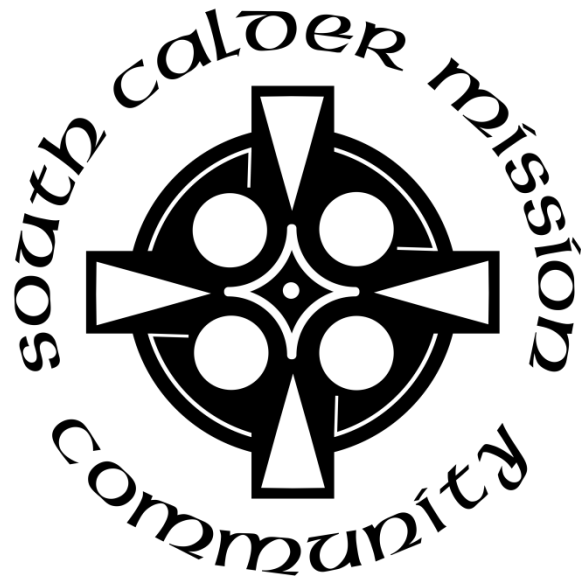


*into his courts
with praise...*



A Service of the Word

Sunday 2 November 2025
Fourth Sunday before Advent.

A Service of the Word for Sunday morning

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INTRODUCTION

*“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord
Jesus Christ.”*

2 Thessalonians 1:2



THE CONFESSION

The grace of God has dawned upon the world with healing for all.
Though we have grieved him, yet he will heal us if we confess our
sins in penitence and faith.

**Almighty God,
I confess that I have sinned against you
in thought, word and deed;
I have not loved you with all my heart;
I have not loved my neighbours as myself.
Have mercy upon me,
cleanse me from my sins,
and help me to overcome my faults,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Receive God's forgiveness

May the Father forgive us
By the death of His Son
And strengthen us
To live in the power of the Spirit
All our days. **Amen.**

PRAISE

O Lord, open my lips...
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.
Give me the joy of your saving help...
and sustain me with your life-giving Spirit.

THE COLLECT

God of glory, touch our lips with the fire of your Spirit,
that we with all creation may rejoice to sing your praise;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Suggested hymn to sing or read ***Praise my soul the King of heaven.***

THE WORD OF GOD.

Psalm 32.

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

While I kept silence, my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.
Selah

Then I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not hide my iniquity;
I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord',
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.
Selah

Therefore let all who are faithful
offer prayer to you;
at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters
shall not reach them.
You are a hiding-place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.
Selah

I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

Isaiah 1:10-18.

Hear the word of the Lord,
you rulers of Sodom!
Listen to the teaching of our God,
you people of Gomorrah!
What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices?
says the Lord;
I have had enough of burnt-offerings of rams
and the fat of fed beasts;
I do not delight in the blood of bulls,
or of lambs, or of goats.

When you come to appear before me,
who asked this from your hand?
Trample my courts no more;
bringing offerings is futile;
incense is an abomination to me.
New moon and sabbath and calling of convocation—
I cannot endure solemn assemblies with iniquity.
Your new moons and your appointed festivals
my soul hates;
they have become a burden to me,
I am weary of bearing them.
When you stretch out your hands,
I will hide my eyes from you;
even though you make many prayers,
I will not listen;
your hands are full of blood.

Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;
remove the evil of your doings
from before my eyes;
cease to do evil,
learn to do good;
seek justice,
rescue the oppressed,
defend the orphan,
plead for the widow.

Come now, let us argue it out,
says the Lord:
though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be like snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool.

2 Thessalonians 1.

To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. Therefore we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith during all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring.

This is evidence of the righteous judgement of God, and is intended to make you worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering. For it is indeed just of God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to the afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes to be glorified by his saints and to be marvelled at on that day among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.

To this end we always pray for you, asking that our God will make you worthy of his call and will fulfil by his power every good resolve and work of faith, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Suggested hymn to sing or read **At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.***

GOSPEL

Luke 19 : 1-10.

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 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, Lord, 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.'

REFLECTION – How wicked was Zacchaeus?

There are Sycamore trees in our garden. There are two very large ones and numerous little ones which appear as if from nowhere in completely the wrong place. I like the Sycamore, although to many it is regarded as a weed. We have frequently had offers from itinerant gardeners to "do something about" the large one close to the gatepost at the end of the drive. I refuse, because I like it the way it is, but I wonder what reaction I'd get if I said, "No, leave it as it is because someone might need to climb it to see over the heads of the crowds."

In the Gospel today we read of Zacchaeus, not only “short of stature” but also a chief tax collector and rich.

Now, taxation was not something that people in Jesus’ time liked any more than we do today. They saw it as a means of making the population pay for the occupying forces of Rome. Yes, taxation was one of the things the Romans did for Israel.

The tax collectors were not civil servants, as they are today, but contractors. They tendered for the job of collecting taxes and took their profits out of the money they collected. As far as the general public were concerned tax collectors were crooked, they ripped people off to line their own pockets. They were seen as among the lowest of the low and certainly not the type of people that Jesus, or any self respecting Jew should be associating with. Especially not this man who was a leader among the gang of officially sanctioned parasites.

How surprised must the crowd have been when Jesus greeted Zacchaeus warmly and invited himself to his house.

All who saw it began to grumble and said, ‘He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.’

Poor Zacchaeus, he must have felt the anger of the crowd. Perhaps he wanted to become even smaller and fade away out of sight. This must have taken the thrill out of being welcomed by Jesus. He does his best to make amends;

‘Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.’

Was this a protestation of his innocence? Did he expect people to come forward and accuse him of fraud?

We don’t know. He may have been an honest tax collector. Certainly he could probably have used his position, and perhaps his servants, to push his way through the crowd to see Jesus. He didn’t though, he climbed up the Sycamore tree, a very normal, human thing to do.

This isn’t what saved him. Jesus makes the point that it is the outcasts, those despised by decent society, that he came to save.

‘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.’

This is a consistent theme of Jesus’ teaching and ministry. It was one of the things that the Pharisees and other leaders disliked about him. We know that they thought that if he was the Messiah he should be focussed on them, after all they were good observant members of their faith.

There’s a message for us too. Not just about tax collectors – that’s a necessary part of life and helping to provide services for society to continue. We don’t expect our tax collectors to line their own pockets at our expense. What we do have a right to expect is that the benefits of society should be there for all.

And in Jesus words, society, and especially we as Christians, should seek out and save the lost.

Brian Pateman

*Suggested hymn to sing or read **The spirit lives to set us free (Walk in the light).***

THE CREED

**All I believe in God the Father,
 whose loving care is the pattern for family life.
 I believe in Jesus, the Son of God,
 who lives in my heart through faith,
 and fills me with his love.
 I believe in God the Holy Spirit,
 who strengthens me with power from on high.
 I believe in one God;
 Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**



A time of quiet prayer for

- *The universal Church - Bishops, synods and all leaders church*
- *The leaders of the nations*
- *The natural world and the resources of the earth*

Loving God I see the news and I am afraid. Violence is spiralling out of control. I don't know what to think or feel. The temptation to fall into hatred, or despair feels very close at hand.

**Help me to remember that nothing in all creation can separate me from your love that I know in Jesus. May your perfect love for me cast out my fear and free me to discern what is mine to do amidst the chaos of this suffering world.
Amen.**

Finishing with the South Calder Mission Community prayer...

**Heavenly Father we thank you for the life of your Church in this place, and in all the villages of the South Calder Mission Community;
for all who have served and worshipped you in years gone by, for all who make up your family in our churches today, for the faith we have in common, and for the people and traditions which make each church unique.
By your Spirit, guide and equip us, that together we might find new ways to reach out to our local community, to show your love to our neighbours, and to encourage them to follow the Lord Jesus in their lives. Father, we offer ourselves to your service. In the unity of the Holy Spirit, And in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

and the Lord's prayer...

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come;
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

THE CONCLUSION

<i>Suggested hymn to sing or read</i> <i>Will you come and follow me?</i>
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The following prayer is said

**Be with me, Lord, as I finish my prayer today.
May my lips always speak the truth;
may my eyes which have read your word
see only what is good;
and may my life as well as my worship
be always pleasing in your sight,
for the glory of your name. Amen.**

And now may the Lord who brought us to birth by his Spirit, strengthen us for the Christian life.
May the Lord who provides for all our needs sustain us day by day.
May the Lord whose steadfast love is constant as a mother's care, send us out to live and work for others.
And the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be with us and remain with us always.
Amen.

So now may I go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
In the name of Christ. Amen.

Links for the hymns

Praise my soul the King of heaven.

<https://youtu.be/RqbhPGFilxc>

At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.

<https://youtu.be/7w-tDjlpqk>

The spirit lives to set us free (Walk in the light).

<https://youtu.be/8CumpuwbWv4>

Will you come and follow me?

<https://youtu.be/S-Bq1YtpQL8>