

Sermon November 2, 2025

*Call to Community

We light a candle of LOVE

For the love we shared with those who are precious to us
For the love that flows deep within us that will never end
For the love that lived through changing times and events
For the love that grew from small seeds into great oak trees within us
For the love that lifts are spirits and our hearts.

We light a candle of JOY

For the joy that gave birth to so many memories of moments, days and years
For the joy our loved ones experienced during their time here on earth
For the joy and smiles those near to our hearts gave and received
For the joy that flowed from the successes our loved ones performed and witnessed
For the joy that gave encouragement to those who followed in their footsteps.

We light a candle of MEMORIES

For the memories of gatherings, holidays, and celebrations
For the memories of smells, sounds and meals together that nourished our bodies and souls
For the memories of times together that reminded us what it means to be human
For the memories of faces and voices that mark our journey together with others
For the memories of people who not only gave us gifts, but who truly were gifts to us

We light a candle of TEARS

For the tears that flow from our eyes and down our faces at a moments notice
For the silent tears that arrive for no apparent reason, and those that no one sees are hears
For the tears of joy as remember jokes and stories that we shared with loved ones

For the tears that point us toward our true feelings and root us in time and eternity's deepest truths
For the tears that signal an inner release, a new freedom, a connection shared with those who mourn.

We light a candle of HOPE

For the hopes, dreams and plans we shared with those precious to us
For the hope and trust we place in the power to continue loving those whom we have lost to death
For the hopes our loved ones carried within their hearts and spirits
For the hope that brings forth in us a confidence to love others without regret
For the hope found as we look forward to the next stage of loving anew those who are close to us.

We light a candle of PEACE

For the peace that we want for our loved ones and for ourselves
For the peace that is deeper than our words and feelings can express
For the peace provides focus and helps move forward in the world
For the peace that joins time and eternity as an eternal song of love
For the peace that helps heal the distance that separates us one from another.

We light a candle of STRENGTH

For the strength that comes from deep within me and sustains me
For the strength that allows me to live each moment to the fullest
For the strength that encourages me to live one day at a time without regrets
For the strength that allows forgiveness to heal the unfinished parts of our relationships
For the strength to remember those who have left an imprint on our hearts

Luke 19:1-10

Last week, we heard a parable about a Pharisee and a tax collector. This week Jesus encounters a tax collector on the road to Jerusalem with surprising results.

"Za-key-us"

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature.

So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. 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." So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him.

All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." Zacchaeus 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. Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

Doing Faith

"Did you hear? Jesus is coming! The one who heals the sick... the one who helps the poor.... some say he is the Messiah! He's coming here, to Jericho. Jesus is coming!"

Jesus was coming to Jericho and you could feel the excitement in the air. Everyone hoped for a chance to see this wonderful man who everyone was talking about. The stories had been traveling for months and the crowds of people gathered on the main road to see this wonderful man.

Fifteen hundred years later, another man traveled down the road. This time no crowds gathered, no one had any idea who he was. On October 31, 1517, a German professor and priest named Martin Luther walked to the church in Wittenburg and nailed his 95 theses to the door. He wanted to start a nice scholarly discussion about church teachings that he disagreed with... to try and reform the church and return it to Jesus' intent. But the result was dramatic... kicked out of the church his followers banded together and the Protestant Reformation began.

And here we are, more than 500 years later, the sitting in a church with roots that reach back directly to that German church movement. Historians believe that the church goes through a process of reformation... or drastic re-evaluation... every 500 years. Phyllis Tickle calls it the Great Rummage Sale. We are in the midst of something remarkable and amazing and quite frankly -- scary. We are being re-shaped and moved out of our comfort zones. We are literally being re-formed and we don't know what we, the Body of Christ, will look like on the other side.

But we do have the stories and the legacies of those who came before us... those who were re-shaped and re-formed and re-vitalized. In a few moments, we will light candles and name names. We will remember those people who have touched our lives and inspire us.

But we also remember one more thing. Amazing things happen when Jesus comes to town! Just ask Zaccheus.

Zacchaeus was as different from Jesus... or Martin Luther... as you can imagine. He was a tax collector. Hated by his neighbors, someone who made his wealth by taking advantage of others. He had wealth and power... But no respect

So he climbs that tree labeled as unworthy, but Jesus sees something else. Jesus sees potential... hope... and reshapes him. Because Jesus sees a child of God.

High up in that tree, Jesus picks him out – the one everyone believes is unworthy. "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; because I'm going to your house today!." "What?" the crowds cry out, "why him? We're better than he is!"

But of course, we are not. When Jesus comes, our eyes are opened to new possibilities... we see the chance for reconciliation. Reconciliation for everyone.

Zacchaeus, Jesus tells us, is a child of Abraham, a child of God.

Zacchaeus will serve as a host to Jesus, the very Son of God!

Zacchaeus, even Zacchaeus, is part of the community of faith. By joining Zacchaeus in his own home, Jesus teaches all of us something important:

- + We are interconnected.
- + We are all children of God, loved and cherished.
- + We are all worthy.
- + We are all instrumental to God's plan.
- + No one should be left behind because of the decisions they made in the past or who they are.

Things are never as they seem and that we need to look at the world with new eyes... to be willing to look beyond our fears and prejudices and embrace all of God's children. Five hundred years ago, Martin Luther challenged how the church forgives sins. "It's not what you do," he reminds us, "and its not how much money you give. Forgiveness comes through grace. And it is freely given."

Zacchaeus has done nothing to earn a place at the table, but Jesus invites him in none the less. In fact, Jesus invites himself to Zacchaeus' table! And at that table, Zacchaeus' life is changed forever. He looks at his life and sees new possibilities. He gets a glimpse of what a life of reconciliation can look like. Forgiven and blessed already, Zacchaeus decides to right the wrongs of his past – restoring what he has taken and more... giving ½ of his possessions to the poor.

Zaccheaus makes the commitment to re-connect with his community. His generosity shows how drastically his life has been changed by Jesus.

When Jesus comes to town, anything is possible. On this sacred day of remembrance, let us see lives changed. Today, Jesus invites himself to the home of someone who has been labeled as unworthy. Maybe Jesus invites himself into one of our homes.

One thing we do know: today and everyday God invites us into grace, even though we do not deserve it. "Today salvation has come to this house." Amen.

SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION AND A TIME OF REMEMBRANCE

Invitation

One: "Today salvation has come to this house."

Come; gather around the Table with a song of praise! God be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

One: Lift up your hearts

All: We lift them up to God.

One: Give thanks to God.

All: It is right to give God thanks and praise

Litany of Remembrance

One: Today we come to this place made holy by the faith and witness of those who have inspired and taught us over the years.

All: We remember with gratitude.

One: Our mothers and fathers in the faith brought the word of God to this place. By their courage and commitment, the church here was gathered and given life.

All: We remember with gratitude.

One: Let us not forget these examples of Christian witness, whose faithful touch extends throughout the generations.

All: We remember with gratitude.

One: Remembering those Christians who have gone before us, let us follow as they followed in the way, the truth, and the life of Jesus Christ.

All: We dedicate ourselves anew to the faith that is Jesus Christ.

One: Knowing that God has made the Church God's instrument to minister to the world in all generations,

All: We dedicate ourselves anew to witness to Jesus Christ.

One: Trusting that God will continue to speak God's love for all people and that God will look to the Church today

We dedicate ourselves anew to being the Church and following in the footsteps of those who came before us.

Naming of Saints, Lighting of Candles, Ringing of Bells

One: We remember:

We join them and all the angels and saints of heaven to sing a hymn of unending praise.

Jen Brown,

Ed Cockerham,

Linda Decker,

Glenn Eckley,

Bonnie Greenholz

Audrey Kuhn,

Kathy Peters,

Paul Henry Shaffer,

Frieda Unger,

James Woods.

(make space for everyone to call out the Saints who touched their lives)

The Story

One: Gathered with his friends, Jesus took bread, broke it and said:

All: "This is my body, broken for you. Take and eat."

One: And pouring the wine:

All: "This is my blood, spilled out for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Prayer for the Spirit

One: God of all, send your Spirit to this place so that those gathered here, in this sacred moment, may know your presence. As we eat the bread and drink of the cup, make us one with the saints, and with our sisters, siblings and brothers in faith around the world. Be with us God, not only here but in every moment of our lives. Help us To know you, To be guided by the Holy Spirit, And to live Christ. Now and forever. And may all the people join together to say...

All: Amen.

***Hymn of Preparation**

Sharing the Meal

The Lord's Prayer

MOVING TOWARDS PEACE ON EARTH!

***Closing Hymn**

***Benediction**

One: Blessing and glory and wisdom
and thanksgiving and honor and power
and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen!

All: We go out to be God's people.

One: Go in strength to be the saints of God
for you will hunger no more, and thirst no more;
the sun will not strike you, nor any scorching heat.

All: We go out to be God's people.

One: Live the way of God with confidence
for God is your shepherd,
and will guide you to the spring of life.

All: We go out to be God's people.