

why do they roam? why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
home, weary wanderers, home!
Wonderful love, wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

- 4 Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love!
Come and abide, come and abide,
lifting my life till it rises above
envy and falsehood and pride:
seeking to be, seeking to be
lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Opening Prayer:

People: Loving God, we come into your presence with singing. We come, each one and all, with unique strengths and weaknesses; together, your children. Thank you for the creation, in your love, of a space where we are accepted as we are, where we can breathe, be honest, learn, and grow. Thank you for meeting with us here on this special day that we celebrate the many years of faithful ministry here at Talbot Street United Church. Thank you for brothers and sisters in the faith. You teach and empower us to live together, to share that love does not end. In thanks we give you praise. Amen.

Children's Story:

Children's Hymn: VU 664 "What a Friend We Have..."

- 1 What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer.
- 2 Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful,
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
take it to the Lord in prayer.
- 3 Are we weak and heavy laden,
cumbered with a load of care?

Christ the Saviour is our refuge;
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do our friends despise, forsake us?
Are we tempted to despair?
Jesus' strength will shield our weakness,
and we'll find new courage there.

Scripture: Luke 18: 9 - 14

Jesus began to tell this story: Once two men went to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee who studied the Torah and taught its laws to others and was highly regarded in his community. The other was a tax collector, who sometimes cheated people out of their money or did cruel things in the emperor's name.

As the Pharisee prayed, he said, "God, I thank you that I am not like all the bad people – the thieves, the murderers, the cheaters, or even that tax collector over there! I know all the laws, and I follow them, I give a tenth of my income to the temple, I fast, and I pray!" But when the tax collector prayed he bowed his head in shame and cried, saying, "God, I am sorry; I have not lived your way of love and fairness. Help me to be kind, loving, and fair."

Jesus looked around at his friends and finished, "God listened to the prayers of the tax collector, even though others thought he should not be in the temple; God listens to the prayers of everyone. No one is better than another."

Reflection: "Respect Others"

We as humans sometimes like to judge ourselves against other people to remind us how much better we are living our lives than "those people". We all do it. It is a human condition. Yes we may catch ourselves judging others and stop, but it is human nature. Jesus has this way of identifying those human traits that are not so desirable. We as humans have a constant challenge to overcome our arrogance and pride. Jesus points out that we, as humans, need a bit more humility in ourselves from time to time.

A public shaming frenzy swept over social media in the COVID-19 pandemic. Fingers were pointed because people were acting in ways that others did not approve of. A Ministry Colleague shared that in a few of their denominational Churches, an internal rift had develop over the wearing of masks in church. Some would wear them religiously. Others refused, for many different reasons. The denomination sent in staff to help talk about the situation. In the situation of COVID some folks are "deathly" afraid of catching COVID, while others think it is all just a hoax. If you had already lost someone you loved and they had COVID, your perspective would change - regardless of what other underlying health conditions where present. This similar judgment happens today in Jesus' story, as folks look at others and judge what they deserve. It is only when we get to know them that we can see them as a child of God, much as we are. Once the churches

mentioned above sat down and heard each other's stories that they compromised for the benefit of everyone.

What's all of this COVID judging have to do with Talbot Street's Anniversary? Today Jesus is addressing our human frailties of judging ourselves against others. I know I do it. I know many of you do it, because you have told me. And we consider ourselves Christians and we are to know better. This parable is a teaching moment for people, maybe even us, who thought themselves "righteous and regarded others with contempt." Is that me? Was that me? What would God say? It is a good question to ask of these two temple goers.

The Pharisee, known to be a strict follower of God's rules, believes himself to be beyond reproach. Like all Pharisees, he would have been especially concerned with prayer, but those prayers would have praised God. Here, he praises himself for fasting and tithing.

The other temple goer is a tax collector, and he seems to consider himself worthy of all blame and humiliation that comes his way. Others, he believes would have regarded him this way. Jesus shares that the Pharisee regards him that way.

The tax collector is not the centre of attention, and he doesn't want to be. He prays for mercy by beating his chest. It is this one that Jesus says goes home "justified". The tax collector is the one who shows humility rather than the Pharisee.

The irony of this text, and the point Jesus makes, is that judgment is God's job, and we – no matter our status, whether we are the minister or the folks using the food bank, we are called to humility and repentance. Like the Pharisee, we may have lots to repent of, but cannot see it. On the other hand, the tax collector has much to repent of and does. God, listening in to all the prayers, sees clearly where forgiveness and compassion belong. We are called to learn as we listen in with God through the teaching of Jesus.

Like the Pharisee, we can easily compare ourselves to other people. But such comparison keeps us from recognizing God in our midst. God is the one who provides and cares for each one of us. God's love is not based on our actions or our perceived goodness based against other people. We are all Children of God, and God promises to be with each and every one of God's beloved children - in all circumstances. We do live in a world that likes to boast of its achievements - we can easily get caught up in tooting our own horn. Today's message is God doesn't care how much better you are than I am. We are all God's Children.

In this church we treat each other as equals. In this our rural church, we are family; some of us are family in ancestry, and others are family because we know each other and share with each other in ways that families do. Even if we have a disagreement, we accept the out come and move ahead. We care for one another. We visit when someone is sick. We call when we haven't heard from someone for a time. When we do goof up, we know through the teachings of Jesus, we can ask forgiveness. As God forgives us – our fellow church members also forgive us. That is family – and we are all part of the family of God.

So yes, we might judge ourselves against one another. Judging another is much easier when you know very little about them. Once you get to know our newer family members they grow on you and you accept them for who they are. If you are like me and start to judge someone whom you know, instead of judging you strive to understand where they may be coming from, or try to understand how they might see life differently than me. That is being the church. That is being part of the family. We are one, in the Holy Spirit. We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 642 “Be Thou My Vision”

- 1 Be thou my vision, O joy of my heart;
naught be all else to me save that thou art,
thou my best thought, by day or by night,
waking or sleeping thy presence my light.
- 2 Be thou my wisdom, my calm in all strife;
I ever with thee, and thou in my life;
thou loving parent, thy child may I be,
thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.
- 3 Be thou my battle shield, sword for the fight
be thou my dignity, thou my delight,
thou my soul's shelter, thou my high tower;
raise thou me heavenward, O power of my power.
- 4 Riches I heed not, nor vain empty praise,
thou mine inheritance, now and always;
thou and thou only, the first in my heart,
great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.
- 5 Great God of heaven, after victory won,
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun!

Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O ruler of all.

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: The Holy Spirit leads us to be the Church, and to give to be the Church in our community. Let us give thanks and give of our gifts as we work to be the Church.

Offertory: VU 541 “Praise God From Whom...”

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Offertory Prayer:

People: Loving God, you have blessed us beyond measure. Help us to remember people in need and be willing to share. When we are the ones in need, help us be willing to receive. We recognize that giving and receiving are two aspects of one thing: love. In our givings, we thank you for your love and blessing for over 150 years. Amen.

Hymn: VU 400 “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying”

Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
send us love, send us power, send us grace!

Pastoral Prayer & Lord’s Prayer:

Closing Hymn: VU 288 “Great Is Thy Faithfulness”

- 1 Great is thy faithfulness, God our Creator;
there is no shadow of turning with thee;
thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;
as thou hast been thou forever wilt be.

*Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
all I have needed thy hand hath provided -
great is thy faithfulness, ever to me!*

- 2 Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
sun, moon, and stars in their courses above
join with all nature in manifold witness
to thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love. R
- 3 Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,

thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide,
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow -
wondrous the portion thy blessings provide. R

Blessing:

Eric: Go and fight the good fight, trusting that you can finish the race because God is with you. Celebrate these 150 years of faithful presence of so many here at Talbot Street United Church. May we share our faith with others, now and forever more.

Go Now In Peace

Go now in peace, never be afraid.
God will go with you each hour of ev'ry day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.
Know He will guide you in all you do.

Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others, so all the world can see.
God will be there, watching from above.
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.
Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude: “ ” – Christie Coatsworth

Prayers:

**Please include these people in your prayers this week.
We offer prayer for these people each Sunday morning. “In the Spirit - We Are One”.**

**Cancer: Kenny
Chris
Paul
Reg and Mary Jane
Dave
Margaret
Bill
Jane
Donna**

**Elizabeth
Donna
Elizabeth
Martin and Family
Dickout Family –
Cheryl
Wayne Gray
Larry**

Gielse