

24th Sunday after Pentecost October 30th, 2016

A Change of Perceptions

A Reflection by Peggy Jensen

Prayer: Creator, Christ and Spirit, we give thanks for this faith community. We come from diverse backgrounds to form this faith filled group of Jesus followers. Some of us are short and wide, some of us are tall and thin, some of us are older than young and some younger than old. Help us to understand that it is not our appearance that matters to you but rather our inner being. You accept us with all our joys or sorrows, anxieties and gratitude's. We want to accept each other with the same non-judgemental understanding. Inspire us with your message for us today. We pray with an openness to your Presence. Amen

Based on Luke 19:1-10

An introduction to Zacchaeus by Laura Sugg Feasting On the Word ear C Vol.4 p 260,261

“Wee Zacchaeus is such a peculiar man. Jesus declares “Salvation has come to this house” because Zacchaeus is indeed a child of Abraham just as the grumblers are.

Where are you in this story?

Think about being in the crowd in Jericho, anxiously waiting for Jesus. You've heard about his miracles, in fact he has passed through Jericho several times but you really want to see him today. What are you thinking about as you wait?. If you could talk with Jesus what would you say? How do you feel when Jesus talks to the rip off tax collector instead?

Can you identify with Zacchaeus, feeling isolated, even despised by people, figuring a tree would be a place to hide as well as a good view-point? Why did you, Zacchaeus want to see Jesus anyway? “I'm coming to your house for dinner” Jesus announces to you. You realize that Jesus wasn't bargaining for this, he only asked you to come down from the tree. . You didn't have to make a financial pledge. Why did you decide to be so generous----spontaneously?

. We are told that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem to face his death. Of course the writer knew that after the fact but what did Jesus understand? Imagine being Jesus in this crowd of people. What was different for you this time through Jericho? Is there a lesson you want to teach? You chose an action rather than a parable. Did you enjoy your visit with Zacchaeus?

The story of Zacchaeus tells us that the gospel is about serious commitment to God, but also about joy! We good church folk do not always do joy very well. Zacchaeus's little stand and big smile convict us to do better. Actually Richard challenged us when we were creating our Mission statement. He remembered feeling joy and actual excitement about Shared Ministry at the conference, SO we included the phrase: “We worship and serve with love and joy”. Yeah!! We are included in God's family and we have lots to be joyful about.

The story of Zacchaeus also tells us about looking for Jesus even as he is looking for each one of us. Think about Jesus coming to look for you. It can be comforting to remember the last words Jesus says in this story: “For the Son of Man came to seek out and save the lost.” (vs.10)

Our salvation is not contingent on our efforts – thanks be to God.

This reassurance does not mean that we may be totally passive, going through life without a thought about how we can take a step towards Jesus. Actually Jesus walks miles to find us time and time again.

Each one of us have had an encounter of some kind or other with Jesus, or with God, or a sense of the Spirit. As we try to follow Jesus in worship, in our daily lives, in our busy routines, remember the happy saint of the church, wee Zacchaeus. If you have been graced with a memorable encounter with God perhaps you feel as joyous as Zacchaeus

You can make your own cheerful commitment in response to Jesus presence.

I was doing some of this imagining earlier this week. What if Jesus walked down South Road here on Gabriola and wandered into this church building and this congregation. What would Jesus see and hear? Would it be a gathering of pessimists, talking about what is impossible? Would Jesus hear the grumblers, complaining about how things have changed so much, nothing is familiar anymore? Would Jesus shake his head hearing our Denominational bantering, or deliberations over decisions?

This week Jesus would have heard bells ringing and people singing. Jesus would have seen people sharing their thoughts and concerns about the Palestinians and praying for peace in the Middle East. And best of all Jesus would have smelled soup cooking and folk having a wonderful time working together. Jesus cares about what is in our hearts and how we are putting our faith into action. Take time to imagine this community from Jesus perspective.

This is a committed community of faith working hard together. We have created a mission statement and shared ideas about our future together. We are working towards a new understanding of Shared Ministry and becoming a stronger faith community. We continue to work together seeking God’s guidance.

We heard Paul’s letter to the church of the Thessalonians, I think this can also be a letter of encouragement to this faith community. 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11,12

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. Therefore we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith during all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring. To this end we always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call and will fulfil by his power every good resolve and work of faith, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Hear these words of affirmation and encouragement. God’s perspective may be different from what you see, but trust God to know the heart and soul of this developing faith community.