

Everyone Is Invited

January 29, 2023

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ Online Ministry. This week's message is titled Everyone is Invited. Thank you to Glynnis, Dave, Gloria, Don and Ed for being part of the video. The scripture reading is Luke 4:14-22.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

Well, good morning, everyone. It's great to see everybody and nice to see the sun after it hiding for quite some time. I was thinking on my way here, I was like, Whoa, right. I'm not used to this, but it really is good to see, good to see sunshine and good to be able to feel that fresh cold breeze. It was it was actually lovely this morning when I took the puppy outside. So I would like to, of course, welcome you and so glad that you're here today and able to. It's nice and snuggly warm in here. I know sometimes it's a little chilly, but today it's nice and warm. And so welcome to everybody both here and online because I know we have a number of people that tune in online.

We've got a few birthdays this morning or coming up this week, Debbie, and then an anniversary: Care and Tim. So congratulations to those people. We have a number of prayer requests. Our dear brother Mike is scheduled for more eye surgery. This coming week. And I know how much he appreciates the prayers that the congregation sends up on his behalf. So I would ask you to be praying for his health of his eyes. Pam is also recovering from a surgery that she had and Rene, Dianne's neighbour, is struggling with COVID and pneumonia. And so we would really appreciate our prayers for her. And then on a much sadder note, Geoff's sister, Melanie, passed away in early January and I know that they would appreciate our prayers for their immediate family, but also for her husband, Mark, who is also and this like broke my heart when I read it is also undergoing treatment for esophageal cancer. So if you would keep him and his family in in your prayers, we would certainly appreciate that.

So if you would join me in a word of prayer before we begin our service, dear Lord, God, God, thank you so much for this gorgeous day. Thank you for the joy of being able to be alive. God, we know that you are the great physician. God, you are the one who can heal us of our wounds, God, not just our physical ones, not just our our emotional ones, but our spiritual ones and even our financial ones. God, I know that it's it's a tough time for everyone. And I pray that you would put it on our hearts to help our sister Pam. God, please help her with her. I'm sure it's I'm sure it's very hard to deal with pain like that. I it and God, you know, that's my probably my personal worst pain and that it just I pray with all my heart and I know that we together pray that you would help her deal with the pain and come to a full recovery. God, we also pray for Mike. We pray that his surgery will go well. God, that man has endured so much hardship with his eyes. And I pray that that you would give him some of his sight back. God, that he can continue to work and to feel like he's contributing in a meaningful way. God, we we also pray for Rene, God. God COVID's bad enough, but pneumonia on top of it is really scary. And I pray that you would be with her and help her to heal God. And of course, we pray for Geoff's sister Melanie, for her husband, for Geoff and his family with her passing. God, we we know you're the great comforter. We love you. We thank you so much that we can come to you with all the things that burden our hearts. God and I pray that for those of us that are anxious or struggling or worried or ill or

whatever God, that you would be with us and help us to deal with it faithfully and to rest in your love. We love you in Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Communion

When was the last time that you received an invitation to an event, maybe a wedding, birthday party, reunion, whatever? The very nature of an invitation is expressing someone's desire to be with you, to interact with you, to be known in greater ways by you, to have the opportunity to share life with you for a particular reason. Invitations are powerful things that make us feel wanted included, important, even loved. They cause us to pause and consider our participation, whether to participate in an event or to engage with certain people. So we check our schedules, we block out some time, we make arrangements to travel if necessary, and even prepare ourselves for the event for which we have received such an invitation. So what if we come to realize that worship is actually an invitation? Our understanding and participation in worship each week could be changed. For many, this might be a contrary idea to the performance invention mentality that sometimes surrounds worship experiences practiced today, we tend to believe that worship is about what we do and create for God. Worship is not an invitation, not an invention. It is an invitation. An invitation by God to us, His people, to enter in a conversation with a loving and holy God.

The invitation here at this moment that we are considering this part of our expression of worship, the communion, do this in remembrance of me. You're invited to participate in remembrance. You're invited in the Spirit of Christ, the son of the living God. Holy Father, bless these emblems of the body and the blood of Christ. And we thank you for the gift of your presence and appreciate the invitation that you have extended to our hearts through Christ. Jesus. Amen.

Scripture Reading

The Scripture this morning is from Luke 4:14 to 22. Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit and news about Him spread through the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues and everyone praised him. He went to Nazareth where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue. As was his custom, he stood up to read in the scroll of the prophet. Isaiah was handed to him unrolling it. He found the place where it is written. The Spirit of the Lord is on me because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, or to set the oppressed free to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them Today, this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing. All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. Isn't this Joseph's son? They asked.

Sermon

Good morning, everybody. I'm so glad to have you with us today. If someone were to ask you, what is your favorite book in the Bible, they might say that's like saying, what's your favorite child? There's just so many books that are profound and wonderful and helpful. But in the New Testament, I suspect I could be wrong, but I suspect that out of the Gospels most would say, Oh, I think John would be my favorite gospel, because there's something about John where he talks about the love of Jesus and probably the most quoted scripture from John 3:16 for God so loved the world and he gave His one and

only son there believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. It's a powerful book and it's a wonderful book. But for me, the book that is sometimes underrated in a book that I love dearly is The Book of Luke. It's not a book that we read very often, but I love it because every one is welcome to the Feast of the Kingdom of God. It is repeated throughout the book that people who've never been invited to anything are first class in the eyes of God. And so Luke begins talking, of course, about the birth of Jesus. But then he goes on from there. And his constant theme throughout all of Luke is You are invited. You are invited, you are invited. And you may remember back from the Old Testament, there was a year of Jubilee every 50 years. Sins would be forgiven and then they would start all over again. But Luke says the year of Jubilee is now and forever. We don't have to wait 50 years. Everyone is welcome to the Feast of the Kingdom of God. So what I want to do today is a very brief sermon and just read a couple of these scriptures that I think were pretty exciting because they work just as well today.

Jesus came for the broken. Jesus came for the lonely. Jesus came for the oppressed. Jesus came for people who consider themselves outcasts. Jesus came for the poor. Jesus became. Jesus came for women. First class in the Kingdom of God. Jesus came for Gentiles. Jesus came for the tax collectors. Yeah. He came for people who live on the streets. He came for people who were filled with leprosy. It he came for people who are trapped in a lifestyle. They couldn't get out, but they keep on trying. This is Luke's book. Everyone is Welcome to the Feast of the Kingdom of God and everyone is welcome to sit at the table of the Kingdom of God.

I think I may be told the story in the past. Excuse me. Barb and I were on vacation and it was in Germany where her family came from. And it was around lunchtime. So we stopped and came into a restaurant, and it was pretty full. And Barb and I were sitting at a table, and all of a sudden, two young men just came and sat beside us and just kind of slid in. They couldn't speak English. We couldn't speak German. And we realized that the customers, if there are seats available, you're going to sit you don't have to stand and wait. But if there's someone if there's four chairs at a table and there's two people sitting there, that there's two of you, you come and sit. So it was a wonderful experience. At first we were caught back. What are we going to do? Well, it was interesting, the language back and forth. They they would catch a few English words. And Barb is much better than I am. And speaking German, she caught a few words like that. So hands, signals and food being shared together. And when we left, we thought, wasn't that cool? At first it was like, Whoa, this is something we've never done. But it was this unexpected pleasure. And as I thought later, it was God bringing us together. This is the book of Luke. Luke has everyone. Welcome to the Kingdom of God in the year of Jubilee. After 50 years since you're forgiven. Not anymore. In Christ, all sins are forgiven.

So no wonder John 3:16 is the favorite scripture in all the Bible for many, many people, for God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son. But I also like when seven Luke people will come from the east and the west and the north and the south and they are invited to be first class. They're going to sit at the kingdom of the Table of God. And so many of the stories and parables reflect on this. So, for example, we know the parable of the Good Samaritan, but it begins this way.

On one occasion, an expert in the law, meaning an expert in Old Testament philosophy, in scripture, stood up and wanted to. And this is not a good thing to do. Wanted to test Jesus. Can you imagine? Wanted to test Jesus? He asked. What must I do to inherit eternal life? In the response of Jesus? Says, What's written in the law? Interesting answer. What's what's interesting? How do you read it? He

answered, Love the Lord, your God with all your soul, all your strength, all your mind, love your neighbor as yourself. You answered correctly, Jesus said, Do this and you will live, not just physically. But he wanted to justify himself. It's never a good idea to try to justify yourself in front of Jesus. Tried to justify himself, and then He tells the story because he asked, Well, who is my neighbor? Jesus said, A man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho. When he fell into the hands of robbers, they stripped him of clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.

Shame on the priest. So, too, a Levite came to the place where the man was. And when he saw him, he took pity on. But the Samaritan he traveled came here. The man was and saw him, took pity on him, went out and bandaged him. A Samaritan. Those evil Samaritans know people will come from the east, in the west, in the north and the south. People we don't know and they're invited as first class in the Kingdom of God. And if you are here today, please know that message is for you to thousands of years old. It is a promise of God. And how many promises of God has He failed? Never not one. All his promises. And He tells the story of a Samaritan who was considered unclean comes along, takes pity, bandages him, takes him to the innkeeper, pays him, reimburses him, and he says, Which one of these? Which one of these do you think is the neighbor and the expert of the law? Couldn't say it. This expert of the law just couldn't say it. He just had to say the one you know, the guy who showed mercy on him. I love this book because it gives us an invitation to be part of something that is absolutely incredible.

Then, in the eyes of God, no one is marginalized. Ephesians Chapter three it says The mystery that was hidden throughout the ages is now revealed that the Gentiles are heirs together with the Jews, with Israel members, together of one body, sharing together in the promise of Christ Jesus. I was looking back recently and came across a statement that was made by N.T. Wright, and I thought it was wonderful. I just read this to you. Jesus not only offers hope. Jesus is hope. Hope is what you get when you suddenly realize that a different world view is possible. A worldview in which the greedy, the powerful and the unscrupulous do not, after all, have the last word. The same world shift that is demanded by the resurrection of Jesus is the shift that will enable us to transform. Yes, the entire world. And Luke gives us this understanding of all people being welcome to the Kingdom of God.

So there are many parables that they talk about this in the Chapter 15 of Luke. Again, a very familiar parable. Now the tax collectors and sinners all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, This man welcomes sinners and eats with them. Yes, and thank goodness he does. Then Jesus told them this parable. Suppose one of you has 100 sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the 99 in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders. Well, isn't that a beautiful description and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, Rejoice with me. I have found my lost sheep. I will tell you in the same way. Listen, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents. Then over 99 self-righteous people who believe they there are good enough for it. That's not what the Scripture says, but that's basically what it means. There'll be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents. Then over 99 righteous persons who do not need to repent. Or at least they don't think so. So in this wonderful book of Luke, you're just going through it rather quickly. There's this understanding of welcome where everyone is welcome. Jesus came for the poor, the Samaritans, and so forth.

And so many of the, I guess, parables were taken. And Jesus heals various people at various times. But it always is going back to You're welcome. You're always welcome. Everyone is welcome to the Kingdom of God. And so in this book I just read this to you in chapter 17 of Luke, now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. And as he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance, calling out in a loud voice. Well, leprosy was considered the worst things, and that somehow she got too close to someone or touched someone who had leprosy. You could get leprosy, too. So as he's going along into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him and they stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice. Jesus, Master, have pity on us. And when he saw them, he said, Go show yourselves to the priests. And as they went, as they were going, they were cleansed. So when they got there, they didn't have leprosy as they were going. As they were going. They were healed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus feet and thanked him. And he was the Samaritan. And it was the Samaritan that was considered unclean. And Jesus says, No, all people are welcome. And then he says, We're not all ten cleanse. Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return to give praise to God except for this foreigner? And again, it's this understanding of Luke.

So Luke knows what Matthew, Mark and John know, but he wants to write this book in such a powerful message that constantly throughout the book he's saying, You are first class, you are welcome, you are part of the Kingdom of God. And even his disciples struggled with all of this. And so we remember this when Simon is being betrayed, Peter being betrayed by God and says this, Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have returned to me, that you would then strengthen our brothers. And then he replied, Lord, I'm ready to go with you to prison. And even unto death. And in fact, all of the apostles eventually died, many of them at the hands of others. But it was this concept of everyone is welcome to come to the Kingdom of God and to share that gift with others. So in verse 36, it says, But now if you have a purse, a wallet, take it, and also a bag. And if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. It's written he was numbered with the transgressors. And I tell you that this must be fulfilled. Yes. What is written about me is reaching its fulfillment, hyperbole and yet reality that Jesus would end up being crucified as the sacred lamb for all of us. So Luke is special. It's unique. And so after the resurrection of Jesus, it must have been so amazing.

So I'm going to start to wind up the sermon, and I'd like you just to listen. These are not my words. They're not Matthew's words. They're not Mark's words. They're not John's words. But this is Luke, the physician. This is a man who constantly is saying to us, Oh, remember, you are first class in the Kingdom of God. Yes, people will come from the east and the west, in the north, in the south, but they will take their places at the Feast of the Kingdom of God. That was said 2000 years ago. And it's just as true today. So here the story. You know what happens? That Jesus dies, he's crucified. Then this chapter 24, on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took spices that they had prepared and went to the tomb where Jesus was put in. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And while they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. Please picture yourself in this story in their fright. The women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said, Why do you look for the living among the dead? Jesus is not here. He is risen. Remember how he told you while he was still with you in Galilee, that the son of man must be delivered over to the hands of dinners sinners and be crucified on the third day, be raised again.

Then they remembered his words. Oh, yeah, I remember that. I remember when he said that they remembered the words and when they came back from the tomb they told all these things to the 11 and the others. Can you imagine that conversation? It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, the mother of James, and the others with him who told his disciples. But they did not believe the women because the words seemed like nonsense to them. Peter, however, got up and ran to the two bending over. He saw the strips of linen lying by themselves and he went away wondering what happened to himself. And then verse 13 and this is incredible. It still gives me goosebumps. Now, that same day, two of them were walking to the village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. Can you imagine the conversation as they talked and discussed these things with each other? Jesus himself gives me goose bumps. Came up and walked along with them, but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, What are you discussing together as you walk along? This is Jesus asking the question. But they don't see him. They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem that does not know about these things that have happened? Jesus asked What things about Jesus of Nazareth? They replied, He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people, the chief priests and the rulers handed them over to be sentenced to death and they crucified him. But we had hoped we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it's the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb this morning and they didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels who said Jesus is alive. But then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it, just as the woman had said. But him they didn't see. And Jesus says to them, How foolish you are, how slow to believe all that the prophets had spoken, did not the Messiah. This is Jesus talking, did not that Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter into His glory.

And then at the beginning, from Moses and all through the prophets, he explained to them what those Scriptures were concerning himself. And I must have taken a while, all the prophets referencing to Jesus and spoke all the way through. And then it says, as they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued, as if he were going further. But they urged him strongly. Stay with us, for it's nearly evening. The day is almost over. So he went into stay with them and when he was at the table with them, he did what we just did. He took bread. He gave thanks, broken, and began to give it to them. Now, watch this. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized that it was Jesus. And then he disappeared from their sight. Do you think they would ever forget that? Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him and disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, were not our hearts burning while he talked with us on the road. And then they got up and returned to Jerusalem. And then they found the 11 and told them. The story said it's true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon. Then the two told what happened on the way and how Jesus was recognized. Then I conclude with this Based on everything that we've just read, and I think this is the coolest thing at the end of Luke that is just so amazing. Just listen, while they were still talking about everything that's happened.

Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, Peace be to you. In other words, Hey, how's it going? Think of everything that's just happened. Hey, how's it going? They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. And he said to them, And this is Jesus. Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself touch me and see. A ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see. I have. And when he had said this, he showed them

his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it, because of joy and amazement, they asked him, Do you have anything here to eat? And they gave him a piece of fish. And he took it and he ate it in their presence. Meaning, no, no. He's alive. His digestive system is working just fine. He said to them, This is what I told you while I was still with you, that everything must be fulfilled. That is written about me in the law of Moses and the Prophets in the Psalms. Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, This is what is written. The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations beginning in Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things, and I'm going to send you what my father promised. But stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.

Luke is the story that says As powerful as all of this happened, it's for us. It is for us. People will come from the east and the west and the north and the south, and they will take their places at the Feast of the Kingdom of God. May that be something that we just can't wait for? Amen.

Song Leader Comment

So this church has been here for a long time. In fact, we are entering in 2023, our 191st year in this community. So what's happened in those 191 years? Well, I've only been here for a bit of it. A little bit of it. So we heard a great sermon today from Luke in the story of the Ten lepers. These are lepers. They were completely social outcasts and they receive the blessing of healing. And one of them comes back to say thank you. So as a so, who do you want to be? Do you want to be the person who receives a blessing and doesn't say thank you? Or you want to be the person that receives the blessing and is thankful? Well, this song, what we're going to sing, is about being thankful. It's a response to blessings. So we go out from here a few hours a week. We spend together over the 191 years, and we release to go out into our communities and to be people of God, people who are pointing to the person and being of blessing. So how do we behave? Well, we behave by loving people and being kind, being joyful, being people of self-control, gentleness. So that's the blessing. That's the response to the to that part of the sermon that we we become these things. So we have to be thoughtful about how that is how we're going to behave, how we're going to speak, how we're going to show that we really are praising God in our lives.

Closing Prayer

That was amazing. Love, that love. Great sermon. Don, thank you so much. God truly is amazing. And I do hope that as we pray, our praises to God will fill the air and let us join together in prayer.

Dearest Lord, God, truly, you are amazing. God, that that you, first of all, brought Jesus to us to allow us such amazing second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, a millions and in fact, an infinite number of chances to turn to you and to be forgiven. God, it's amazing. But you've also you've also filled our hearts with joy and enable us to walk this path. God, I pray with all of my heart that you would be with here, both here in our building and and online. God and all of our. All of our friends and neighbors. I pray that you'll be with that you'll help us to feel your presence. God, that we can be deeply, deeply encourage that every single one of us is welcome, that every single one of us are invited. God, no matter where we stand, no matter what we've done, no matter, no matter we are yours because we matter to you. God, you are amazing. God, I pray that you'll be with us as we go into the week ahead.

God help us to love other people. Help us to love you more deeply, God, and guide our hearts. God, we love you, we thank you. We pray for the world. God, especially those people in war torn areas. God, they are somehow encourage them. God, we don't even know how, but please encourage them and send them your love. God, we love you. We thank you. In Jesus name, we pray. Amen. Have a great week.

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