



Christ • Communion • Community

# CASCADIAN WEEKLY

September 30, 2022

Week 133

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Cascade Christian Church,

We have gotten used to living in a pandemic. We know about vaccines, boosters, COVID tests, and mask wearing. But there is another epidemic going on, one of loneliness. I would guess that no matter our age or stage of life, we all feel lonely or alone at times. Jesus understands that feeling, and there were times when he went off to be alone with God the Father, but at other times, when no one understood him, when he was being questioned, or when the disciples deserted him, Jesus was very much alone.

This condition was foretold about Jesus by the prophet Isaiah - **"He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief."** Isaiah 53:3. Jesus understands our loneliness.

It is not God's intent for people to be alone. From our beginnings in Genesis we have been created to be in relationships, to be in community, to be one people, God's people. I appreciate how the church has responded to bridge building as we have spent the month of September looking at unity. Several of you have told me how you are working to build bridges, especially with those who disagree with you. I will be the first to acknowledge bridge building is not easy, it takes effort and heavy lifting, but we are called as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to be a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As followers of Jesus - we bridge the divides that cause loneliness.

I am so encouraged by the work of the church in reaching out, and there are many ways you can be a bridge builder and reach out to people who are hurting and lonely. Briefly, here are a few of the ways the church is bridging the loneliness gap:

- Operation Santa Claus - I know it isn't even Halloween yet, but efforts are underway to bring the joy of Christmas to families in need. Operation Santa Claus is a community effort that makes a personalized Christmas for the children in our community who would otherwise go without. People are needed to make this happen - people to call families and see if they would like help, people who can organize the gift giving, people who can deliver Christmas tins of treats to our elderly folks who can't get out much. There are many levels of involvement, and a great need to finance all of this. Make Christmas a blessing for someone else, and watch for more information on Operation Santa Claus.
- And speaking of Halloween, Trunk or Treat is Sunday, October 30. This is one of the simplest ways we can reach out to our community, and we have so much fun doing it! Amber Elliott and Adam Carlson are working on this - and we hope you'll participate.
- Our elders are alleviating loneliness by making communion visits again. This hasn't happened in over 2 years! Thanks be to God for the lessening of the COVID virus and that we are able to visit our older members. At this time sixteen of our older members are being visited at least once a month by thirteen of our elders. What a joy! If you would like to have communion brought to you, or if you would like to be part of the visitation team, please call the church office.
- You are invited to the many events that happen at the church - and I invite you to a new Bible study on Wednesday nights called "You Are Never Alone" focused on the Gospel of John, written by Max Lucado. Max makes the deep things of God understandable in his very readable style of writing, and the study is only six or seven sessions long. Think about it - you get to learn more about the God who is always with you, and hang out with a group of great people. Please join us on the second floor of the Education Building from 6:30-8:00PM on Wednesday nights.

While we all have lonely moments, it doesn't have to last, you have a family at Cascade Christian Church. You have a church community that cares, and you have Jesus as Lord and Savior. He reminds us in Matthew 28:20 - **"I am with you always, to the end of the age."** We are never alone; thanks be to God.

Keep the faith, build that bridge, and see you in church,

Jill

## WEEKLY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<u>Sunday (10/2).</u>	Pre K-5th grade Sunday School and Crib Room- 9:30 AM 6th-12th grade Sunday School - 11:00 AM Alcoholics Anonymous - 7:00 PM (Coffee House)
<u>Monday (10/3).</u>	Alcoholics Anonymous - 8:00 PM (Coffee House)
<u>Tuesday (10/4).</u>	Women's Bible Study 9:00 AM Senior Exercise Class - 1:00 PM
<u>Wednesday (10/5).</u>	Men's Bible Study - 6:30 AM (Coffee House) Overeaters Anonymous 3:30 PM Wednesday night classes - 6:00 PM Boy Scouts - 7 PM (Centennial Hall) Alcoholics Anonymous - 8:00 PM (Coffee House)
<u>Thursday (10/6).</u>	Grief Share 10:00 AM Senior Exercise Class - 1:00 PM Al-Anon - 8:00 PM (Coffee House)
<u>Friday (10/7).</u>	Church Office Closed Open Talk Group - 7:30 AM
<u>Saturday (10/8).</u>	Rippling Hope Days for Girls

**Financial giving for  
the week ending in  
9/25/2022:  
Budgeted: \$10,652  
Given: \$10,640**

## GENERAL NEWS

### THANK YOU CAITLIN OKE

Our Office Manager, Caitlin Oke, has taken a full-time position with Kentwood Public Schools. Caitlin has been a joy to work with in the year she has been here, and we wish her well in her new career. Thursday, September 29 will be her last day with us. If you would like to donate to a love-offering in her honor, please send your gift to the church by October 1 and we will make sure it gets to Caitlin. Godspeed and best wishes to Caitlin!

### PINE REST CARD MINISTRY

The Social Action and Mission Outreach team is sponsoring a new ministry to provide nine adults in the foster care system with cards and/or letters for Holidays and Birthdays. These men and women live in the Westwood Home at Pine Rest, and would love to be remembered with a card or letter in the mail. "Receiving mail is a rare treat", says Kathy Bird-Deyoung, their chaplain. She has witnessed the anticipation of weekly trips to the mail room, in hopes of an envelope with their name on it. Kathy and her husband, Mark, asked SAMO to help find some friends from CCC. Can you help bring cheer to one of these adults? If so, please choose a man or woman to send a birthday and holiday cards to this next year. It could be a family project, including children and adults. Depending on each individuals ability, you may get a response! Please prayerfully consider this outreach opportunity and contact:

Mark DeYoung: • Kmbdeyoung@gmail • Marks cell# 616-581-8282 Or  
Carol Tiemeyer: • carol.tiemeyer@yahoo.com • Carol's cell# 616-304-2268

# GENERAL NEWS

## SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS:

The church board met via Zoom on 9/22/22. Here is a summary of what we discussed.

- Finances: Our Business Manager is keeping a close eye on income as compared to expenses. We are close to budget, but giving is currently down. Hoping that we will be blessed with giving over budget as we were last year.
- Orange Street House: A family of four adults is now in the house. They are refugees from the Congo. We are helping them in partnership with Samaritas.
- Board Meeting Time Change: Voted to change meeting time from 7:00 to 6:00.
- Investments: A total of \$110,000 has been moved out of our Huntington Money Market Account to fund new term share certificates (what others refer to as CDs) with America's Christian Credit Union. Kudos to Mark Langenbach, our Business Manager, and the Administration Ministry team for getting a higher interest rate on our cash reserves.
- CDC: The CDC board let us know that they were going to increase wages in hope to attract and retain staff. CCC board supported this.
- Candidate for Ministry: Approved supporting Adam Carlson as a candidate for ministry. He is enrolled in Phillips Theological Seminary. We are excited to come alongside him as he pursues his degree in ministry.
- Pastor Search Team: We received an update on the planned tasks from the chair of the Pastor Search Team. We will be working with our Regional Minister, Teresa Dulyea Parker, to find candidates.
- Church events: Heritage Day - CCC hosted this on September 10th and it went very well. Disciples Regional Meeting - CCC will be hosting on October 14-15.

Note: There was no Board Meeting in August due to multiple vacations. Our next Board Meeting will be October 20th in Centennial Hall at 6:00. This is the planned in-person meeting for the quarter. Any and all congregational members are welcome to attend.

Terri Wing, Church Board Secretary

## RIPPLING HOPE WORKDAY: SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8 FROM 8:00AM-8:00PM

All are invited to join Michael Dirksen and Adam Carlson as they bring our youth to Rippling Hope in Detroit. Rippling Hope is one of the missions we support, and we need work crews for office work, outdoor yard work, and people who can do skilled labor/home repairs. Please call the church office or email Michael at [mdirksen@cascadechristian.com](mailto:mdirksen@cascadechristian.com) or Adam at [acarson@cascadechristian.com](mailto:acarson@cascadechristian.com)

## REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

Keynote speaker; Rev. De. Bruce Reyes-Chow

Go to [www.michigandisciples.org/event/cciw-ccmr-regional-assembly](http://www.michigandisciples.org/event/cciw-ccmr-regional-assembly) for more information or to register

Regional Assembly Schedule

- Friday October 14 6-7:30 pm - Worship Rev. Dr. Bruce Reyes-Chow live stream
- Saturday, October 15th
  - 10:00 AM- Business Session, Fellowship, and Mission Projects
  - 1:00 PM - Workshops

## TRUNK-OR-TREAT

We invite everyone in the church to bring their vehicle to the church Sunday, October 30th for truck-or-treat. We welcome families in the community to come view our super fun, yet not scary decorated vehicles and get some yummy treats! Please be a part of this special event! Vehicles will be judged for best decorated, best creativity and best laugh and win a prize and 2022 truck-or-treat bragging rights all year long! Please have your vehicle parked in the parking lot at 1:30 PM and the event begins at 2:00 PM. Email or call the church office to register or contact Amber Elliott with any questions.

# CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

## SUNDAY SCHOOL

Every week kids PreK through 5th grade will start in the Sanctuary and participate in opening worship in the 9:30 service. They will be dismissed from there to go up with Adam Carlson and his merry band of volunteers to the Elementary room, where they will have Sunday School. Pickup will be in the Elementary room at the end of the service. As a side note, if you would like to join Adam's merry band of volunteers, please let him know! You can find his contact information on the church website. We're currently working our way through LifeWay's Gospel Project. It is a journey through the Bible where we hear about how God has worked with humanity to keep us in step with Him. Every week, the story connects back to Jesus, so we can always remember what He has done and is doing to keep us in step with God.



## CRIB ROOM

The Crib Room is open for kids who aren't yet old enough to join the fun in the Elementary Sunday School. Children will be well-cared for in a safe environment with our amazing staff. Our crib room is available from 9:15 through 12 noon.

## WEDNESDAY JUBILEE

Our midweek program Wednesday Jubilee is back, every Wednesday from 6:30-8:00PM! We will be working in concert with our Sunday School curriculum, strengthening the lesson we learned on Sunday, and having great fun in the process. Everyone Kindergarten through 5th grade is welcome to join us for a night of engaging Bible study and fun.



## PARENTS' NIGHT OUT

We provide a night of free childcare for parents once every month! For a few hours on a Friday night, parents can have some time to themselves. Go on a date, run errands, or just nap in the car! And don't worry, dinner is provided. The next Parents' Night Out is scheduled for October 28, from 6:00-8:00PM. If you would like your children to attend, please go to: [tinyurl.com/CascadePNO](https://tinyurl.com/CascadePNO)

# MIDDLE SCHOOL & HIGH SCHOOL

## SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School meets regularly during the 11:00am Service in the High School Youth Room. We will be starting a new series in the fall, but until then we will be mirroring the lessons done in the 9:30 Sunday School Class. We would love for everyone to join us!

## WEDNESDAY NIGHT YOUTH GROUP

Wednesday night youth group is back! Youth Group goes from 6:30-8:00PM and is open to students 6th grade through 12th grade. We hope to see you there!

## MIDDLE SCHOOL MADNESS

The next Middle School Madness will be October 28 from 7:00-9:00PM. Join us for a night of fellowship, food, and fun!

## 9.25.2022 SERMON: BRIDGE BUILDERS THROW A PARTY

Good morning church, God calls us to be Bridge Builders as we seek to be people fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus and find our unity in Him. Jesus was the ultimate bridge builder, bridging the gap between us and God, and as followers of Christ we have been given what we need bridge the chasms in our relationships. As bridge builders - we have the Bible as our blueprint and the example of Jesus Christ to inspire us.

Colossians 3:12-14 is a good place to start as a builder of bridges. **Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.** This verse tells us to put up with each other, forgive each other, and to love one another. Last week we looked at the parable of the Good Samaritan as an example of reaching out and bridging the divide with enemies, and while that is challenging, we have the nine graces of the Holy Spirit to help us. You find these gifts or graces in Galatians 5:22-23 **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.** Using the Bible as our blueprint and using our spiritual toolbox of the gifts of the Spirit, we're now look to the next step in the process. Rebuilding is a key component to bridging the gap and mending those relationships in your life that need extra work.

Bridges work best when they are strong and well-constructed. The Mackinac Bridge can withstand high winds, blizzards, rough waters, and still keep people safe and connected. The Mighty Mac's towers are 155 high, and our bridge is 5 miles long, but it is not the longest or tallest bridge in the world. There is a bridge in China that is 102 miles long, and in France there is a bridge that is 1104 feet high. But bridges don't have to be high or long to be effective. Think the Camel Hump bridge and the Cascade Road bridge over the Thornapple River. Many of us wouldn't have been able to drive here today without those sturdy bridges.

Bridge building for Christians means spanning the divides between us, making our relationships with God and each other strong. My guess is that there are bridges we need to build, and bridges we need to cross. In our humanness, we have had fights, disagreements, hurts, sometimes over a small misunderstanding, sometimes over a big issue. Broken human relationships hurt, so let repair them and rebuild.

Near Saranac in Ionia County you'll find White's Bridge. It's a covered bridge, a reminder of a bygone era of horses and buggies, of not traveling everywhere at 60 miles per hour. Maybe you've had a relationship that is like a covered bridge, long lasting, timeless, a relationship that has been through a lot and yet still stands. But even those relationships can be fragile. White's Bridge was built in 1869, it was so sturdy you could still drive a car across it. Sadly this beautiful bridge was destroyed by an arson in 2013. Someone with ill intent, destroyed a master work. But because people cared, this bridge was rebuilt with an almost exact duplicate in 2020. Just like a single match can destroy a bridge that has long stood, and a single word can destroy a relationship. Rebuilding relationships takes time and effort, and a lots of humility, but like rebuilding a bridge, it's worth it. Look to the example of Jesus, who bridges the divide between us and God. With Jesus as our example, we can take action and be intentional in building and rebuilding broken families and friendships.

Let me tell you a preacher story about rebuilding. Charles Spurgeon and Joseph Parker were famous preachers who had churches in London in the 19th century. Their churches cared for the poor, for the widowed, and the orphaned. On one Sunday, Parker commented on the poor condition of children admitted to Spurgeon's orphanage, but it was reported to Spurgeon that Parker had criticized the orphanage itself. The next Sunday came around and Spurgeon blasted Parker from his pulpit. He defended the orphanage he worked with, and he gave it to his critic. This attack was printed in the newspaper and became the talk of the town. It helped church attendance as people flocked to Parker's church the next Sunday to hear his rebuttal. But Reverend Parker did something no one saw coming. He said - "I understand Dr. Spurgeon is not in his pulpit today, and this is the Sunday they use to take an offering for the orphanage. I suggest we

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take a love offering here instead." The crowd was delighted, here was their leader, reaching out in love to do God's work. The people gave generously - the ushers had to empty the collection plates three times. Later that week there was a knock on Reverend Parker's study door. It was Reverend Spurgeon. Spurgeon came to his clergy brother in humility - and said, "You know Parker, you have practiced grace on me. You have given me not what I deserved; you have given me what I needed."

This is a powerful story of action, of a man willing to build a bridge rather than dig a wider chasm. Pastor Parker could've so easily furthered the divide by caving into the cultural pressure around him, by attacking Spurgeon as Spurgeon had attacked him. But he didn't, instead he chose the way of grace and compassion. He went above and beyond; he rebuilt a burned bridge. And Spurgeon chose to walk across that bridge, he chose to humble himself and do the right thing, and cross the divide that Parker had offered. In the words of Spurgeon himself, "You have given me not what I deserved, you have given me what I needed."

Friends, when bridges of broken relationships are rebuilt, and when people cross them, that is a cause for celebration. Scripture tells us there is rejoicing when the lost are found, when the sinner repents, when the broken are healed, when bridges are made and crossed. Think of the story of Zacchaeus. Jesus built such a bridge to him! He bridged the way for the despised tax collector, and reminded Zacchaeus of who he is in the eyes of God. Let me share with you Luke 19:1-10: Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short, he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

**When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "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 to save the lost."** Jesus saves the lost, and then he celebrates with them. He ate at Zacchaeus house, He hung out with a sinner, and made it so the sinner could cross the gap, bridge the divides, and be as one with God and with his neighbors. We are called to do the same.

In John 10:10 Jesus tells us: **The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.** Friends, I'm not sure that we're doing a very good job in sharing this good news of Jesus. He has come that we might have life, full life, abundant life. And so many people don't see that in us. They can't see any bridges coming from Christians, they mostly see walls and barricades. Jesus has come to bridge the divides, and invites us to do the same, and then to celebrate! Listen to these stories from Luke 15:1-10: **Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."**

Then Jesus told them this parable: "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

God rejoices over our repentance; I can imagine the angels in heaven dance with joy when the lost are found. When relationships are restored, there is cause for celebration! And what a lesson for the crowd - there were sinners and tax collectors like Zacchaeus right there, listening to Jesus, and so were the Pharisees and teachers of the law - these were

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the important religious people of the day who were so sure they were right, and others were wrong. There is more joy in heaven over one messed up person who finds Jesus, than over 99 people who think they have Jesus so figured out that they think they can judge others. The party, the celebration, is for the one who was lost, and then is found. The party can happen because the shepherd didn't stop looking. The shepherd sought the sheep, found it, and then carried it home. That is a powerful image of Jesus, looking for us, looking out for us, finding us when all seems lost, finding us when we're far from home, caring for us in the pain and dangers that are part of life, and then carrying us, getting us through, getting us home. And we celebrate - because He loves us, He wants us, and we are with Him.

Jesus explained this again to the same crowd in the Parable of the Lost Coin in Luke 15:8-10: **"Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."**

Ten silver coins is 10 days wages, in modern terms, your two weeks paycheck. In this story, the woman makes the bridge by shedding some light on the problem, cleaning it up, searching until she finds. She then gets back what she had lost because of the efforts she made. And when the lost is found, she gets her friends together to have a party because she is so happy to have found what was missing. Jesus says there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels when there is repentance.

Several weeks ago Adam Carlson spoke on the parable of the Lost Son. He did a brilliant job, and I'm guessing you all remember the story Jesus told of a boy who asks for his inheritance, leaves dad and brother at home, goes off and parties, runs out of money and friends, ends up humiliated, and decides to go home, hoping his dad will take him back as a servant. It is interesting that Dad is watching the road, and that he didn't go out and look for his son. Dad knew the best move on his part as a father was to watch, and wait for his boy. Eventually dad sees someone in the distance with a familiar walk, he had seen those feet take their first steps. He looks closer, maybe seeing hair the same color as his wife's, maybe the beginnings of a beard similar to his own. That is his son, slowly walking up the road, hesitant, wondering what reception he'll get. What the boy gets is dad running down the road to meet him, what the boy gets is a robe and sandals, a ring for his finger, a feast in his honor, a party because the lost was found.

The decision that the prodigal son made led to turmoil for himself and for his family. The decisions we make can feel good for a moment, but in the end, they sometimes lead to heartache, a burned bridge, not only for you but also for those around you. Sin is never an isolated matter; it has ripple effects that travel much further than any of us can know.

A sin we all might be guilty of is wasting what we have been given. Are you doing your part in bridge building? Or are you waiting for someone to build a bridge to you? The shepherd acted and found his sheep, and then threw a party. The woman lit her lamp, swept her house, found her coin, and invited her friends to celebrate. The father in the story of the prodigal son could have turned his back on his boy, locking up his heart and closing the door, but he didn't - he ran and welcomed his son home. None of them wasted the opportunity. In the story of the two pastors, Parker built the bridge, Spurgeon chose to cross it, and the orphanage was blessed with abundance, with a party.

You and I have similar choices to make with the gifts we've been given. We can use them for good, to build up the family of God, but we can also use them just for ourselves. We can squander them on things that don't matter, things that won't last, or be apathetic, and just not care. So today, are you wasting time and opportunities to do some good? Are you squandering the possibilities to right some wrongs? What are you doing with what God has freely given you? It might be time to consider a different path, a different use for the gifts you've been given.

We all have a little "prodigal" in us. Some of us are blessed with a profession, with money, with a gift of singing or dancing or athletics. But we waste the gifting on things that please us - the praise of others, amassing money, a title, a

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career. There's nothing wrong with achieving things, but if done only for yourself, with selfish intent - you're burning a bridge. These parables of the lost being found have a similar theme - rebuilding. The Prodigal Son wises up, Luke says, "But when he came to himself," as if to say when he finally woke up. He decided to return and try and make things right. He rehearsed to himself how he would publicly apologize to his father, giving us an example of repentance and confession. To repent means to turn, to turn around. As we seek to mend broken relationships, that might be one of the first steps. Do you like where the brokenness and misunderstanding has taken you? Do you want to carry the hurt, the guilt, the anger? God doesn't want that for you either, Jesus came to give you life, not guilt. Making a turn around and building a bridge is not for the faint of heart. It's no easy or simple task and it will cost you. With that said, it's worth doing and worth celebrating. If it wasn't, would God have sent his only Son to die on your behalf?

So let's throw a party! When a divine bridge is built or rebuilt, there is great rejoicing in heaven. It may be difficult to imagine heaven, but it's easy to imagine the party at the end of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. It's easy to imagine Jesus celebrating at Zacchaeus home. When the lost are found, when the bridge is built, everyone is welcomed, and not just welcomed back, but welcomed back to an absolute party with everyone in the Father's household. Jesus responds in the same way for each of us. No matter how far we walk away, when we come to our senses and come home, Jesus is waiting with open arms to welcome us. The grace and mercy Jesus shows us is the greatest example of how we too should respond to one another. He doesn't shame us with all our wrongdoing, he welcomes us, restores us, and helps us back onto the path of doing the right thing.

So here's the challenge for all of us in rebuilding or bridging relationships:

First, are we willing to recognize our wrongdoing and the potential hurt we may have caused and then to respond with action and humility? Are we willing to ask for help? Can we turn from our own ways and put our hands to building bridges rather than digging wider chasms? Simply put, this means we ask for forgiveness.

And secondly, how do we respond when others come to seek reconciliation and forgiveness? In our stories from Luke 15, the shepherd, the woman, and the father respond with a shocking amount of grace, love, and compassion. They respond with joy, and they threw a party! For many of us, it would be easy to respond in anger and frustration. Similar to how Charles Spurgeon responded to Pastor Parker in my opening story, so many of us want to "get back" at others and make sure they hurt like we hurt.

This may make sense to the world, but this is not the way of Jesus. In Christ, we welcome those who've hurt us. We are to welcome their apologies and offer forgiveness to them. And when we've burnt the bridge, we ask for forgiveness and rebuild. Just like our heavenly Father forgave us. So we build bridges, throw parties, and celebrate when someone - anyone, including us - is willing to travel the path of repentance and grace.

Many of us have gone our own way, tried to do things by ourselves, and turned our backs on family, loved ones, relationships, and even God. Then we came to a point where we knew it was time to go home, time to come down from the tree. And maybe we're at a point now where we can see we need to build bridges, sweep the house, find the sheep, light a lamp, and throw a party. Who are you in these stories, the son, the sheep, the coin, Zacchaeus? Or are you the shepherd, the woman, the father? At different times in our lives we are the lost, and other times we get to go and find. Some of us get lost and have to return again and again, and that's okay. The work Jesus has done, the bridge He has built is strong and well-able to accommodate an innumerable number of travelers, and He gives us the high road of forgiveness and repentance. May our response, and the response of others be that of Spurgeon, "You have given me not what I deserved, you have given me what I needed." Not what I deserved, Lord, but what I needed. Let's rebuild, and celebrate when the lost are found. Amen and amen.