

It is true and can be trusted.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: "The Courage to Climb a Tree"

With thoughts from Rev. Willie Dwayne Francois III

This is a Bible Story that many of us learned before we were 8 years old. It's cute. It's short. It's funny. And the "moral" of the story is something all 8 year-olds should remember.

As adults we would like to read Bible Stories with a little more depth. We understand that we

should not cheat people and we should be more generous. Yet, we yearn for more; how can this story speak to us who are over 8 years old? We want to know more about Zacchaeus and how his life is so similar to ours even 2000 years later.

For example, what invisible wounds does a person sustain through a life of cheating others? Scholars describe this example as a “selfish existence as a cancer of the heart that metastasizes to the mind and spirit. Conceptions of the good life are often propped up on the pillars of more money, more sex, and more resources--a crude case of materialism that maims.”

Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, keeps gaining more and stealing more--he builds a public persona around excess. A Jew who works for Rome, he gains material wealth at the expense of his community. He is despised and alienated, wounded by the wages of his work.

But Zacchaeus also hungers for something beyond his life preying on his own people. What happens when life's call for more is issued not from your bank or business, but from your being--the very essence of identity? When your life calls for more, you have to search for it, doggedly and creatively. Zacchaeus abandons the available trappings of his current life--with its abundance and

alienation, inventory and insults, possessions and pains--to climb a tree.

All opportunities for authentic life require some shift in you. Sometimes you have to struggle to a new height, away from the crowded ground level, to gain new vision. When Zacchaeus climbs the tree, he abandons the pretensions that paralyzed him. With every reach and step, he resists the weight of his past. At ground level, he can't see what's possible--so he climbs to where he can.

What chauffeurs him from the ground to the tree is the very thing that distinguishes him: his height. Limitations can inspire creativity. Zacchaeus converts his so-called deficiency into an opportunity to see what others cannot. This situation plants him in a place ripe for encountering the divine.

Paul Tillich says that "being religious means asking passionately the question of the meaning of our existence and being willing to receive answers, even if the answers hurt." Zacchaeus's answer is in this ordinary tree, although he is uncertain whether Jesus will even notice him. This short man resiliently climbs a tree, inviting the mockery of people already biased against him. It takes courage to look this foolish. Zacchaeus needs to climb,

because the crowded ground level offers more of the same sights that have been wounding him.

In the midst of Zacchaeus's victims and detractors, Jesus announces, "Today salvation has come to his house for he is a son of Abraham." Jesus declares a new type of healing for the invisible wounds the world cannot see. Zacchaeus is free to see himself as a child of covenant. Jesus' declaration is a license for him to restart, reimagine, and revolutionize his life--with an identity that enables him to reach beyond his mistakes, beyond his occupation, beyond his infractions. "You belong!" says Jesus, to Zacchaeus and to us. "You are enough."

PASTORAL PRAYER: Beginning with a time for personal silent prayer.

God our Creator, you found good in all that you made, and when sin spoiled your paradise, you set out to regain and re-create it. At your command we pray for your whole creation especially for all your people everywhere.

So bless your church with gracious love that it may gather to you those who have neglected the great salvation you offer to all in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Keep us simple in our

basic faith that however complex our theology we may offer to unbelievers the plain invitation of Jesus to come to him and find abundant life. So may your church grow in numbers and in hope, receiving the humblest and the youngest whom you draw to yourself and embrace with grace.

We pray for our country and its leaders that the beauties of the land and the glories of the law may not be spoiled by avarice and abuse.

We pray for the sick and ailing that you will give them strength according to their day. Sickness may plague children and youth as well as adults and the aged. Right now we especially pray for all the children in hospitals around our country suffering from respiratory failures due to viruses and bacteria. Dear God, your healing presence is needed, and you heed the prayers of all who call upon you.

We give you thanks for your Son who taught us to pray . . .

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 evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO GENEROSITY:

When the crowds around Zacchaeus blocked his view of Jesus, he anticipated where Jesus would be and stalked space in the sycamore tree to increase his ability to see. His foresight became a blessing as Jesus saw Zacchaeus and invited him down from the tree. Likewise, let us look ahead to where we can meet and welcome Jesus into our many ministries by generously sharing our various gifts today.

***UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION AND THANKSGIVING:**

Thank you for choosing to receive these gifts that we now share with you, gracious God. Bless each offering – including our very selves – and let every single one be given in service to you. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

Bless you in your coming and going. Bless you in your welcoming and being invited. Bless you in your doing and being. Bless you in your now and forever. Amen.

PRAYER LIST: Urban Baum, David Seneczyn, Warren Neff, Carol White, Cheri Schutzenhofer, Theo Mally, Jane Reiss, Sandy Fort, Becky Ballard, Larry and Penny Wagner.