

Alexandra Presbyterian Church

## Fourth Sunday of Easter

April 25, 2021

Minister: Rev. Vern Tozer  
Stephanie Burgoyne, music director  
Kaitlin Vandertuin, soprano

### GOD'S PEOPLE GATHER

#### \* Entry of God's Word, our Holy Bible

**PRELUDE**

"Our Father in Heaven"

G. Bohm

#### WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS

In accordance with the latest stay-at-home order restrictions updates, and for the safety of our parishioners, in-church worship services are suspended for at least the next month. We will continue to provide worship online on our website [www.alexandrapresbyterian.ca](http://www.alexandrapresbyterian.ca) and through our mail outs. Stephanie and Kaitlin will continue to provide recorded music for the online services.

### WE ARE CALLED TO WORSHIP

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

This day we will spend some time in worship and praise. We come together to seek the Lord even though He is never far away. And we rejoice that not only do we seek the Lord, but we have heard Him say: "The son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Let us then allow our Lord to find us so that He may minister to our needs.

**HYMN** 372

Praise him, praise him, Jesus our blessed Redeemer

#### \* PRAYERS OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

Loving God, our Creator and King, with needy hearts we come to you. You have always been ready to receive us whenever we have opened our hearts to you. How great and loving you are at all times! How blessed we are that you never tell us to leave you alone. We do not have to be important people in our world or our community in order for you to pay attention to us. From the lowest to the highest in influence and wealth, you give your undivided attention. You know us so well O Lord and still we are important in your eyes. Bless us further than as we seek to glorify your name. May this be a holy time for us when we will be blessed and refreshed. We pray in and through the name of Jesus Christ your Son and our Saviour. We continue in prayer with the prayer He gave in response to a request from the disciples —

**\* 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 trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.  
For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

**ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

Our God stands ready to forgive His children when they confess their wrongs and sins. His tender mercy is extended when we are truly sorry for what we have done. He removes our sins from us as far as the east is from the west. All praise be given to God the Father.

**WE HEAR GOD'S WORD**

**RESPONSIVE READING:** Psalm 121

- <sup>1</sup> I lift up my eyes to the hills –  
from where will my help come?  
<sup>2</sup> **My help comes from the LORD,  
who made heaven and earth.**  
<sup>3</sup> The Lord will not let your foot be moved;  
he who keeps you will not slumber.  
<sup>4</sup> **The One who keeps Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.**  
<sup>5</sup> The LORD is your keeper;  
the LORD is your shade at your right hand.  
<sup>6</sup> **The sun shall not strike you by day,  
nor the moon by night.**  
<sup>7</sup> The LORD will keep you from all evil;  
he will keep your life.  
<sup>8</sup> **The LORD will keep your going out  
and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.**

*"May the Lord bless the reading of His word to our hearts."*

**SCRIPTURES**

Proverbs 3:1-12

Luke 19:1-10

**HYMN** 746

What a friend we have in Jesus

## MEDITATION

### “Little Man, Big Change”

Today we consider our third person from the Bible. We have shared with you about Rahab and Mephibosheth the last two Sundays. These have been two fairly unknown folk from the Old Testament. As I mentioned last Sunday, you may not remember the name Mephibosheth. It is more important to remember what happened to him and it would be fine if you just remembered that he was a cripple who became a prince!

Today we turn to the New Testament and will share some things about a man much better known than Mephibosheth. His name was Zacchaeus. Have you heard of him?

In a serious moment have you ever wondered how you will be remembered after you have departed this life? I have a book that is filled with things that people have had carved on their headstones. Some of the sayings say a lot in very few words. Others are quite funny. One headstone is reported to have this little poem on it. “Here lies poor Joe, dear husband of Ruth. She asked “How do I look?” and he told her the truth. Today we are going to talk about a man who is remembered for climbing a tree!

When we ministered in Listowel, every Tuesday right after school we had a Children’s Bible Club. Part of our activities included singing choruses. One that was a favourite, largely because of the actions that went along with it, was “Zacchaeus Was a Wee Little Man and a Wee Little Man was He”. Did you ever learn that song? It sounds like it could have been written by someone from Scotland! The words are: “Zacchaeus was a wee little man and a wee little man was he. He climbed up in a sycamore tree for he wanted the Lord to see. And as the Saviour passed that way, he looked up in the tree. And He said “Zacchaeus, you come down for I’m going to your house for tea.” The chorus does not tell the whole story but my sermon today will.

Jesus often took time out of his very busy travel schedule to spend time and pay attention to one person. There might be a crowd of hundreds tagging along with Him but He would turn aside and attend to one person. On a certain day Jesus was making his way into the city of Jericho. Yes, that’s the city where Rahab lived many years before. Living in Jericho was a very well-known man. Here was well known for all the wrong reasons. Zacchaeus was one of the leading tax collectors there. Jericho was a very busy city with many big businesses. Because it was a commercial centre, there were plenty of taxes to collect. And because there were big businesses there, there were wealthy people. And, of course, taxes would be collected from those people.

We have been in Jericho while touring Israel. I didn’t see any tax collectors but I remember two things about Jericho. There was a huge, really beautiful bougainvillea tree. The second thing I remember was that the owner of a fruit market insisted that we accept a huge pomelo. You will love it, he said.

Back to Zacchaeus: He had become very rich but also very unpopular. This man collected taxes for the Romans and the people hated the Romans. So they would despise any Jewish man who stooped to working for the Romans. They hated taxes but they hated tax collectors even more! The tax collectors were told how much they had to turn in to the government but they were not told how much more they could collect above that. You might say that Jericho had a bad case of the Tax Virus. And that caused people to despise any mention of taxes or people who were involved in collecting them.

Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was coming to his town. Something moved him to go and see this man that many said might be their Messiah. Usually Zacchaeus avoided crowds—he knew that people called him every name in the book and they had invented some new ones. Maybe his heart was empty even though his bank account was swelling. He may have had a feeling that he was missing something in his life. There was a problem being so small. There would be no point in going if he could not get in the front line. But when he tried to get near the front line—he got elbowed in the face. Nobody wanted to stand beside him or near him at all. They rudely pushed him out of the way. ‘Go to the other side of the street. Go down to the corner... Just go anywhere... Go away.’

Then he spied a sycamore tree. Its branches hung out over the street. If he could get up there on one of the lower branches that could work perfectly. He could see and people probably would not notice him. After much effort and perspiration he managed to make it up there. But just as he was settling down, the procession stopped. And all eyes were turned towards that tree. And Jesus, he was looking right up at him. ‘I’m going to get it now. He is going to make an example of me. He is going to tell me off before the whole city. Why did I do this?’

Jesus spoke. “Zacchaeus come down out of that tree!” How in the world does he know my name? There’s no law against climbing a tree. I am not harming the tree. But Jesus continues talking to him: “Come on down immediately because I am going to your house and I will be staying for a visit.” We don’t know if he climbed down, tumbled down or fell down! But what a loud murmuring was started by the crowd. ‘Can you believe it? Did we hear Jesus clearly? Of all the people to visit in our town that tax collector is last on the list! Someone should tell Jesus what that man is like.’ Then they began to discuss things like this. Were we wrong about Jesus? Is what we heard untrue? If he is the great prophet people say he is, he should not come with ten feet of that crook! Jesus should just leave him sitting up there in that tree—like the bird of prey he is. He deserves to be left out on a limb. And Jesus wants to go to his house for a meal?

Jesus did go to the house of Zacchaeus and it was an amazing visit. This thief, this cheat stood up after the meal and declared for all to hear “I am going to give away half of what I own. And if I have cheated people I will give them back four times of what I took from them.” That could almost bankrupt Zacchaeus. We have to believe that something had touched and changed his heart. When someone’s pocket book is hit that hard there has to have been a change of heart. This little man was not trying to buy a relationship with God, he was not trying to pay for forgiveness—he was not trying to impress others. He had received something of far greater value than money. He had received God’s forgiveness and was relieved of his sin and guilt.

Jesus confirmed this when he said “This day has salvation come to this house because this man is a son of Abraham.” In other words, he stands in the same line as faithful Abraham did many years ago. He is a son of the Heavenly Father. And Jesus concluded by adding, “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Because Jesus reached out to Zacchaeus his past was redeemed. His present was transformed and his future redirected. Finally this little man, the tax collector, had fulfilled the desire of his mother’s heart when she gave him the name Zacchaeus. For Zacchaeus means “the pure one”. That day through faith in the Lord, he was made clean in the eyes of God.

A very quick lesson: The Lord did not present Zacchaeus with a list of things he must do. He did not say to this little man, here is what you must do to earn forgiveness and to find a purpose in your life. All the things the Zacchaeus promised came because of the work of grace that Jesus did in his heart. Jesus had reached his heart. No more cooking the books. No more taking everything and wanting more no matter how it was done. As a result of receiving the gift of forgiveness, Zacchaeus was ready to do what he would have considered foolishness just a few hours before. He was willing to give rather than get. The Lord's visit to Jericho would never be forgotten by this little man nor would the city forget the day Jesus changed the heart of their most infamous citizen. Jesus continues to do the unexpected today wherever he is received.

## **WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD**

### **PRESENTATION OF OFFERING**

#### **\* DOXOLOGY**

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.

### **PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Our heavenly Father, you are a giving Father, and we have all been blessed by what you have given to us so freely. Thank you for enriching our lives with all the daily gifts that we need in order to live. We wish to present these gifts as a sign of our thankfulness. Receive and use these gifts so that others may be blessed. We ask in the name of Jesus our Lord, Amen.

### **PRAYERS THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION**

Caring God, there are times, as you well know, when we do not know where to start in our prayers to you. With so much to challenge and frighten us today, we often feel our list of requests is far too long. We want to share our personal needs, the needs of our loved ones, the needs of our church family and yes, the needs of our country. We are comforted in knowing that you already know what is needed.

For ourselves we ask for your protection from the virus that is all around us. May the news we hear over and over again not cause us to live in dread. May we know that our days and our times are in your hands. Grant that we would believe that you are able to keep us in perfect peace when our hearts are centered on you.  
For our loved ones, we continue in prayer that they too will be sheltered by your protecting wings. For as a mother faithfully watches over her brood, so you watch over those we love without fail, day in and day out.

For our country we would also offer our prayers. We pray for leadership that wisdom may be provided. Lead those who make decisions to making wise decisions. We would ask that they would turn to you and seek your guidance.

We share our deep concern for your church in our city and in this country. Keep us from drifting into despair. Deliver us from throwing up our hands and quitting. Through the Holy Spirit, revive us and fill us anew with the conviction that you do work all things together for good to those who love you and called according to your purpose. Lead us to remember that your church has never depended on human strength and it has been not by might nor by power but by my spirit, says the Lord.

With troubled but not defeated hearts we bring these loved ones, neighbours and friends to you. Comfort them, heal them, restore them and assure them of your presence for we ask in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son and our blessed Saviour, Amen.

**HYMN 760**

Where cross the crowded ways of life

\* **BENEDICTION**

\* **CHORAL AMEN**

**POSTLUDE**

“Finale”

W. Hune



### **In Our Prayers**

Edith Cowper  
Bruce Wheatley  
Jeannie Carmichael  
Joan MacQueen