

WELCOME TO...

The Presbyterian Church of
Saint David
October 27, 2013

Early Morning Service

"A LIVING FAITH IN THE
SHAPE OF PRAYER-
PART 3"



Hymn: Be still and know that I am God

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Opening Prayer

How lovely is Your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!

**We long to be where You are;
to stand in Your very presence,
and to behold You, face to face!**

*And so we have come to this place today;
we have gathered together to worship You -
to offer the praise which belongs to You alone.*

**Bless us as we worship You together,
and as we open our hearts and minds
to Your presence among us.**

*For You alone are God,
the One in whom we trust.*

**God, may we come to you
in humility and repentance,
ready to encounter you in love
and to turn your way.**

*Accept us as your sons and daughters,
together with Jesus Christ,
your Son and our Lord forever.*

Hymn: Speak Lord in the stillness (1-3)

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Focus Reading Focus Scripture Luke 18:9-14

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax-collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

Reflection by Kate Huey

In this second of two parables about prayer, Jesus again uses a most unlikely example as a teaching aid: the despised tax-collector. Here, Jesus addresses the heart of prayer: who God is, and who we are before God. For the Pharisee, God seems to live right inside him. His prayer is more of a Shakespearean soliloquy, praising himself and his works and his own goodness. He has it all figured out, and things add up rather nicely for him. Perhaps he comes out looking better than even God does! It helps to have the tax-collector nearby for stark contrast, because the Pharisee far outshines him in his virtuous works. To this religious leader, God is benevolent and has surely noticed how good the Pharisee is. Actually, there isn't much need for God to do anything in the life of this Pharisee except to agree with him. In sharp contrast, the tax-collector pours out his heart to God and buries himself so deeply into the voicing of his deepest anguish, his most profound awareness of his own weakness, failures, and sins, that he apparently never notices the Pharisee, let alone compares himself with him. He flings himself on the mercies of God and depends on God to do something remarkable in his life. There are so many reversals in the Gospel of Luke that perhaps we shouldn't be surprised that this hated collaborator goes home justified while the observant religious type doesn't. If we, too, come before God in humble openness and fervent trust in God's goodness, we make room for God to work in our lives. That is much closer to righteousness than all the good works we can manage. Honesty in prayer flows from openness: an open heart, an open mind, a life opened to God and to transformation. Such humble and trusting prayer helps us to discover who we are, and who God is: merciful and loving and just.

Hymn: Speak Lord in the stillness (4-5)

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Invitation: *When Jesus sat at tables and broke bread with tax collectors, lawyers, rich elites, and poor peasants, he proclaimed that God's gracious love and abiding presence know no bounds. Through these occasions of sharing food, women and men experienced God, and shared in God's Kingdom. A Kingdom, where: all are welcome, worthy, and invited; lives are transformed*

and empowered; and the fruits of God's gentle justice bloom throughout all Creation. All people, including each of us, are invited to share in this sacred meal of celebration, and be strengthened by the presence of God in this place.

Hymn: The love of God comes close (1-3)

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Great Prayer of Thanksgiving: *(adapted from A Wee Worship Book)*
For us you were born, for us you healed, preached, taught and showed the way to heaven; for us you were crucified, and for us, after death, you rose again.

Lord Jesus Christ, present with us now, for all that you have done and all that you have promised, we praise you and give you honour and glory! Send down your Holy Spirit on us and on this bread and cup, that through you we may be healed, forgiven, and made whole, and that for you we may be your body, united together, loving and caring in the world until you kingdom comes. United in our love for you and one another, we join together in the prayer that you taught your friends, saying: Our Father...

Communion

Prayer following communion

You have refreshed us at your table, touched our deepest needs, and called us to a life shared in memory and hope. Send us forth with courage and joy in the name of Jesus Christ, that we too may become bread and peace for one another and the world. Amen.

Hymn: The love of God comes close (4-5)

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Blessing: *May you continually wrestle with prayer. May you beseech the door of heaven with shameless boldness. May our prayers produce, in us, a countenance of joy, a gracious demeanor, and a peaceful heart. And may the God of hope, fill you with all peace, that you may abound in hope, assured that your prayers are heard by a loving and gracious God.*