

What I carry with me

October 30, 2022, 2 Thessalonians 1: 1-4, 11-12 & Luke 19: 1-10

Another morning and I wake with thirst
for the goodness I do not have. I walk
out to the pond and all the way God has
given us such beautiful lessons. Oh Lord,
I was never a quick scholar but sulked
and hunched over my books past the hour
and the bell; grant me, in your mercy,
a little more time. Love for the earth
and love for you are having such a long
conversation in my heart. Who knows what
will finally happen or where I will be sent,
yet already I have given a great many things
away, expecting to be told to pack nothing,
except the prayers which, with this thirst,
I am slowly learning.
(Mary Oliver)

Just as Paul and Silvanus and Timothy prayed for the people of church in Thessalonica
Dorrie and I are now praying for you, beloved members, and friends of Trinity Church:

*Grace to you and peace from God our Parent, Spirit our Inspiration, and Jesus our brother.
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 surrounding communities of faith for your
steadfastness during all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring. To this
end we always pray for you, asking that our God will make you and us worthy of God's call
and will fulfill by God's power every good resolve and work of faith.*

How grateful I am today for all the gifts that you have brought and are continuing to bring
to this day. The love I have for every one of you is increasing, even as I take this step away
from you. This is a long conversation in my heart.

I am so grateful that today we got to hear this strong worded letter from Paul to a long ago
people that speaks so eloquently to us in our time of transition. And I am so grateful that
we also got that action packed story of Zaccheaus, the rich tax collector, a real life example
of the tax collector we heard about last week – the man who knew where he had “fallen
short” and needed to pray for mercy. Here he is today, a short fellow climbing that old
sycamore tree, to get a better look at Jesus, so Jesus could get a good look at him.

Well we might not be looking down from a sycamore tree but what are we doing today?

We are releasing each other from our promises. We are bringing gifts of hope, song,
forgiveness, prayer and an ever deepening faith.

From the limb I am standing on here in the pulpit I can see that you and I came today to be seen and welcomed into the Enormous Heart (which if it isn't already one of God's names it sure should be.)

Zaccheus had to give away much of what he accumulated in his life in order to expand his soul. The poet was told to pack light so that she could carry the most important things on her spiritual journey.

Today I am giving back to God what was given to me when Dorrie and I came to sojourn with you for what started as a moment and became a decade. I am giving the gift of the life I received as your pastor back to you and back to the Enormous Heart of God so we can all move forward to a bright new day.

What I am carrying away with me into retirement will take a lifetime to digest and to celebrate. Like the poet I wish that I had more time to speak about them all today.

My precious relationships with you. My awe at seeing your and my faith grow abundantly. Everything you taught me about how to be your pastor, your preacher, and your religious leader. Every Friday night supper. Every encounter at the clothes closet and on the street.

The trials we went through that shaped all of us. How what we endured made us who we are. The ways we prayed together in times of joy and of suffering, times of grief and amazement.

The greatest gifts that I am packing up and carrying with me are "the prayers which, with this thirst, I am slowly learning."

One of you said to me "Marguerite you have been telling us about this transition for three months now. We got it!" What we've got is a powerful thirst for mercy and justice and a powerful trust that God has something really good in store for all of us.

Dorrie and I began our time with you ten years ago, almost to the day. That Sunday we shared great worship and a great party downstairs in the fellowship hall. Today we are getting to worship and party together one more time. As Jesus demonstrated over and over again, it is time to get off the limb we are sitting on and have a celebration. Hallelujah!