

THE TOWER

SEPTEMBER 2013

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GUEST SERMON

“From Here to There”

by

Joan Pierce

July 28, 2013



Dear family of God: Jesus said, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am in the midst of them.” As we have a little more than that number, we can be sure to feel his presence here today.

Except for his visit to the temple when he was twelve in the second chapter of Luke, nothing in the Gospels tells anything of his life before his baptism. Life in Judea would have revolved around his carpentry, his family, and the worship of God. The laws of Moses in the Torah were ever present in Hebrew lives.

Luke 4:16 tells of his first appearance as a preacher in the synagogue. He read the words of Isaiah telling of the coming of a Messiah and stated that this prophecy was being fulfilled in him. The response was very negative. The congregation converged on him, took him to a hill, and attempted to throw him off. Not a good beginning.

The Old Testament contains dozens of instances where God had direct contact with humans. From Abraham and Moses through Jeremiah and the prophets, it was not unusual for divine messages to be revealed.

Throughout the generations many imposters had claimed to be this Messiah. Dishonest men, magicians, and those seeking glory performed tricks and spun great tales for their own ambition. People were naturally skeptical. Was this just another faker?

Jesus simply began teaching and preaching to those who would listen. He had a completely new message: “God is love, repent, the kingdom of God is at hand, love your enemies, if you are struck on one cheek, turn the other. Lay up your treasures in heaven, not on earth.” He spoke in parables, easily understood stories with a moral message all directed to bringing the people closer to seeing God as a Father. He healed the sick, cured the lepers, the blind regained their sight, and the lame walked. Strong stuff. Gradually reports of these miracles exploded through Judea and the people thronged to him.

He met Simon and Andrew, his brother, by a lake and asked them to take him in their boat a little way from land so he could have space to speak to the crowd that was following him. When he finished speaking he told the men to put out into the deep and cast their nets. They said they had toiled all night and taken nothing, but they would try. After the nets came up so full they were breaking and help was needed to empty them, Simon fell down at Jesus's knees saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man." Jesus said to him, "Do not be afraid, you will be catching men. You shall be called Peter."

From that time on, Peter became a constant presence. He was a brave man who totally believed in Jesus. Whenever the scriptures mention Jesus interacting with the twelve disciples, the first name after his is Peter. When Jesus was seen walking on the water to their boat and told him to come, he climbed out of the boat and began walking. When he became afraid he began to sink and Jesus said his faith was not strong enough. He was the first to believe that Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus told him he had not learned this on his own, but that knowledge had come from God.

Over the next weeks he gathered the twelve men who would be his primary disciples. Consider the choices these men had to make. They were grown men, some of whom had lived rough lives. Their bodies were strong and their hands hard. They would leave all that was familiar and strike out into the unknown with this charismatic man. This meant abandoning their families, their jobs, and their security. They were not rich, and they would face poverty and a hand to mouth existence. It required a great deal of faith to make that decision. Their belief in Jesus must have been profound. He, in turn, would take on the task of leading twelve mature men with different personalities on an unmarked trail into the future.

When their journey began it was on foot. Jesus instructed them to wear sandals and only one tunic. They were to bring only a staff; no bread, no bag, and no money.

How many miles they must have covered as they walked from here to there in those years. The scriptures mention the washing of feet many times. How did they stay healthy? Judea is hot. Ninety-degree weather is the norm and rainfall rare. These twelve men had no idea where they would eat or sleep. They were homeless.

They witnessed daily miracles. Soon their duties included crowd control. Feeding five thousand with five baskets of barley loaves and two fish. Still, when asked by Jesus who they thought he was, all but Peter answered, "John the Baptist, or Elijah, or

Jeremiah, returned to earth.” When Jesus spoke of his ultimate destiny of arrest, trial, and death, they were not able to understand.

Human nature being what it is, there must have been a certain amount of jockeying for position and closeness among these twelve men. In Mark 9:33 after he arrived at Capernaum, he asked the twelve what they had been talking about on the way. They remained silent because they had discussed with one another who was the greatest. He sat down and said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all, and servant of all.” In Mark 10:35 the brothers James and John came to him and requested the right and left hand seats beside him when he came into his glory. Jesus responded, “To sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared. For the Son of Man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom to many.”

Jesus had the ability to turn aside petty differences without offending or choosing sides. To be leader, mentor, teacher, friend, and diplomat. Sometimes his patience failed. One time a father brought a boy suffering from epilepsy to the disciples to be cured, but they were unable to help him. They appealed to Jesus and he said, “O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? Bring him to me.” Any parent would recognize his feelings.

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Not too long ago we sat in a circle upstairs in Stoddard Hall and tried to decide exactly what was going to happen to Park Church. Short on money, divided on what was best for our congregation, and not that familiar with each other, the direction we would take would have far-reaching consequences.

We had just experienced the trauma of losing our home of over a hundred years at Russell Street, and the future loomed uncertainly before us. We were in the same position as the disciples.

We also struck out to make our way, holding on to some traditions but changing others. All we had to depend on was our tireless shepherd, Pastor Gary, our dynamic shepherdess, Miss Linda, and ourselves.

So from there, we are here. It was slow going. We landed on our feet in this chapel. Our individual lives usually revolve around health, home, duty, and family. We have added our dedication to continue the good work generations before us have

established here. We are to be God's messengers and helpers. His hands upon the earth.

We are to keep our charities still in place to support those in need. To be a source of information and encouragement to the lifeblood of the church, our children. At this point in their lives, they need a strong Christian foundation. We have to compete with all the distractions of electronic wish fulfillment available to them. They need an inner core of Christian values to protect them in this turbulent world.

We have been blessed with talented members able to fill these needs. Our Sunday School is thriving because of superior teachers. It's a joy to see our young people signing up for Confirmation classes, and those who have been confirmed taking their places beside us at the altar. Dedicated trustees and an outstanding treasurer guard our funds to make them last as long as possible. Do you believe all this has been a happy accident? Have we just been very lucky? Surely, God has been with us throughout the last few years.

My way of getting from here to there is on foot. When you walk, especially by yourself, you have time to think, to reflect, and to plan. Alone, you don't have to match the pace of another person or hold up your end of a conversation, and the atmosphere around you can be totally enjoyed. This is my Father's world to be thoroughly appreciated. The beauty of neighborhood yards so carefully kept. The care taken to plant shrubs and flowers and maintain well-groomed lawns. Poets tell us God is nearer man's heart in a garden than anywhere else on earth. Really look at the trees. Some of them have an undeniable beauty and grace. Try it sometime.

We are here. We can have no possible guess as to what we will find when our funds diminish and we get to there, when more decisions must be made. All we know is when we arrive at that point, we can feel confident that we have tried, with the best of our ability, to fulfill our mission to bring the message of Jesus and the Word of God to all the ears we could reach. Our lives have been blessed by Park Church. Perhaps Park Church has been blessed by our lives. Amen.

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**GAME NIGHT WILL TAKE PLACE ON SATURDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 14,  
AT 7:00PM IN THE LEE ROOM**

Bring your favorite board games! Bring your friends! Bring some snacks! It's lots of fun! Youth and children are especially welcome! It's a great way to socialize!



**DEAR PARK CHURCH,**

It has been nearly five years since I first entered this church, and I have loved every minute of it. The community here is truly a family in every sense of the word, and the support given is inspirational. Thank you to everyone for the support and encouragement I've received involving college. I am proud to say that I will still be a part of this wonderful family come fall when I will be attending Assumption College!

Thank you everyone,  
Josep Rose

**DEAR FRIENDS AT PARK CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,**

We are grateful for your recent Missions donation to Worcester Fellowship and being part of our efforts dedicated to ending isolation by providing spiritual care and by nurturing community. Our ministry for the homeless and at-risk of Worcester, MA, continues because of you!

Worcester Fellowship is about listening, being there, and building up individuals so that we can be in community together. We are lunch, church, and Bible Study on Sundays. We are book groups on Mondays and we are there when someone needs a pastoral visit.

With your continued support, together, we are able to continue our ministry and respond to our community's needs. Again, we thank you for your kind donation and ask that you please keep us in your prayers as you are kept in ours.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Latham, Administrative Director, Worcester Fellowship, Inc.

[On Wednesday, September 11, an Ecclesiastical Council will take place at Trinity Church, Northborough, to accept Worcester Fellowship as a congregation of the Central Association, Massachusetts Conference, United Church of Christ. If accepted, Worcester Fellowship will become the first "church without walls" in the 214-year history of the Conference.]

**THANK YOU TO CHRISTINE WILSON AND ANN LAVALLEE**

. . . for spending many hours cleaning out the files in the church office. There is much more room now in the file cabinets.



DEAR MS. PROULX, MS. JANNELLE LINDQUIST, MS. BRITTANY FISHER, MR. JOSEF ROSE, AND MR. JAMES ROSE,

On behalf of our Board of Directors, our staff, and, most importantly, the veterans we serve, please accept our sincere appreciation for your in-kind donation of sneakers and shoes.

Since our inception, Veterans Inc. has assisted thousands of veterans transition out of homelessness, undertake job training, and, ultimately, stabilize their lives and the lives of their families. Our brave troops--some with post-traumatic stress and other combat-related problems--are returning home to a struggling economy and a bleak job market. The unemployment rate for young male veterans who have served their country since September 2001 is a staggering three times the national average. Veterans Inc. has a goal of lowering that percentage and our staff is uniquely qualified to provide veterans and returning soldiers with the resources they need. Our housing programs and the initiatives have garnered national recognition as examples of changing lives for the better.

With the help of generous supporters like you, we will continue on as one of the largest providers of services for veterans and their families in New England. Once again, we thank you for your support.

Sincerely,  
Marie Krawchuk, Donation Coordinator, Veterans Inc.



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THE CHILDREN'S TOWER  
September 2013



Dear Children,

Well, here we are again getting ready for a CHURCH HOMECOMING! Yep, Sunday, September 8, is our Park Congregational Church **WELCOME BACK SUNDAY!**

Of course, we all know why we call it WELCOME BACK SUNDAY . . . because we have all been "away," right? Away from school, away at the mountains, away at the beach, away in another State, maybe even away in another country. Gone! Bye, bye! A-way! Nobody home! Gonzo! Ah, what a wonderful summer. Those beautiful warm, sunny, restful, "don't have to do anything" days! Sleep late! Stay up late! Totally **AWAY** in the full meaning of the word even if only sitting in your own back yard!

But now it's crunch time! Josep Rose and Matt Proulx going off to college! Miss Brittany, Miss Jannelle, James back to high school. Josh, Justin, Jacob, Miss Samantha, Miss Julie, Miss Jena, Miss Arianna, Miss Jessica, Miss Sarah, Miss Laura, all back to school. Preschool Miss Ceaira and Jacob Cogoli ready to experience a new adventure! Wow! Good thing we have all had a good rest and are now ready to go back to Sunday School and Church. Open up those doors!!! We are coming home! But wait . . . open what doors??

Yes, how happy God is that we have all had a wonderful summer. God has given us those beautiful weeks of freedom and carefree adventures. But you know what? We need not *open* any doors because the doors have never been shut! **GOD HAS BEEN HOME ALL ALONG.** God never takes a vacation. God is always with you whether you are at the beach, mountains, far away or near. God is with you always because your HOME is with God . . . God is always HOME. God never closes the doors. He has always been "home" with you wherever the summer days have taken you and will be with you in all the days ahead.

Thanking God for our earthly and Eternal home . . .

*your friend, Miss Linda*



. . . It has been said before but I believe it needs repeating. **Good kids don't just happen!**

First, parents nurture and care for their children. They teach them right from wrong. They teach them love. Second, they bring them to church to learn about God. They enroll them in Sunday School. There, they learn about God and prayer, the teachings of the Church and Bible. Who is responsible for their spiritual education?

Park Congregational Church is most fortunate and blessed to have the finest teachers in Miss Dee, Miss Lisa, Miss Holly, and Miss Linda. Our Christian Education Committee is second to none. THANK YOU ALL.

"Education Sunday" on June 9, 2013, was very inspirational and full of hope! The planning and hard work by both the teachers and children/youth was very apparent and uplifting. Our future is in the hands of our children . . . with God's help and blessing, Park Congregational Church should continue to be our house of worship for a very long time!

Judy Devoe



. . . Just a note to tell you how much I have enjoyed your heartwarming story in the *CHILDREN'S TOWER*, Summer 2013 issue. I have read it over several times! I can just picture the scene. What a delightful experience for both you, Miss Linda, and the gentleman shopper. I do hope his plant is thriving! I wish all newsletters were as interesting as *THE TOWER*!

. . . "a friend"



*Dear Park Church Family,*

*Though it is impossible for us to formally invite our entire Park Church family to our wedding reception, we would be delighted for you to be with us in the sanctuary of First Baptist Church on Saturday, September 28, 2013, at three o'clock in the afternoon as we celebrate our marriage!*

*Love,  
Kimberly Toney and Dennis Pelkey*

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**MOVIE MATINEE ON  
SEPTEMBER 8 PRESENTS  
THE BLIND SIDE**



Michael Oher is a homeless black teen from the Memphis projects who is taken in by a wealthy white family, and eventually becomes a first-round draft pick and star for the NFL Baltimore Ravens. This real-life inspirational story will keep you cheering with its mix of gridiron action and heartwarming emotion. Sandra Bullock gives an Academy Award-winning performance as the mother who takes Michael into her home and into her heart. Don't forget to bring your brown bag lunch. We meet in the Roy Room following the worship service. The movie begins at 11:30am. The film is suited for youth 13 and older. Everyone is welcome!



### SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

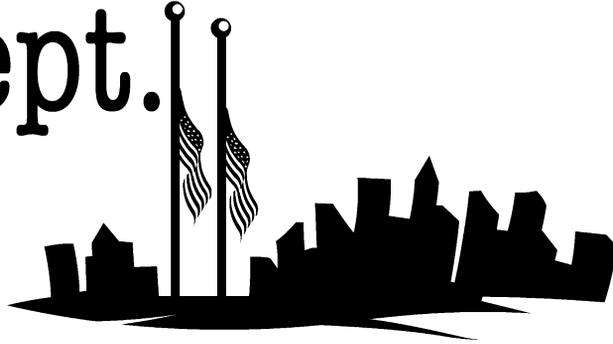
- 2 James Rose
- 3 Fred Mezynski
- 8 Elsie Nichols
- 9 Jacob Baronas
- 10 Sherri Deneault
- 11 Dan Smith
- 12 Eddie Menzigian
- 12 David Rose
- 13 Ron Devoe
- 14 Ted Jordan
- 16 Luis Martinez
- 18 Linda Bogosian
- 18 Holly Proulx
- 19 Matthew Proulx
- 29 Sarah Harris
- 29 Rosemary (Sis) Johnson

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**BIBLE STUDY BEGINS A NEW DAY AND TOPIC IN SEPTEMBER AS WE WILL GATHER ON THE SECOND AND FOURTH THURSDAYS OF THE MONTH TO DISCUSS THE APOSTLE PAUL'S LETTER TO THE COLOSSIANS**

On the Thursdays of September 12 and 26 at 7:00pm, we will come together in the library on the second floor of First Baptist Church to begin a new topic, the apostle Paul's Letter to the Colossians. This short, but important letter in the New Testament remains relevant to the church today as it addresses issues such as false teaching, the person of Jesus Christ, household ethics, and how Christian belief affects behavior and relationships. Everyone is welcome, especially newcomers!

In Remembrance of  
Sept.



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**THE TOWER**

Park Congregational Church  
111 Park Avenue  
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