

October 28, 2021



Steeple Views

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MARTINSVILLE, VA

Devotional Meditation
Elder Monica Stevens
October 27, 2021

A Question of Identity

Luke 19:1-10 (NRSV)

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today. So he hurried down and was happy to welcome to him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

Most of us have been familiar with this story since we were children. It is good to learn the stories of the Bible as children, but too often as adults, we neglect to examine these stories more closely to see if there is anything new we can learn from them. One way to do this is to ask where you see yourself in the story. Which character are you?

We'll start with Zacchaeus. He was a wealthy man because he was good at his job. Unfortunately, his job was part of a corrupt system. Rome levied taxes on the people to pay for their governance. The governors would hire the people who promised to collect the taxes, who would in turn, hire others to collect more than the amount promised to Rome. Anything collected above the required amount would be the pay/profit for the tax collector. Graft was built into the system and the citizens were

the ones who suffered for it, but life was good for Zacchaeus. Then one day, word spread that Jesus, the Galilean preacher, teacher, and healer everyone was talking about was coming to town and something drove Zacchaeus to check him out. Was it simple curiosity, or was Zacchaeus drawn to Jesus because he sensed the stirring of some emptiness within himself that only Jesus could fill? Whatever the motivation, it was strong enough to make this powerful, rich, but short man humble himself enough to scramble up a tree to get a look at Jesus. When Jesus looked up and summoned Zacchaeus to come down and spend time with him, something changed within Zacchaeus. Status and wealth were no longer important, and Zacchaeus wanted to make restitution for all the money he had stolen from taxpayers over the years. Maybe Zacchaeus was the one rich man who could show the camel how to go through the eye of a needle. Can you see something of yourself in Zacchaeus?

Then there was the crowd. They were lining the street to see Jesus, to honor Jesus, to seek his favor, and perhaps to be blessed and healed by Jesus. They clamored to get Jesus' attention because they could see he was a holy man. On the other hand, when they saw Zacchaeus, the hated tax collector, struggling to get a look at Jesus they closed ranks and wouldn't let him near the road. Some of them may have even let a well-placed elbow "accidentally" fly in Zacchaeus' direction. When Jesus called out to Zacchaeus and made it clear he wanted to share a meal with Zacchaeus at his house, the crowd grumbled in disbelief. Why would Jesus even consider spending time with this traitor to his own people, this servant of Rome, this unclean and despised sinner? To their thinking, anyone, everyone else in the crowd would have been more worthy of Jesus' time than Zacchaeus. What was Jesus thinking? Can you see yourself as one of the crowd praising Jesus in one breath and judging Zacchaeus in the next?

The only character left is Jesus. Jesus had been travelling through the countryside preaching, teaching, and healing. His reputation as a man of God and worker of miracles preceded him wherever he went and people flocked to see him. One thing about Jesus that really annoyed members of the religious establishment was Jesus' perceived lack of propriety. He willfully sought out and spent time with all the wrong sorts of people—the poor, the tax collectors, the ritually unclean, and habitual sinners. What did Jesus see when he looked at them? Did he just see them as their sin, or did he see them as children of God who were part of the "lost" he was sent to save through his love? Most of us can probably easily, if uncomfortably, identify with characteristics of Zacchaeus and the crowd. We are just as human as they were, and therefore, a mixture of honorable and not-so-honorable traits and motivations. However, if we are truly going to learn from this story, we need to remember that as Christians we bear the name of Christ into the world. This story challenges us to see others as Jesus sees them. We need to learn to get past appearances, reputations, and associations, and other barriers to remember that God loves all of his children, ourselves included, so much that he sent Jesus to seek us and save us through his love. As members of the Body of Christ we are called to minister to those who have

need—the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned, the homeless, the lonely, the grieving, the suffering, and the lost. We are not Jesus, but by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit we are called and empowered to live in such a way that others may see something of Jesus shining forth from us as we serve in his name.

May God bless and strengthen us to do his work. Amen.

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The Church is Open for In-Person Worship Service!

The safety of our congregation and community are our highest priority. In light of increasing infections due to the Delta variant and in order to follow state and local guidelines and CDC recommendations, **we strongly recommend that everyone, regardless of vaccination status, wear a face covering that covers your nose and mouth while anywhere inside the church and sanctuary**

The church office will open for limited appointments. Please call to schedule. Please enter at the narthex for Sunday worship and during the week use the back door at the portico.



Please join us for the twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost either **in person** or via **Facebook live** at 10:00 AM

Sermon by Elder Monica Stevens
Living as the Body of Christ

Based upon Romans 12:1-18 and Isaiah 58:1-11



Steeple Views Reminder

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MARTINSVILLE, VA

Steeple Views is published weekly on Thursdays. **DEADLINE** for submission of articles is Tuesday evening.

If you have information you want included in Steeple Views, **PLEASE SEND TO:** steepleviews@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org. If you send to another email address, the information may get lost and subsequently not included in the newsletter.

We reserve the right to edit all submissions. Sharon Kirby, Editor



Earth Care

Earth Care congregations are doing some very interesting things. Would you like to know who is "Blessing the Butterflies," or who is "Waiting for Angels"? Here is a link to pcusa.org that will lead you to discovery:

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/eco-journey/category/church-earth-care-stories/>.

- 2 Colton Sanders
- 3 Bill Hensley, Elizabeth Harris
- 5 Neil Tatum
- 6 Brooke Cundiff
- 7 Christy Kropp
- 8 Donna Lawhon
- 15 Steven Minter
- 18 Donna King
- 21 Henry Grady III Moore
- 23 Sue Benfield
- 24 Judy Ware
- 25 Jean Hill
- 27 Dr. Joe DeVault, Dr. Leanna Blevins
- 28 Norah Cundiff



In Memory of Reed Stone Moore

Jim and Eliza Severt

Robin and Ann Joynt
George Lester, II
Nancy Baker
Thomas and Denise Unterbrink
William F. Stone, Jr.

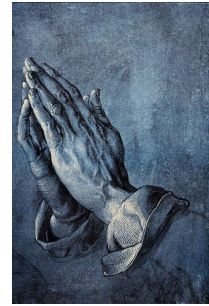
In Memory of Mrs. Charles (Lou) Fox
John and Donna Miller

Prayer Requests

These members and friends of the congregation need our prayers:

PRAYER CONCERNS

Family of Cynthia Dobrinski, Carl and Georgette Bishop, Ernest and Merylyn Bremner (S. Ford), Catherine Bridges, Jim Brunt (N. Davis' brother), Tommy Cobb (M. Dunn), Judy Epperly (Nancy Baker), Daniel Handy, Leonard Kelley (Monica Stevens' brother), Betty Carol Lamm, Eddie Levi, Mary Manning, Laura Stevens Milton, Reed Stone Moore, Brenda Pendelton (A. Pinkard), Anne Peterson, Scott Stevens (M. Stevens), Bruce Thomas (M. Stevens), Tammy Tucker Wardinski (Susan Pilson), persecuted Christians and all troops in defense of freedom throughout the world.



Please submit prayer requests to Rita in the church office, (276) 632-3431, office@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org.

Congregational Care and Fellowship

If you are in need of prayer, a meal, transportation, etc...due to a death in the family or the birth of a baby, please reach out to the Congregational Care and Fellowship committee by contacting Lynn Pritchett at [276 252-6068](tel:276-252-6068).

Please remember
Canned Soup



The 4th quarter food donation item is ****canned soup****

(please NO tomato**)**.

Please consider donating extra when you are able to get out and about as your donations will become more important than ever.

Hygiene Items - We are always in need of these items!

**Items may be brought to church but please call the office to make sure Rita is there. Alternatively, you may drop off at Grace Network, Monday - Friday, 9-2 PM*

**Presbytery of the
Peaks**



For updates and announcements, please click on the link below or copy and paste into your web browser:

[https://www.peakspresbytery.org/images/2020 Peaks Postings/PP Aug18 2020.pdf](https://www.peakspresbytery.org/images/2020%20Peaks%20Postings/PP_Aug18_2020.pdf)

Our Mission

Share God's Love, Embrace Our Neighbors, Nurture Each Other

Printed copies of Steeple Views are available at church. Current and back issues are also on our website:

www.firstpresbyterianmartinsville.org/page.cfm/topic/newsletter

Useful Links

FPC website:

www.firstpresbyterianmartinsville.org/ or www.fpcmartinsvilleVA.org/

FPC online directory: members.instantchurchdirectory.com/

FPC Facebook page: www.facebook.com/FPCMartinsvilleVA

Presbytery of the Peaks: www.peakspresbytery.org/

Presbyterian Church (USA): www.pcusa.org/

Daily Bible Readings: www.presbyterianmission.org/devotion/daily/

Church Office Phone: 276-632-3431

Our mailing address is:

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Martinsville, VA 24112

STAFF

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Carol Carter, Weekday School Director, wds@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org

Deborah Burgess, Contemporary Music Director,

contemporarymusic@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org

THE SESSION

Clerk: Nancy Baker

Treasurer: Henry Moore

Class of 2021

Lynn Pritchett: Congregational Care and Fellowship

Rob King: Facilities

Monica Stevens: Worship

Class of 2022

Brooke Cundiff: Mission/Outreach

Pamela Rakes: Stewardship and Communication

Betty Hudson: Christian Education

Class of 2023

Billy Kirby: Administration

TRUSTEES

2021: David Garland, Ed Linker

2022: Joan Montgomery, Ashby Pritchett

2023: Sandra Ford, Joe DeVault

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