

**Climb & See ~ There IS a Vision!**  
Sermon on Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4 & Luke 19:1-9  
Sunday November 4, 2007  
Trinity United, Ottawa  
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Climb and Wait! Climb and Listen! Climb Every Day and You Will See!

The despised tax collector Zacchaeus, feeling guilty and isolated, climbs up a tree to look for the Lord, and he sees Jesus coming. His faith-full effort is rewarded with a personal holy encounter. Zacchaeus receives the forgiveness and opportunity to repent that restores him to 'the fullness of life.' Salvation. Healing. Wholeness.

The prophet Habakkuk, amidst strife and contention, injustice and destruction, challenges God with angry questions and then climbs the ramparts to a solitary watchtower where he awaits God's response. His faith-full effort is followed by an experience of God's assurance that there IS still a saving vision. Given in plain words the prophet can write large on a sign - a billboard clear enough to be seen by anyone running by.

*Trust in God's plan for salvation.*

*God's healing and wholeness comes to those who practise faith.*

Whatever our own life's dilemma, our community's current dissent and contention, our world's destruction - faith recalls us to the truth that each problem is God's to resolve! Not ours alone. And God will! Not God alone. But God with us ...Emmanuel.

Here is the promise in our stories today: If we will but climb in faith and practise patience in the moment while we wait, the God-way forward will be revealed to **us** too. Hasn't it always been so? The Bible - and my own experience - tells **me** so.

But we have to climb! We have to actively climb up out of our ego-powered place -

our 'I want, I need, I will' place, to get to a God perspective on how each of us fits into the Almighty's inclusive 'We.' Only the steep and challenging steps of committed spiritual practises will lift us up to see what the 'God in us' can see - the Vision of Christ's Kingdom actually coming.

Outside of faith, we see our everyday existence from the huddled down perspective of our frightened little egos, our small 's' self. Our lonely ego is unaware of our capital S Spirit self, right there. And cut off from our vision of God's presence...also always right here.

To escape the tunnelled down view of our fearful ego, we have to get ourselves up to a place where we can see with our God perspective. We need to get to our highest power, and see again how 'I' am a tiny perfect part of the Almighty 'We,' like a star in the sky, fitting brilliantly into the salvation cosmology.

It is difficult to experience this perspective when we are spiritual couch potatoes, expecting to be fed where we sit. Although God can appear to us by grace even in front of the computer screen or TV, usually we have to climb up and do our spiritual exercises to be open to God's vision. We need to pray or meditate, read or sing, play, dance or chant - or even walk up stairs with our focus on the Holy in each moment. Like the exercises we do for our physical and emotional health, any spiritual practise that gets us moving is good.

In her scholarship about successful mainline Christian churches today, Diana Butler-Bass shares the evidence that "Programs don't make Christians. Practices do." The health and salvation of our church lies this way. As a community, in some regular way, we all need to practise some stretching exercises of spiritual growth and self awareness...to struggle out of the straight-jacket of our lazy, frightened egos and practise connecting with our strong Spirit perspective.

Some of us are starting a new spiritual practise this week, "Living the Heart of

Christianity.” It is a small group spiritual journey, engaging not just our heads but our hearts and our everyday spiritual lives with each other. Its not just a book study.

My husband Bob has been following a daily spiritual reading and meditation practise for a couple of months called ‘A Course In Miracles.’ You may have heard of it? The day this sermon germinated, he read me his Lesson 71 from the Course. The gist of it was: Your ego has set up a plan in opposition to God’s. The ego’s plan centres on holding grievances and making salvation dependent on other people making changes, rather than you. Your ego’s plan will not work. Only God’s plan for salvation will work. If you attempt to follow both, you will be confused and fail and be miserable.

The practise to repeat during that day was to choose God’s plan over the ego’s plan for saving our self. We were to do this by asking God challenging questions like Habakkuk did, and then listen for the answers:

“What would You have me do?”

“Where would You have me go?”

“What would You have me say, and to whom?”

To ask these questions and anticipate following the answers, is to be faithful. To climb out of our ego place and up into our Spirit perspective, ready to follow the way God points.

This way Salvation!

In scripture circle on Wednesday morning, our conversation inevitably drifted to last Sunday’s strife and contention around the difficult JNAC decision. Perhaps we need to practise stopping to pray and listen more often during our meetings? David McLellan suggested that “Everyone in Trinity needs to climb a tower and listen for what God wants...to climb a tower every time we vote. If we just vote on “what I

want,” all we get is a majority vote of egos.”

It will take us all a lot of spiritual practising to achieve that form of decision-making in our church, and in our lives. But I believe it is God’s way forward, and has always shown the God way forward for the faithful.

Shall we commit to stretching our capacity to climb...and encourage each other up the stairs to heaven on earth...and even at church? Whenever we feel dissent, discouragement, confusion and frustration, we might institute a new Robert’s rule, a new spiritual discipline to practise. Our new call to prayer might be “Let us stop and climb our tree” or “To your watchtowers Trinity!”

Faith is willingness and commitment to climb again and again, growing stronger in patience and broader in vision. Let us get our spiritual exercise, individually each day, and weekly as a team. Let’s all climb up and get a God perspective, where we will see that there IS still a saving vision. A vision of healing and full life - for you, for me - for Trinity.

Like Habakkuk and Zachaeus, let’s Climb and See!