

Sunday Morning Worship at Brentwood, Oct 30, 2016

Notes for the sermon on How Sinners Become Saints

Ps 32:1-7 and Luke 19:1-10

Sermon Text = Luke 19:9-10



***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.***

[Hymns = 476, 613, and 692 in the *Book of Praise*]

Key Ideas

1. Let's look at some of the ways this story may challenge the way we consider Jesus – **First**, Zacheaus does not change in order to earn Jesus' acceptance - he changes because of it – God in Jesus, the Christ, reaches out and invites himself into Zacheaus' life first – God takes the initiative in forgiving and accepting – what we do is respond in gratitude by changing our attitudes and behaviours – **Second**, it is forgiveness, not judgement, that is at work in this story – it's another version of the Prodigal Son – it picks up Luke's emphasis on Jesus coming to assure the outsiders of God's forgiving love for them - they are included in the citizenry of the Commonwealth of God – **Third**, this kind of forgiving love will make self-righteous people 'grumble' – these people are the soul mates of the older son in the prodigal story – but God is not swayed by their narrow-minded outrage – nor does God reject them – they are still loved and accepted and invited to continue to grow into their citizenship in God's Commonwealth
2. My attention was drawn this week to the place and power of forgiveness in dealing with our sinfulness – it takes first place – it has happened – in answer to the question, “when were you saved?”, Karl Barth answered, “2000 years ago on a garbage dump outside the city of Jerusalem when Jesus reconciled me with God.” – as Luke's parable makes plain, Jesus takes the initiative here – he comes into our homes – he accepts us as valued hosts – it is in response to that loving forgiveness that we choose to change our lives – our enmity and resistance to the work of the Creator loses its power over us – our misuse of our creaturely freedom becomes apparent and we repent – we change our ways – we begin to step into the saintliness that God has given us as free gift in Jesus Christ
3. Our picture this morning is of Maggy Barankitse – founded Maison Shalom in Burundi after the Rwandan genocide – 60 members of her family were slaughtered in this gross misuse of our creaturely freedom – these are the atrocities that Senator Romeo Delaire describes in his new book on his continuing struggles with PTSD – in an

interview this week on CBC with Carol Off, he talked about finding hope and some degree of healing in helping others - through Maison Shalom, Maggy Barankitse offers safety and support to orphan children from all sides – that’s her step into hope and healing - “Forgiveness is the key to life. If you refuse to forgive, you refuse life.” – when we are immersed in the misuse of our creaturely freedom through the power of hatred, fear, and division, then we die in our sinfulness – when we recognize, with wonder and joy, that we have been saved, freely and lovingly, then we have access to the power of forgiveness and the freedom of saintliness – we step into that gift of salvation one act of forgiving love after another – it is equally important to forgive ourselves as well as others - it’s a journey home to the creation-wide family of God into which we were born and for which we are destined – and we are accompanied by the presence and power of a forgiving God every step of the way

At this stage in our ponderings, then ...

Sinners become saints by accepting the amazing grace of God’s forgiveness, then living out of that gift as they forgive themselves and others – it’s not an easy journey – we have to face the reality of our own misuse of our creaturely freedom – we have to face our own self-righteous arrogance – we have to face our anger and hatred of others – in the end, we have to face honestly all three patterns of sinfulness – but we face those realities with the assurance that we have already been forgiven, that we are already loved, that we have a dignity and worth that even our worst enmity and resistance to God’s ways cannot erase – sinners become saints, then, one act of bold, perhaps even brazen, gratitude for God’s forgiveness after another