

Everyone Is Welcome

September 17, 2023

Welcome to the Beamsville Church of Christ online ministry. This week's message is titled "Everyone is Welcome." The scripture reading is Luke 13:22 to 30. Thank you to Geoff, Barb, Paul, and Don for being part of the video. Happy birthday this week to Ernie.

Welcome, Announcements, Prayer

Good morning everyone. As I looked at Don's plan for today, I noted that he was talking about the welcome that God gives to everyone. And I thought that was a great way to start and to think about what we were going to be looking at today because we are God's children. We are to be a welcoming people. Jesus says this, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in me. My father's house has many rooms. If that were not so, would I have told you that I'm going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the place to where I am going." Jesus invites us to be with him.

Let's go ahead and offer a prayer. I'm going to pause for a few seconds and those of you who are in the class this morning, the musical term "selah" will come up again because I talked about it in class. We were reading a psalm and in the middle of the psalm there is a little notation that says "selah" and no one is quite sure what that means but it usually means or at least it's believed that it means take time, pause, and understand and revere God for what he is and then you can get into celebration. So I'm going to give you a few seconds to think about it, to welcome God into your heart and welcome God into your celebration this morning and then I will pick up with the prayer.

Father, sometimes we need to stop and see you for who you are. To take that "selah" moment and pause to let the things of the world escape from us and this morning as we begin, we do that in honor of you. That we might be here together, your welcome guests, to celebrate the Son of your love, to break bread, to hear a word from your Bible. Father, we pray this morning that our time together will be uplifting, that you will accept our praise in song, in prayers, and in our meditation and study as a fragrant offering from a people who we know you love and welcome. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

All right, I have a few announcements this morning. Somebody has a birthday. I'll tell you this, she is always 29 and I can say that with impunity because her birthday is on the 29th. So I can say she's always 29 and I can mean it. All right, there are no anniversaries this week. Are there any other announcements that I missed? Okay, if not then I will turn the time over to Adam.

Communion

Hello. If you'd like to get your Bibles, John the first chapter.

In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made. Without him nothing was made that was made. In him was life and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. Verse 9, "The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He

was in the world and through the world and though the world was made through him the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him to those who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God. Children born not of natural descent nor of human decision or of a husband's will but born of God. The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and the only son who came from the Father full of grace and truth."

This is a lovely section of text. I would argue introduces and summarizes the book of John. In fact, God's redemptive New Testament story to us, the entirety of the gospel is there. It starts with one through five, "Who is Jesus? Eternal, source of all life." And it describes him and there's discussion about this but what John uses the word, word. Did the word word. See that? What exactly does that mean? Logic, order, righteousness. Jesus is in full accordance with God. Jesus shines his light into the world and nothing is able to stop it. We could stop there and you could listen to me go on for several hours but we're not going to do that. And then in verse nine Jesus comes into the world. The world does not understand, believe in, recognize him but some did accept him and it became children of God. And notice down there it specifies children of God from God, of God's choice. So not of any human choice. And then verse 14 there's a promise, a dedication, a comfort for those who believe Jesus dwells with us here now. We see his glory, the grace and the truth of God through Jesus.

One of the things I like about this passage, it's kind of--those of you who are into video gaming, you have third person, you know when I say third person, first person is you this way through your own eyes you see, second person is Rhonda sees me, so second person, third person is the omnipresent above view and you see the person walking around. This text to me is a third person text. You kind of see from above, the big picture. You see the stretch of history unfold before. One of the side effects, the good side effect of that is you see the whole picture, you see everything. The downside of that is sometimes it's hard to see yourself in that picture. I would argue that when Jesus came into the world, yes he came into the world at large, he came into the world 2000 years ago, but he also came into the world for me personally, for Paul Moore. We sometimes talk about Jesus took our individual sins to the cross, but Jesus also came into my personal world and dwells in my personal world. And therefore the choice in nine through thirteen of recognizing him or not recognizing him is also a very personal one to me. Do I recognize his eternal self? Do I recognize he is the source of all life in the entire universe? Or do I not understand him, not recognize him? And therefore the promise that Jesus continues to dwell with me here and now and that I continually see his glory and the grace and truth of God.

I sometimes think that it's helpful to, there's lots of things that are true in the wider world, the universal third person view, but it's also helpful to isolate it down to it's true for all of you individually, but it's also true for me personally. And I hope we all agree with it, but when it comes down to it, do I really agree with this? Do I really think it, feel it, understand it, and live it?

This morning or today as we think about Christ's death, burial and resurrection on the cross, we think of the gospel, we think of hopefully some of these things, but who he is and what he has done for us. Is it personal to you?

I grew up in a church family. Like some of you, I grew up in a place where I just went to church every week. That's what you did. In fact, we went to church three times a week because that was the church I grew up in as a child. They meet on Thursday nights now. Where do you find that in scripture? I ask you. But that's the type of environment I was. So when I became a Christian, I didn't make a giant

traditional leap, if you will. I just continued doing largely the same things I did before, which is not to say that a leap was needed and continually is needed. But I had to make eventually a choice. A choice for me. A choice not based on my family, based on the people I grew up with, the friends I had, but a choice for me. So I challenge us all this morning to think about that choice. Think about what that means for us and where we are in that choice. And perhaps, if you're like me, a reminder of the choice that we made is a useful thing. Let's go to God in prayer.

Dear Lord, thank you for all you've given us and all you've blessed us with. Thank you for this time. Lord, help us to remember your son well today. Help us to remember his body broken, his bloodshed. Help us to remember the sacrifice that was made on our behalf, but also the resurrection, the power that he proved existed in this world for us so that we may have love life abundantly. In Jesus name, amen.

[Music]

Reading

Luke 13:22-30

Then Jesus went through the towns and villages teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door because many I tell you will try to enter and will not be able to do so. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading. Sir, open the door for us, but he will answer, "I don't know you or where you come from." Then you will say, "We ate and drank with you and you taught in our streets." But he will reply, "I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me all you evil doers." There will be weeping there and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed, there are those who are last who will be first and first who will be last.

Sermon

Good morning everyone. Thank you so much for being with us. So I have a question today that is maybe unanswerable because the question is out of the four gospels, which one is your favorite? I don't know how you answer that question, but for me the book that I have so enjoyed out of the gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, is Luke.

Luke is a physician. He's a doctor. He cares about people. He cares about their health. He definitely cares about their spirit and their soul. And in this wonderful book of Luke, he's concerned about people not being healthy, not getting enough food, a lot of food insecurity in the New Testament. And he's concerned about them, but he's concerned also about how do we fix it? How do people who are hungry, how can we help them with all that? Well, one of the answers from Luke is everyone's invited. Everyone's invited to the feast of the kingdom of God. Everyone is welcome. And in this book, spiritually and physically, he talks about all of these things. And it talks about the fact that there's inclusivity. Everyone's welcome. Number two, not only is everyone welcome, everyone is welcome to come, listen now, to the feast of the kingdom of God and that what I'm saying, Luke says, is reliable. The physician is concerned about people's health, concerned about food insecurity, concerned about

their spiritual welfare. And so Luke writes in such a way that it's like, just like today, it's very much the same today in many places, even in our world, even here in Canada.

So I want to spend some time talking about this. And I was thinking about this just last night. And I wrote these things down. That Jesus came for the lonely. He came for the broken. He came for the ignored. He came for the oppressed. He came for those who are considered social outcasts. He came for the poor. He came for women who've never had a voice. He came for Samaritans. He came for Gentiles. He came even for the tax collectors. He came for those who live on the streets. He came for those who are ill, leprosy. And he came for those who are trapped in a lifestyle that they've tried so hard to get out of and up to this point, haven't been able to.

It's Luke. He's a doctor. He's concerned about everyone. And so when he writes this book, he talks about everyone coming to the kingdom of God. The message today is not lengthy, somewhat brief, but I just want to make a couple of comments in this wonderful book of Luke. There's inclusivity. Everyone is welcome to the feast of the kingdom of God. And listen to what Jesus says in chapter 10. The Lord appointed 72 others and sent them two by two, ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of a harvest. Therefore to send out workers to go into the harvest field. Go. I'm sending you out like lambs among wolves. Don't take your wallets, your purse, your bag or sandals. Don't take anything. Just go and went into our house. When you enter a house, welcomed into a house, offer peace to that house. And if the head of the house loves peace, your peace will rest on that house. When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what you eat, whatever is put in front of you. Oh boy, that could be interesting. If you've been told all your life, you can't eat this, you can't eat that, you can't eat this because that's the way God wants. And all of a sudden that food is put in front of you. What are you going to do? Jesus is changing their mind. Eat whatever is put before you. And when you enter that town, welcome and be welcome.

Now, there's something about eating. There's something called parallel eating and there's something called personalized eating. I remember once Barb and I having the privilege of being in Europe and we were at a restaurant and all the seats were getting rather full and Barb and I had our own little booth and all of a sudden a couple of guys just came in and sat with us. They weren't really interested in what we were saying. We didn't understand the language very well. Barb's better than me when it comes to that, but it was just like that's the European situation. If there's a place to sit, you sit and you eat. And if you want to talk to the person, you talk to the person. If you don't, you don't. And that's just the way it is. Parallel eating is sitting and eating and not really caring about anyone else. But Jesus comes along and he introduces personalized eating. Sit down. Is it okay if I sit at your table? Okay. I think we in Canada would say, okay, I don't know you. Well, let's get to know each other. And so pretty soon, food isn't even that important. You come from where? Oh, wow. Are you married? Oh, wow. What kind of job do you have? And all of a sudden there's this dialogue that just goes and flows and it's wonderful. And pretty soon, usually at the end of that, we take down phone numbers or take down names. Hey, you're ever back in town? Let's get together again. This is what Jesus was doing, going town to town to town. And how did he get interested in people and people interested in him? They did a lot of eating. They lot of welcome. A lot of people coming together, which was completely different than the custom of that day where Jew and Gentile had nothing to do with one another. And there were strict rules about that and strict rules, what they could eat and what they couldn't eat. And Jesus comes along and says, wipe that out. Welcome everyone to the feast of the kingdom of heaven.

And it's Jesus sharing a message. And when Jesus was a peripatetic teacher, meaning he didn't stand behind a pulpit like I am, he'd go out into the world and just share, walk. He was a walker and a talker in showing a demonstration of who God was. And so the very wonderful parable that everyone has heard, I want to read again, is the parable of the good Samaritan. On one occasion, an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. It's never a good idea to test Jesus. What's written in the law? He replied. How do you read it? He answered, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself. Jesus said, you've answered correctly, do this and you will live. But he wanted to justify himself. So we asked Jesus, all right, so who's my neighbor? And Jesus replied, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers and they stripped his 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 pass by on the other side, so to a Levite, he came to the place and saw him and passed by the other side. But the Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was. And when he saw him, he took pity on him. And as he traveled, he came there with wound, pouring oil and wine. And then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an innkeeper, look after him, he said. And when I returned, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you have. Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands? And the expert of the law said, the one who had mercy on him. He wouldn't call him a Samaritan, but the one who had mercy on him.

And I was thinking how important that is for us. How on any given day, a simple compliment, or a simple little help, or a little bit of exchange of money for someone who is in need. All of those things matter. You see, Luke is a doctor. He cares about people. He cares about their life. He cares about how they treat one another. He cares so fabulously that it's a reminder to me as an example of who God is, who continually gives his love for us. And so in this wonderful book, The Kingdom of God, Luke is all about this sharing with one another. So again, he's going to write about this again.

In Luke chapter 14, he talks about the great banquet. Well, we've been eating, so let's eat some more. So here's this wonderful great banquet. When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, blessed are those who will eat at the feast of the kingdom of God. Now please remember this from Luke also. 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 heaven. And when one of those at the table heard him, he said, blessed are those who will eat at the feast of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus replied a certain man was preparing a banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet, he sent his servant to tell those who have been invited, come for everything is ready. Have you ever been invited to someplace and you said yes, but you really didn't want to go? But they all made excuses. Can't come. The first one said, I've just bought a field and I must go and see it. Please excuse me. Another said, I've just bought five yoke of oxen and I'm on my way to try them. Please excuse me. Still another said, I just got married so I can't be with you. The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered a servant go out quickly into the streets and the alleys of the town and bring in the poor. They've never been invited. Bring in the crippled. They've never been invited. Bring in the blind and the lame. We've never invited them. Sir, the servant said, what you ordered has been done and there's still room. Then the master told the servant, then go out into the roads and the country lanes and compel them to come in so that my house will be full. I tell you not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet. It's Luke, this wonderful, wonderful man, inviting everyone to come to the feast at the table of God.

And Luke is a writer of stories. He writes parables, parables of a lost coin, parable of the lost son, all kinds of parables. And then we meet interesting people like Zacchaeus, a song that we used to sing in Sunday school. He was a wee little man apparently. Jesus entered Jericho and passing through and a man was there by the name of Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector, a taxist, nobody liked this guy. And he was wealthy because he'd keep a little bit for himself. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short, he couldn't see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him since Jesus was coming that way. And when Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, come on down from that tree immediately. I must stay at your house today. I must stay at your house today. And it reminds me, Jesus is welcome into our house, into your house. And one of the ways that we can prove that is by welcoming others into our house. Jesus is here. He's with us. Zacchaeus, come down. I must stay at your house. And he welcomed you. And all the people saw this and they began to mutter. He has gone to a guest of a sinner. But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, look, Lord, here and now I give half my possessions to the poor. If I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times that amount. And Jesus said, I think with a very large smile on his face. Today, salvation has come to this house because this man too is a son of Abraham. For the son of man came to seek and save that which is lost.

This wonderful story of Luke, he's concerned about people. He's concerned about Jesus. He's concerned about other people knowing Jesus. He is concerned about spiritual food. He's concerned about physical food. He's concerned. And so we tell the story of this in chapter 22. He asked the disciples to prepare for service. Where do you want us to prepare for it? They asked. He said, as you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters and say to the owner of the house, this is interesting. The teacher, meaning Jesus asks, asks, where's the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples. He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished, make preparations there. Then they left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. And when the hour came, Jesus and his apostles, I love this, reclined at the table. Now, I think all of us understand this. There are times when you maybe have gone to a place, invited to a place, and it's not necessarily relaxing. You're a little bit concerned. How is everything going to work? How is it going to go? But most times when we invite someone to our house, ah, just relax, take off your shoes. What can I get you? It's a relaxed atmosphere. And sometimes in scripture, we can make something so difficult that we can't even relax in the presence of Jesus. Because I believe with all my heart that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is with us right now. They sit beside us. They welcome us. I know that because Jesus said so. I'm always with you. I'll never leave you. I'll never forsake you. And if you can be as relaxed as Jesus is with us, we should be as relaxed with one another and welcome people to enter the feast of the kingdom of God because whether they know it or not, and whether they believe it or not, they are welcome.

Isn't Luke precious? Everyone is invited to come. And then it says when they took communion, they took the bread Jesus did and broke it, gave it to him saying, "This is my body given for you in remembrance of me." In the same way after the supper, he took the cup saying, "The cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." And all throughout the New Testament, the blood is the sacrifice for sins so that we can be wonderful servants of Christ as Christ taught around the table.

So in the book of Luke, marvelous and wonderful. And I'll start concluding with these words. In Luke 44 and 45, Jesus said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you. Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms." And then listen to

this. "Then Jesus opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures. And then as Jesus appears from his resurrection, he said to them, how foolish you are and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Did not the Messiah, Jesus, have to suffer these things and then enter his glory. And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself. And as they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on 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 in to stay with them. And when he was at the table, this always gives me the goosebumps, and when he sat at the table, he took the bread, gave thanks and broke it. Then their eyes were opened and recognized him. And then he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning with us while he talked about us on the road that the scriptures said to us?" And then they got up and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the 11 and those with them assembled together and saying, "It's true. The Lord has risen, has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way and how Jesus was recognized when he opened and he took the bread. And then the conclusion of this.

If I haven't already said, I'll say it again, probably for the fifth time, I love Luke. He welcomes everyone. He teaches me that Jesus is the most welcoming of all, not only in the first century, but right now at this moment, he welcomes us. And so, how does Luke finish the book? He's incredible. He's concerned about everybody's health spiritually and physically. So he finishes this way. "While they were still talking about this," Luke writes, "Jesus stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." This is after Jesus's death and now the resurrection. And they're wondering about the resurrection. Is it really going to happen? He said it was going to happen and it does because then Jesus appears. "They were startled and frightened, thinking that Jesus was a ghost. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled? And why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It's me. It's myself. Touch me. See, a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones as you see I have." And when he said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe, but because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" Why would he ask that? Because he wants them to know he's physically alive. He's not a ghost. Ghosts, I don't think, eat. Jesus said, "I'm hungry. Let me have this." They showed them he was alive. So they gave him a piece of broiled fish. And then Jesus did what he always would do. He took it and ate it in their presence, shared it as communion. He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you. And everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms." And then he opened their minds so that they could understand the scriptures.

So I've been preaching now for 45 years, and I'm not even close to understanding all of the scriptures. But like that, Jesus opened up their minds so that they could understand the scriptures. Can you imagine how they preached? Can you imagine how they taught? They saw, they touched them, the experience. They opened their minds so they could understand the scriptures. He told them, "This is what was written, the Messiah will suffer, it rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name into all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things, and I'm going to send you to what my father has promised, which is the Holy Spirit. But stay in the city until you've been clothed with power on high." And then Acts chapter 2 reminds us of that wonderful day when the Spirit comes into our lives. Yep, I think Luke is a remarkable man. He's a physician. He's a busy man. He takes care of people. He takes care of their bodies. Most importantly, he takes care of their souls, and he still takes care of us. Amen.

Closing

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come, and let the one who hears say, "Come, let the one who is thirsty come, and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life." Let's go to God in closing prayer. Father, we're so thankful that we are welcomed at your table. We look forward to that, but we're so thankful that now we're welcomed here in this life to participate with the Spirit in you. Today, Father, we celebrate, we rejoice in the fact that both the Daniel family and Hannah have a place to live. That's a hard thing to be found in this in this situation today. We thank you, Father, for the camps that have just ended, Strawberry Point and Camp Omagh, and we pray that the seeds that they have sown will nurture young hearts and will bring them closer to you. We pray next week that Church in the Park will be a celebration that reminds people that God is looking for them.

Father, we celebrate the fact that we can participate in an open air place in this country, and Father, we ask that it will be to your credit that people meet. Father, we continue to pray for those who are recuperating, particularly for Mary. We ask that you help to strengthen her body and that Brian and the rest of the family can assist her as she recovers. And Father, we pray a special blessing on the Ritchie family at this time at the loss of Keith. We ask that you comfort them. We ask that you be with them in this time of their need. Thank you, Father, for your welcome. We pray in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Spirit who walks with us. Amen.

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