

Greetings members and friends of First Congregational Church of Shelburne,

This Sunday's Worship Resource is attached for your use either for home worship, or at home with the YouTube video. The link to the video is on our church web page, shelburnechurch.org.

In your prayers this week please remember:

Martha Davenport for healing and comfort as she recovers from a broken ankle.

Fleurette Patterson who is recovering from a stroke.

As we now move into the summer months, we will keep you up to date concerning worship services and our pastoral search.

Please remember we include prayer requests every week.

Any requests may be sent to me at pastor01089@gmail.com.

God be with you as we unite in praise, in ministry and in worship even from a distance.

Pastor Rob

Welcome to Sunday Worship

June 14, 2020

Good Morning to our members and friends at home,

This week's Worship Resource focuses on a passage from the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus looks out upon the crowds that follow him. Our reflection is about what we see and what we make up in order to fill in the gaps of what we do not see. Check the church web page at shelburnechurch.org for the YouTube posted for this Sunday's service.

Prayer Requests: We are accepting requests for prayer (healing, comfort, thanksgiving and others). Please send your requests to the Pastor at pastor01089@gmail.com. Requests will then be sent out through our email list to the congregation for our common prayer life during the week. PLEASE remember that all prayer requests received become public knowledge. If you are uncertain if your request for another might be confidential, do not send it.

And now let us be in worship

A Call to Worship Psalm 116

I love the Lord because he has heard my voice.

I love the Lord because he inclined his ear to me.

Therefore, I will call on the Lord as long as I live.

Morning Prayer & Lord's Prayer

O God, creator of all, the sun and the stars, the mountains, and valleys. We, your children, come to you offering our praise and to seek your healing in our lives. Be among us this morning as we greet this new day and this new week. Be our cloud by day and our fire by night. Hold us close as we live and grow in Christ, our Savior and Redeemer who taught us to pray saying...

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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Prayers of the People

You may wish to add your own prayers for healing, prayers of thanksgiving, prayers for comfort and others during our time of meditation. Our prayers for today speak to the light of God and the divisions within humanity and within God's people. As we come to prayer, let us clear our minds and turn all of our attention on being in the presence of God. Let us pray...

Upon the people, O God, you have said, your light has come. Upon the people who have walked in darkness, has your light shined. Upon the people who have walked in deep, deep darkness your light, shines. We, O God, are those people. We, O God, walk in darkness. We cannot see what lies in front of us, we scarcely remember what we have left behind, nor are we gifted in learning the lessons of our past. We are near sighted, far sighted, blind in our darkness of a life we struggle to understand, especially in the context of your light, and even when it comes to you, Lord God, Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth, who moved across the waters and created order from chaos, who brought forth your people, covenanted with them, sent Jesus of Nazareth in the fullness of time, your word made flesh, your love made concrete, to be our salvation, who we bring our children to you that you might bless them, to whom we pray for healing in our sickness and to whom we commend the souls of our faithful departed, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in the sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, you, O God, even with you, we find that we are often in the dark concerning your will and your ways.

Faithful people throughout your creation disagree, sometimes violently concerning who you are, and how you act, who you care for, who you love, and who you reject and cast out. As your apostle Paul did write, *we see as through a glass, dimly*. We, O God, are the people who walk, if not in darkness, then certainly in the shadows of twilight.

Shine, O God, shine your light upon us. Dispel our shadows, and the darkness of our hearts that bring bitterness and unrighteous anger, that prompts us to speak words of

unrest, words of arrogance and words of constant, relentless complaint. Shine your light into our minds, that we may see rightly, with the eyes of Christ, rather than with our own. May your light vanquish this far and near sightedness, may the shadows flee before your constant and relentless light of your love, flee before your words of hope, of healing, of mercy. Upon us, O God, Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace, may your light shine, even as we offer our prayers to you this day... (personal prayer and meditation)

Upon us, O God, Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace, may your light shine, and then, may that light be reflected through us, to all those around us. Amen

Gospel Lesson: Matthew 9:35-38

Today's Gospel lesson takes place towards the end of Jesus' first year of public ministry in the spring of 29 AD. During this year Jesus has been traveling throughout the region of Galilee proclaiming the good news, teaching, and healing. Word of his ministry began to spread and people began to seek him out. Given our current environment of anxiety and fear of COVID 19 and of unrest at unequal justice in our nation, this passage offers an opportunity to reflect on ourselves and our faith in action.

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.*"

After the reading, you may reflect on this passage and share your thoughts.
There is a set of notes concerning this text for your reflection.

Benediction: Romans 15:13

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Notes on the text

When Jesus was preaching, teaching and healing people started to follow him around the country. He had his devoted twelve but there were others. So many others that scripture records them as being a crowd. How do you feel about crowds? I imagine even those who loved being in them, see them differently these days. When you see a crowd today, what goes through your mind? Back before COVID 19, did you like crowds? Hate them? Avoid them? When Jesus looked around at all those people who had become “the crowd” he had compassion on them. When we look at a crowd what do we see? Do you consider everyone in that crowd selfish? People who do not care for the well-being of others? Perhaps you may wonder what is so important these folks would take the risk of being in a crowd? When Jesus looks at a crowd, he sees needs, multiple, tragic, hurting, needs. Because of what he sees, he has compassion. It’s all in what you do with the information you are presented with. It’s all about what your biases, prejudices and opinions are. It’s all about how willing you are to make it all up based on little or no information or stop and reflect on what the facts are. In the 1930’s there was a merchant out in the Midwest who had two identical sons. As is with most twins, these two boys were inseparably intertwined. They dressed alike, went to the same schools, played the same sports, read the same books and neither ever married. When their father died, they took over running the family business. They were a perfect model of creative collaboration and the business flourished. One morning, a customer came into the store to make a small purchase and handed one brother a dollar bill. The brother who waited on him put the dollar bill on top of the cash register, made change, and walked to the front door with the customer. Some time later he remembered what he had done with the dollar bill, but when he returned to the cash register, the bill was gone. He asked his brother if he had seen the bill and put it into the register. The brother replied that he knew nothing of the bill in question. *That’s funny,* said the other. *I distinctly remember placing the bill here on the register and no one else has been in the store since then.* Had the matter been dropped, the mystery involving a tiny amount of money would have amounted to nothing. An hour later, this time with a noticeable hint of suspicion in his voice the brother asked again: *are you sure you didn’t see that dollar bill and put it in the register? I know I put one there.* No, I did not. I didn’t see it, I didn’t touch it. You left it there. It was your responsibility. And so, the first serious breach of trust between the two brothers occurred and it grew wider and wider. Every time they tried to discuss the issue, they ended up in another argument. Each blamed the other: *You took it. You left it.* Each accused the other of not being honest: *You must have taken it.* You must have forgotten where you put it. Each accused the other of being disloyal: *How can you treat me like this? How can you treat me like this?* Finally, they dissolved their partnership. They built a wall dividing the store in two. What had once been a perfect model for creative collaboration was now an angry and fierce competition. This lasted for the next twenty years. Then one day a car drove up with an out of state plate. A well-dressed man got out and went into one of the stores. He inquired about how long the merchant had been in business in that location. When he found out it had been more than twenty years, the stranger told his story: *Then you are the one with whom I must settle an old score. Some twenty years ago, I was out of work, drifting from place to place. I happened to get off a box car in your town. I had no money and had not eaten for three days. As I was walking down the alley behind your store, I looked in and saw a dollar bill on the top of the cash register. Everyone else was in the front of the store. I gave into the temptation and slipped through the door and took that bill. That act has weighed heavily on my conscience ever since. I finally decided I would never be at peace until I came back and faced up to that old sin and make amends. Would you let me now replace that money and pay you whatever is appropriate in damages?* At that point the stranger was surprised to see the old man standing in front of him shaking his head in dismay and beginning to weep. When he had gotten control of himself he took the stranger by the arm and said, *I want you to go next door with me and repeat the same story you have just told me.* The stranger did, only this time there were two old men who looked remarkably alike, and both were crying. Imagine, twenty years. Twenty years of hostility and recrimination all rooted in that one event that was misread. Seen, but not seen accurately. An entire false story line created based on little or no information. Just that one dollar bill had gone missing. So, my friends the question for today is **what do you see?** Are you sure what you are looking at is what you are seeing? When you look upon other people what do you see? Do you see rich and poor? Do you see color of skin? Do you see style of dress? Do you see country of origin? What story line do you make up based on little or no information? In the gospel of Matthew there is another time that Jesus talks about the crowd. The disciples of John the Baptist have come to him and asked if he is the Messiah. Jesus asked the disciples of John what they saw. Just to be sure they didn’t just see a crowd,

Jesus told them who those people were. He said: *They are the blind, who can now see. They are the lame and crippled who can now walk. They are the lepers who have been cured. They are the deaf, who hear every word you say. They are the poor, who have heard the Good News and rejoice.* The conclusion to today's Gospel lesson is that once you can see with the eyes of Christ, with the eyes of faith, once you have chosen to add the adjective "Christian" to your self-description, then, Jesus says, "*go to the lost sheep*" I imagine that only with the eyes of Christ can we truly see who is lost and who is found.