

Herriet Lindman:

Good morning.

Congregation:

Good morning.

Herriet Lindman:

Welcome to Morning Prayers. Please rise in body or spirit for our responsive reading, Psalm 134.

"Come bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord who stand by night in the House of the Lord."

Congregation:

"Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the Lord."

Herriet Lindman:

"May the Lord, Maker of heaven and earth bless you from Zion." You may be seated.

Choir:

(singing)

LaNell Williams:

Can we consider ourselves good people, if our only incentive to do good is to find our way to heaven?
Can we consider ourselves good people, if our only incentive to do good is to be seen as a good person
in the eyes of man, or even on the surface level, in the eyes of God?

My mother always taught me and my siblings to be good Christians, but what does that actually mean to be good, especially when we're also taught that we're all sinners? What does it say about us as people when we can watch suffering of all kinds and not feel anything? What does it say about us when we can look down on one another and consider ourselves better or superior because of our status, because of our identity, or even because of our religion?

The funny thing is if God is who we believe He is, which is loving and kind, merciful, non-judgmental, forgiving, then accepting ourselves and others for who we are shouldn't actually count against us in the ways that we probably believe in our society. And not only accepting ourselves, but also loving ourselves and others for who we truly are. And some of us think that we're actually doing this, but in reality we're actually not doing this, because many of us strive to be seen as a good person.

So we go through the motions instead of actually accepting ourselves and accepting our hearts as they are in the moment, and working towards embracing and practicing those characteristics that we say that God embodies. Some of us are more enthralled with our titles, with our images, with our brands, and with the things that place us above others. We're enthralled with the things that we believe cause us to be seen by man and also on the surface level, by God. But we forget that at the end of the day, despite what others may feel, despite what man may feel, despite what you might feel about yourself, if God is who we believe He is, then He still knows your intention and He still knows your heart.

Luke 16:15 says, "And Jesus said to them, 'You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your heart for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.'" I believe that some of us believe that we can fool ourselves and that we can fool God, because somehow

along the way we also fold ourselves. But if we take a step back and actually examine ourselves, examine our humanity, examine our imperfections, and then examine our heart as it is, then maybe we can strive to embody those core characteristics that we say that God embodies. Maybe what we mistakenly believe will win us God's favor, and ultimately our entrance into heaven won't be our only incentive for doing good, because it will truly come from the heart and ultimately, hopefully win God's favor. Thank you

Herriet Lindman:

All who are able, please rise for prayer. Let us pray. Eternal God in whom we live and move and breathe and have our being, accept O Lord our thanks and praise for all that You have done for us. We thank You for the splendor of the whole creation, for the beauty of this world, for the wonder of life and for the mystery of love. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Herriet Lindman:

Together let us recite the prayer that Jesus taught us, 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Congregation:

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

Herriet Lindman:

Please join in singing today's hymn number 280 in your Crimson Hymnal, O God, Thou Faithful God.

Congregation/Choir:

(singing).

Herriet Lindman:

Merciful unforgiving God, You know our hearts and all that is in them. Help us to go into Your world doing what You call us to do, only because You call us to do it. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.