

Invitation: *The bread and wine we're about to share joins us to the people throughout history and across the world who have come to this meal in search of life and have found God's mercy..*

Hymn: Bread of the world in mercy broken 551

Prayer of Thanksgiving: *The Lord be with you: **And also with you.** May we open our hearts. **May we know your presence.** It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and every- where to give thanks to you, God Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. (we continue in prayer) Come to us, Spirit of our Lord Jesus and fill us anew. **Holy Spirit, divine Advocate, guide and encourage us. Stir within our hearts, that we may speak anew the familiar words that Jesus taught us...***

Communion

Following communion: Gracious God, may we who have received this sacrament live in the unity of your Holy Spirit, that we may show forth your gifts to all the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ.

Hymn: Here O my Lord (4-7) 543

Henri J.M. Nouwen, 20th century

"As long as we continue to live as if we are what we do, what we have, and what other people think about us, we will remain filled with judgments, opinions, evaluations, and condemnations. We will remain addicted to putting people and things in their 'right' place."

Postlude

God Be Merciful To Me

WELCOME TO...

The Presbyterian Church of

Saint David

October 23, 2016

GOD, BE MERCIFUL



Call to Worship: *From the deepest, darkest places in our lives, we call out to you. We need help! We need help now! **If you kept records of our sin, we would be truly lost.** We worship God whose very nature is love. We know you make a habit of forgiving us. **We wait and watch for your light as we watch for dawn to break on the longest night.***

Hymn: Up from the depths I cry to God (1-2)

90

Opening Prayer: *Loving God, we are yours. We come as we are, with our cares and concerns. We long to touch you and find healing in your embrace. Strengthen our faith and heal our brokenness, that we may worship you with joy. Amen.*

Hymn: Up from the depths I cry to God (3) 90

Confession: *We have not loved you with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We have not forgiven others as we have been forgiven. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. We have been deaf to your call to serve. We have been unfaithful, proud, and hypocritical. Christ have mercy. Christ have mercy. We have been self-centered, and have taken advantage of others. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. We have been envious of those more fortunate than ourselves. Christ have mercy. Christ have mercy. We have loved worldly goods and comforts too much. We have been dishonest in daily life and work. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. We have neglected prayer and worship, and have failed to commend the faith that is in us. Christ have mercy. Christ have mercy. We have been blind to human need and suffering, and indifferent to injustice and cruelty. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. We have thought uncharitably about others, and we have been prejudiced towards those who differ from us. Christ have mercy. Christ have mercy. Merciful God, we have sinned in what we have thought and said, in the wrong we have done and in the good we have not done. We have sinned in ignorance: we have sinned in weakness: we have sinned through our own deliberate fault. We are truly sorry. We repent and turn to you. God be merciful to us and renew our lives to the glory of your name. Amen.*

Hymn: Jesus, Lamb of God 545

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."

Hymn: Jesus, Lamb of God 745

Making room for God in our lives

So Jesus teaches a lesson about God's mercy in justifying the abject sinner, the tax-collector, instead of the apparently holy Pharisee. If we come before God in humble openness and fervent trust in God's goodness (how else would we be forgiven but for 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. Charles Cousar writes, "Prayer is the occasion for honesty about oneself and generosity about others" (*Texts for Preaching Year C*).

Honesty flows from openness: an open heart, an open mind, a life opened to God and to transformation. For Luke's audience, learning to be Christian years after Jesus died, "Prayer was not a last resort when all the plans and programs and power plays had failed; prayer was, rather, the first and primary task of Christians" (Cousar). Prayer helps us to discover who we are (or remember who we are), and who God is: merciful and loving and just. (Kathryn Matthews)

Hymn: Nothing can trouble 617

With whom do you identify in this text: the Pharisee, or the publican, or perhaps the audience or all three? In what ways might we be tempted to believe in our own accomplishments and in our deserving of what we have received? How do you think you would have reacted if you had been in the audience listening to Jesus that day? Who are those, in our churches, in our denomination, in our society, from whom we stand apart when we pray? What does it mean to you to go home from church "justified"?