

Holy Trinity Anglican Church
Rev. Michael Fleming
Lent 3
March 7, 2021

Celebrant: The parishes of the Diocese of Ottawa stand on the unceded territory of the Algonquin people.

All: **May we live together in harmony and peace**

The Gathering

Celebrant: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: **And also with you**

Celebrant Almighty God,
**All to you all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from you no secrets are hidden.
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

The Collect for Lent 3

Celebrant: Father of mercy, alone we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves. When we are discouraged by our weakness, strengthen us to follow Christ, our pattern and our hope; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

The Trisagion

All: **Holy God, holy and mighty; holy, immortal One, have mercy upon us (x3)**

The First Reading

A READING FROM THE BOOK OF EXODUS

God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work - you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your live-

stock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

Psalm 19

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows his handiwork.

One day tells its tale to another, and one night imparts knowledge to another.

Although they have no words or language, and their voices are not heard,

Their sound has gone out into all lands, and their message to the ends of the world.

In the deep has he set a pavilion for the sun; it comes forth like a bridegroom out of his chamber; it rejoices like a champion to run its course.

It goes forth from the uttermost edge of the heavens and runs about to the end of it again; nothing is hidden from its burning heat.

The law of the Lord is perfect and revives the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure and gives wisdom to the innocent.

The statutes of the Lord are just and rejoice the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear and gives light to the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is clean and endures for ever; the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold, sweeter far than honey, than honey in the comb.

By them also is your servant enlightened, and in keeping them there is great reward.

Who can tell how often he offends? cleanse me from my secret faults.

Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not get dominion over me; then shall I be whole and sound, and innocent of a great offense. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

The Second Reading

A READING FROM THE FIRST LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS 1: 18-25

The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

The Gospel

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

All: **And also with you**

Celebrant: The Holy Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, according to the blessed St. Luke (St. Luke 19: 1-10)

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

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

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

Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

The Gospel of Christ.

People Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The Homily

Zacchaeus Up a Tree

As Paul Simon wrote in his masterful song Old Friends, Bookends "Time it was and what a time it was..it was...". Following Jesus' moment with the children and the rich young man, the story with which I began our Lenten series of sermons on living as Kingdom people, Jesus tells his disciples that the time has come for the final plan to be set afoot. They were to go to Jerusalem, the heart and soul of their faith, where God would set into motion that which had to be - Jesus was to be arrested, tortured and killed but he would be raised from the dead after three days. His friends didn't get it then nor for a long while as they journeyed towards the city of Jericho.

Outside the gates of the walled town, they meet a blind man who three times begs Jesus to heal him. When Jesus asks, "What do you want?", the man replies, "I want to see." In response to this, Jesus touches the man's eyes, tells him that his faith, no matter how imperceptibly small and weak it is, has made what is to happen possible, and suddenly the beggar's sight is restored. The man immediately dances around and around, praising God and Jesus for what has happened and one more is added to the company.

Entering Jericho, they find that a large crowd has gathered. Somehow, word has spread that Jesus is in the neighbourhood and many want to simply be able to say later in life, "I saw him..." There were so many gathered along the edges of the village courtyard, three or four

deep, that people kept nudging each other out of the way in order that those at the back might catch just a glimpse of the healer-teacher-preacher from Nazara. Among those trying to move to the front of the line was a man of small stature and each time he tried to squeeze through the bodies before him, he was rebuffed and pushed back against the stone wall. It had nothing to do with his physical size – it had everything to do with who he was.

His name was Zacchaeus and he was the village tax-collector. Because of what he did, he was seen as a collaborator of the hated Romans and many were convinced that he was a thief as well, siphoning off a portion of the taxes he charged them into his own pockets. Everyone knew that the deal with the Romans was simple: each person was to pay a certain amount in Roman coinage per year, but the only person who knew exactly what the charge was would have been the one responsible for remitting the cash. In other words, the taxman could charge whatever he wanted, pay what his overlords demanded and keep the rest as his cut. The sad thing was that no one could prove that Zacchaeus was engaged in this very unsavoury practice but it was assumed that, like all who worked for Caesar, he was in it for himself and did not have the welfare of his neighbours ever in mind. He found himself barred from the synagogue and cut off from the social world of Jericho, a pariah in their midst. He was probably the most hated person in town and no wonder no one would allow him to move forward.

Realizing that his way would be forever blocked, Zacchaeus sees a tall sycamore tree near the wall and decides to climb it. Scampering up, he wedges himself in the crook where two large branches meet and leans against the hardness of the wood.

And....there is this Jesus that he has heard wonder tales about... he just couldn't believe that this hero of the masses would see fit to visit his town.... As excited as he is to see the Shepherd, Zacchaeus is aware of the precariousness of his situation and holds on to the branches for dear life. And there he is, standing like a statue when Jesus, passing through the square, glances up above the heads of the fervent townsfolk, points to the tree and shouts, "Zacchaeus, come down...I need to with you today."

The crowd goes as silent as if a blanket had been thrown over them. What had they heard – did Jesus really ask himself over to the tax collector's for a meal? Does Jesus know who this guy is? Does he not remember that touching or sharing food or water with one deemed to be unclean by the rabbi (and Zacchaeus would certainly have been seen in this way!) would make Jesus unclean as well and would have to be shunned by the community until he had atoned for his sin against the faith? Did Jesus not understand that asking or being asked to someone's home was a signal that the inviter and invitee would see each other as equals? As Jesus begins to wade through the sea of bodies to get to the tree, the crowd parts. Zacchaeus, uncertain that he has been addressed at all, still clings to the branches above Jesus' head. Looking at him, Jesus repeats the plea, "Zak, come down..I need time with you."

Shinnyng down the trunk, Zacchaeus lands at the feet of the Master who reaches forward and taking him by the elbow, raises the little man to his feet and puts his arm around his shoulder. In the midst of the utter silence of the villagers, Zacchaeus heads for home with a look that is a combination of confusion and, yes, gloating- “Jesus and me. Best buds for sure!!!”

Suddenly, they stop in their tracks and the crowd, who are following closely behind so they can overhear the conversation, tumble into one another. Zacchaeus looks at them and then turns to Jesus. “Lord, know this: from this time and place forward, I will give half of what I own to the needy and the poor with no strings attached and no publicity demanded; no plaque on a wall, no name in our town’s scroll of honour...And...,” he said, turning to the crowd, “anyone who believes that I have cheated them in any way - come forward and I will pay you back four times worth what you say I stole from you.”

In the silence that followed, only the cooing of the mourning doves on the roof of the synagogue broke the stillness. Then Jesus spoke. “Hear, O Israel, today in your midst a miracle has been enacted. This man, once blind to the will of his heavenly father, once deaf to the cries of his people in oppression, once immune to the pain he inflicted on others...this man small of height has been transformed into a giant of the heart. Like our friend at the gate, he was blind and now can see, was lost and now is found and for him and for yourselves is such dancing in heaven that he has come home. Rejoice, my friends, rejoice!”

What does all this say to me about living in the Kingdom? A number of things: that I cannot continue to judge others based on the colour of their skin, the language they speak, the religion or culture they follow, the size of their home or the content of their wallet, the relationships they hold precious or sacred, the way they appear to be; that I need to ask God to open my eyes, hands, ears and heart so I can see the injustice and hatred under which so many groan and then ask for the gifts, skills and courage, like the cowardly lion that I often am, to stand against the darkness no matter what the cost; that I speak for the voiceless in my communities and demand that equity, justice and just plain decency rule our daily discourse and actions; that I may truly be an instrument of God’s shalom and strive to amend my ways to be a reflection of light into the darkness which surrounds us all.

I know this I can do but only IF God hears my cry and answers me. And at the end of my days, I pray to hear my Lord and Creator say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Amen

The Apostles’ Creed

Celebrant Let us confess the faith of our baptism, as we say,

All I believe in God,

the Father almighty,

creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

**He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again
to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

The Prayers of the People

In peace, we pray to you, Lord God.

For all people in their daily life and work;

For our families, friends, and neighbours, and for all those who are alone.

For this community, our country, and the world;

For all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.

For the just and proper use of your creation;

For the victims of hunger, fear, injustice, and oppression.

For all who are in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble;

For those who minister to the sick, the friendless, and the needy.

For the peace and unity of the Church of God;

For all who proclaim the gospel, and all who seek the truth.

For Shane our bishop, and for all bishops and other ministers;

For all who serve God in his Church.

For our own needs and those of others.

Hear us, Lord;

For your mercy is great.

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.

We will exalt you, O God our king;

And praise your name for ever and ever.

We pray for all those who have died in the peace of Christ, and for those whose faith is known to you alone, that they may have a place in your eternal kingdom.

Lord, let your loving kindness be upon them;

Who put their trust in you.

We pray to you also for the forgiveness of our sins.

Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father;

in your compassion, forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone; and so uphold us by your Spirit that we may live and serve you in newness of life, to the honour and glory of your name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We ask you to watch over all our parish family, remembering especially Zachariah, Marjorie, Cheryl, Jeanette, Roy, Emerson, Irene, and their families. May we, by example, draw others towards the glorious Light of the World.

In the Worldwide Anglican Cycle of Prayer, we pray for Province de L'Eglise Anglicane Du Congo.

In our Diocesan Cycle, we pray for the The Parish of Huntley, and their priest, The Reverend Baxter Park.

Gracious God, you have heard the prayers of your faithful people; you know our needs before we ask, and our ignorance in asking. Grant our requests as may be best for us. This we ask in the name of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

The Peace

Leader: The peace of our Lord be always with you.

All: **And also with you.**

Additional Prayers

Celebrant: Lord, in this Lenten season, we're reminded of our own difficulties and struggles. Sometimes the way has seemed too dark. Sometimes we feel that our lives have been marked by such grief and pain that we can't see how our circumstances will ever change. But in the midst of our weakness, we ask that you would be strong on our behalf. Lord, rise up within us, let your Spirit shine out of every broken place we've walked through. Allow your power to be manifest through our weakness, so that others will recognize that it is you who is at work on our behalf. We ask that you would trade the ashes of our lives for the beauty of your presence. Trade our mourning and grief for the oil of joy and gladness from your Spirit. Trade our despair for hope and praise. We choose to give you thanks today and believe that this season of darkness will soon fade away. Thank you that you are with us in whatever we face, and that you are greater than the trials we face. We know and recognize that you are Lord; we thank you for the victory that is ours in Jesus, and we are confident that you have good still in store for us in the future. We thank you that you are at work right now, trading our ashes for greater beauty. We praise you for you make all things new. Amen

All: God who cares for us, the wonder of whose presence fills us with such awe. Let kindness, justice and love shine in our world. Let your secrets be known here as they are in heaven. Give us the food and the hope we need for today. Forgive us our wrongdoing as we forgive the wrongs done to us. Protect us from pride and from despair and from the fear and hatred that can swallow us up. In you is truth, meaning, glory and power while words come and go. Amen

(St. Hilda Community)

Celebrant: Lord, make us channels of your peace...

Wherever in your world where we find hatred, the hatred that hurts and divides nations and communities and families; the hatred that dehumanizes and destroys; enable each of us bring love, love like your love for us that keeps no scores of wrongs and that never gives us.

Wherever in the world we find the injured – victims of famine and war, or want or of plenty; the handicapped, disabled or disadvantaged- enable each of us to bring love, love like your love for us which is patient and kind.

Wherever in your world we find despair – on account of alienation or unemployment or bad housing or childlessness; on account of loneliness or fear – enable each one of us to bring love, love like your love for us to lift our spirits and bring them hope.

Wherever in your world we find darkness – because of superstition, ignorance or because people love evil rather than good – enable each of us to let our light shine, that others may turn to the Light that has never been extinguished.

Wherever in your world we find sadness- because of bereavement or the evaporation of dreams, or because of unachieved ambition or on account of others – enable each of us to spread joy, the joy that comes from knowing that we are never abandoned.

Lord, make us channels of your peace; in giving may we also receive; in losing our lives in the service of others may we find the anew in you. **Amen**

(Jessie Clarke, based on the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi)

Dismissal

Celebrant: Return now to the world that is ours in the world which the Lord our God has given us; love the Lord and each other and be alive in all the power of the Holy Spirit. And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all this day and forevermore. **Amen**