**First United Church**

*Seeking to be a welcoming community of Christian faith, proclaiming and celebrating the love of God in Jesus Christ through the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit*

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September 30, 2018 @ 10:30am

*7 Curtis St., St.Thomas, ON N5P 1H3 Phone: (519) 631-7570*

*e-mail: office@1stunitedchurch.ca*

*web: www.1stunitedchurch.ca*

*MINISTERS: ALL THE PEOPLE OF GOD*

*Pastoral Minister: Rev. Emmanuel K. Ofori*

*Music Minister: Jody McDonald-Groulx*

*Secretary/Treasurer: Lori Hoffman*

*Custodian: Dave Luftenegger*

**19th Sunday after Pentecost**

**PREACHER: Rev. Emmanuel K. Ofori**

**\*** You are invited to stand if comfortable doing so

VU = Voices United MV = More Voices

***We Gather Together***

***Choral Prelude***

**MV#88** *“Over My Head”* (2x)

**Over my head, I hear music in the air.**

**Over my head, I hear music in the air.**

**Over my head, I hear music in the air.**

**There must be a God somewhere.**

**MV#18***“Lord Prepare Me…”* (2x)

**Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy tried and true;**

**With thanksgiving, I’ll be a living sanctuary for you.**

***Opening Prayer***

***\*Hymn:* VU#415***“God We Praise You In the Morning”*

***Lighting of the Christ Candle***

***Passing of the Peace*** (VU 958 “Halle, Halle, Halle”)

***Welcome***

***Life and Work of the Church*** (see insert)

***We Draw Near to Worship***

***Call to Worship***

**One: Welcome in the name of the Lord.**

**All: Thank you. We are glad to be here.**

**One: Sometimes we wonder how we have gotten through some difficult situations.**

**All: God has been with us, lifting and comforting our spirits.**

**One: We struggle and worry.**

**All: God’s loving presence sustains and strengthens us.**

**One: Listen for God’s call to you. Open your hearts today to hear God’s word for you.**

**All: Lord, we are listening and seeking your guidance. We open our spirits to receive God’s healing love. AMEN.**

***Silence***

***Circle Time*** *(with the Children)*

***\* Children’s Hymn of Praise:* MV#33** *“Jesus Came Bringing Us Hope”*

***Thanksgiving/Intercessory Prayer***

We have prayed all these through Christ Jesus our Lord; He is the One who taught us to pray saying … “**Our Father …”**

***The Lord’s Prayer***

***Senior Choir Anthem***

***We Listen for God’s Word***

***Scripture Readings***

Gospel Reading: Mark 9:38-50

Reader: This is the Word of God

**All: Thanks be to God.**

***\* Hymn of Preparation:* VU #606** “*In Christ There is no East or West*”

***The Message:* “**No Place for Group Superiority”

***We Respond in Love***

***Offering***

***Hymn/Song of Dedication***

**God of Love hear our prayer, bless this offering we bring you.**

**May our lives do your will, guide and guard us forever.**

**Give us courage to stand for truth, help us give to others.**

**God of Love hear our prayer, bless this offering we bring you.**

***Offertory Prayer***

***We Go Out to Serve***

***\*Closing Hymn:* MV#161** *“I Have Called You By Your Name”*

***\* Benediction***

***\* Triple Amen***

***\* Commissioning Hymn:* VU#298***“When You Walk From Here”*

**When you walk from here, when you walk from here,**

**walk with justice, walk with mercy, and with God’s humble care.**

***\* Musical Postlude***

**TODAY’S MESSAGE**

In Mark 9:38-50, John, one of the disciples of Jesus, seems to be exhibiting an attitude of superiority toward someone who is not in his group.

* This shows the narrow exclusivism of those who thought they were the closest to Christ.
* Sometimes we tend to be jealous that someone outside our group is having spiritual success in Jesus’ name.
1. **The Problem with Group Superiority**

**JOHN**: “Teacher, we saw a man using your name to expel demons and we stopped him because ***he wasn’t in our group***” (Mark 9:38)

We are a society that values the elite and vilify the poor. We judge people based on their position in life and how large their bank accounts are.

1. **We Are on The Same Team**

**JESUS**: “*Don’t stop him*. No one can *use my name* to do something good and powerful, and in the next breath *cut me down*. If he’s not an enemy, ***he’s an ally***…” (Mark 9:39-40, The MSG)

We need to develop a kingdom focus, not just a church focus; we must make kingdom impact in our generation. How can we do this?

**Think about this:**

* Group superiority is cliquish and exclusive – do I see the “group” I belong to as better than others?
* Jesus’ disciples failed to recognize fellow believers, those who were on the side of Jesus. Do I have the generosity to appreciate God’s work in others – those who are different?
* We’re on the same team. Differences don’t have to divide us.