

FAITH @ HOME

Week of November 3, 2019

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost/All Saints

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Luke 6:20-31

REFLECT: We talk a lot about blessings. A blessing is God’s favor or gift. How are you blessed? Can people be blessings, too? In this reading, Jesus gives a list of blessings. He calls “blessed” the people who are poor, hungry, weeping, hated, or excluded. That doesn’t sound like God’s favor, does it? However, Jesus completes each sad thought with a happy one, the opposite of what he said at first.

Then Jesus mixes it up! Do you remember what said next? “WOE TO YOU.” Yikes! Woe means sorrow or sadness. Jesus warns those blessed with good things, following each blessing with its unhappy opposite. Why do you think Jesus finishes the lesson this way? Perhaps Jesus wants us to pause, to think, and to be careful. What can these pairs of opposites teach us?

Today we celebrate the Feast of All Saints. We can all be saints—people through whom God’s light shines for others. Many saints who we remember by name suffered terribly for their love and work for God. In their woe, were they blessed? Through their sorrow, did they bless others?

RESPOND: In The Way of Love, we are called to worship. One way we can worship God together is to raise our voices in song! In your hymnal or online, find the hymn “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God” by Lesbia Scott. Sing or speak the words together. Who might these saints have been? See if you can find the answers together. Who were the queen, doctor, shepherdess, priest, soldier, etc.? When you find the answers, think about these saints’ real lives. How might their stories relate to the blessings and woes in today’s lesson?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: AMANDA WISCHKAEMPER



Amanda Wischkaemper is devoted to telling and hearing stories, building relationships, and finding reasons to laugh. She is a professional actor, dialect coach, theatre educator, and dog-person. In her 13th year of Episcopal Children’s Formation, she currently serves as Director of Children’s Ministry at St. David’s Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas, alongside her Music Director husband (Mark), and turbo-toddler (Abby).

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: Luke 19:1-10

REFLECT: This is a great story because all of us sometimes feel like Zacchaeus. He wasn't very popular, as a matter of fact, most people in Jericho didn't like Zacchaeus. He was short, he was a tax collector, and he had even cheated people out of their hard-earned money. But Zacchaeus was ready to make some changes in his life. He was sorry and ready to do the right thing, and he wanted so much to see Jesus.

Jesus saw a need in Zacchaeus, so he met Zacchaeus where he was. He walked right up to Zacchaeus as he sat in the tree and said come on, let's talk. The people of Jericho couldn't believe it. Why was Jesus going to his house? But, that's how Jesus is, and we're who Jesus wants to hang around with.

RESPOND: When I was little, I had a book called *If Jesus Came to My House*. It is still one of my favorite storybooks. Talk with your family about what you would do if Jesus came to your house. What would you do if Jesus just knocked on your door one day and asked if you could play? Create a story about all the games you would play, things you would share, and food you would eat.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: LISA PUCCIO



Lisa Puccio is the Coordinator for Special Needs Worship and Family Formation at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Houston, Texas. Lisa leads Rhythms of Grace Houston, a weekly worship service for special needs families, and oversees ministries for children and parents at St. Andrew's. She has worked in parish ministry since 2002, served two terms as vice president of Forma, and is a member of the diocesan formation advisory committee in the Diocese of Texas. Lisa and her husband Mike have four grown children.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: Luke 6:20-31

REFLECT: Love your enemies? Do good to those who hate you? Bless those who curse you? Pray for those who abuse you? Are you kidding me? Is God asking us to be doormats, to allow the world to take advantage of us, to be weak? Not at all. God is asking us to live lives that are counter cultural, to live lives that follow move closely follow the life Jesus lived.

Jesus cared for those who no one else cared for—bullies, mean girls, people no one liked, people no one else associated with, even Judas who would eventually betray him. Jesus asks us to love the world and to live in the world as he did so that the world may see a better way, and so that the Kingdom of God are comes more quickly and is felt even in some small way each day. It is hard. Dare I say, even impossible? To do it alone, yes, but we are not alone. We have God and one another, we have all those who have come before us. The saints, not just saints written about in books, but the faithful people we know, love, and miss.

RESPOND: Do you know someone who is no longer living whose life you believe closely models the way of love? Thank God for their life and for the example they have set for you. Perhaps there is someone who is still living who lives a life you admire and want to emulate—take the time to tell them in person, in a note, or in an email. And give thanks for the communion of saints, which guarantees that we are not alone.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: KATHERINE DOYLE



Katherine is the Coordinator for Youth and Young Adult Ministries and the rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Kentucky. She lives in Louisville with her husband and whichever of her four young adult children happen to be home at the time. Katherine's greatest joy is being a mama: first to her own four and then to all the children, youth, and young adults who call her Mama Doyle. She often finds God in the ordinary messiness of everyday life and writes about it on her blog thesixdoyles.blogspot.com.

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Week of November 3, 2019

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost/All Saints

ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Luke 19:1-10

REFLECT: My great-grandpa William Vanstone Sampson was a wee little man. He had a scratchy beard, a warbler's whistle, and tip for me: to use a step ladder when I couldn't see something properly. I vividly remember scooting the three-level metal step stool to the window to look at a nest of tiny pearl-sized eggs while a momma hummingbird buzzed vigilantly by.

We have all probably sung the Bible school song about Zacchaeus being a wee little man. How he climbed up a sycamore tree to get a better look at this guy Jesus. It occurs to me that Zacchaeus wasn't the only one using his position to get a better look. Jesus invites himself to Zacchaeus' house to get a closer look at the heart of this man. While it might have been easier for Jesus to pass by the flawed man, a sinner in the eyes of many, a thief in the minds of most, Jesus instead moved closer.

That closeness with Jesus changed the trajectory of Zacchaeus' whole life with a ripple effect that changed countless lives then and still resounds a couple thousand years later. I am so thankful to know that God still desires to step closer to flawed, sinning thieves. God looks past all that the world says about me and you and instead looks at the heart of each of us.

Though my great-grandpa "Shorty" (yep, that's what we called him) has long since gone on to glory, I still remember simple things he taught me, like using a stepladder will give me a better look at things, and that one small step closer can change everything.

RESPOND: Using the camera on your phone, play with angles in your pictures. See what things look like from up high or down low. Take a few selfies (both high and low) and see if you have a preference in the angle, remembering God looks beyond what we view as flaws and sees the heart of each of us. Keep those selfies as a reminder to step closer to the One who desires closeness with your heart.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: KARIANN LESSNER



KariAnn Lessner has led youth and children's ministries in The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Texas for over twenty years. Currently the Minister for Children and Families at Christ Church Cathedral in Houston, she loves serving as a summer camp session director at Camp Allen and is a frequent speaker to women's groups throughout Texas. In addition, she produces the podcast "You Brew You," where she sits down with folks to share what God is brewing in their lives in the hopes that each person is infused with grace and courage by the other's faith. She enjoys spending time with her family, hammocking, reading, and sipping sun tea in the great outdoors.

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