

**Sunday, October 6, 2019 – An Eye Toward the Future Series I**  
**“Jesus is Our Sanctuary”**

Luke 17: 11-19

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Definition Structure

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

I'm glad you're here! It's good to be here – this place where God washes us in baptism, forgives us with His Word, this place where Jesus comes to us. We call this space the sanctuary – the sacred place, the holy place. God's everywhere but this is where all the God-stuff He promises to us happens to us. Yes, God is with you everywhere you go but this exactly where we know how and when and what He's doing with us! You heard about that in Hebrews – the reverence and awe for that holy place of God and what God does for us there. So sanctuary is about WORSHIP.

Sanctuary also refers to the idea of safety. Did you have a “safe zone” when you played tag as a kid? You could call that your “sanctuary” in the game of tag. In the Old Testament God set up sanctuary cities in Israel, where people facing all kinds of different trouble could go for refuge. Historically in Europe “sanctuary” was recognized when someone came to a church – law enforcement wouldn't dare have the state encroach the other, bigger kingdom, this embassy of Heaven on earth to pursue a suspect. Speaking of suspect, I suspect you feel safe here. Your kids run a little freer, and perhaps you're less careful about locking your car or leaving a purse, phone or computer unattended – because it's church. Now I want you to feel safe – physically, emotionally, spiritually, to be open and vulnerable and grow with God and each other... (but it should be said opportunistic thieves do know that we tend to let our guard down when we're here... so please lock your car door and bring your valuables in with you, kept on your person).

This is also a sanctuary from life and its problems not only of body but of soul. A place to seek God's help in prayer for whatever ails you. A place where the devil gets beaten back and God's kingdom spreads as Jesus, the way truth and life is preached as our Savior. A place where hope is found in the return of Jesus, one day for resurrected eternity.

And then there's the sanctuary as a place of welcome. You don't have to be a certain age, or from a certain family with a certain education or income, or have a certain skin color or be of a particular sex. When you're repentant of your sin your past sins and the sins you keep fighting and struggling against with God's help have no bearing on your status here. Moreover

it's not just for people who are already here, but God would have all people be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. This space is intended as a sanctuary for you here and whomever else out there! It's available for everyone. Jesus is for everyone. So just as sanctuary is about WORSHIP, sanctuary is also about the interplay between WELCOME AND SAFETY.

Those who most need welcome and safety, a safe place to worship and receive from God's generous hand are those who are most vulnerable. Luke tells us the story of 10 men with leprosy. It's a border region between Galilee, which is Hebrew and Samaria, land of the Samaritans. The Hebrews and Samaritans were distantly related but had language, cultural, religious and other barriers between them. There was no love lost here but that exclusivity, those walls had nothing on the walls between lepers and polite society. Sufferers of this microbial disease would watch their skin and muscle rot and decay. Highly contagious, lepers were forced off on their own, far from civilization so that they wouldn't infect their family and friends. Having leprosy makes you so excluded that even Hebrew and Samaritan people who have leprosy will turn to each other for support. Such is the situation Jesus finds this day.

They cry out for help – have mercy on us! Jesus orders them to go to the priests. Only the priests can declare a person cured of leprosy and invited back into society. So they go – ten strong, toward the sanctuary and the priests to worship and be brought back safe and welcome into society. But one does something different – after going and finding himself healed he turns around to give thanks and worship Jesus. This former leper, the Samaritan sees welcome and safety from God in Jesus. He sees Jesus as the one who makes Him clean, Jesus as the object of worship – Jesus – not a synagogue or temple or priest – Jesus is the sanctuary.

So too for us today – Jesus is our sanctuary! As our congregation humbly seeks God's guidance in developing future ministry plans, facility plans and financial plans for how we go about that our eye toward the future starts with a long look back at what God has done for us. Jesus is our sanctuary.

Back in August over three different sermons I revealed the vision statement developed from your input, compared against God's Word and prayed over that goes as follows: "We are God's chosen people, adopted in baptism, forgiven through His Gifts and sent on His mission to love and disciple others." It starts with what God does **for us** and moves to what God does

**through us** – His purpose. Then three nights after that sermon series ended, back on August 28<sup>th</sup> we had a night called “An Eye Toward the Future” where we split into groups and discussed the future of ministry and facility development to facilitate that ministry. That input from the congregation has grown to include four separate target areas that will later drive specific goals and the tasks needed to reach those goals. Over the next three weeks we’ll look at the four target areas – they’re unwieldy. Ridiculous. Aspirational. You might even say impossible – but the goals under development will drive toward those ridiculous targets so that with God’s help we could be coordinating together as we are sent on God’s mission to love and disciple others.

And you’ve heard two of those four new targets already. The first is about **worship** – that our worship connects ALL people to God’s Gifts. Over time the goals and methods we employ toward that end may change but the target remains the same. People in our community are living and dying without knowing God and His Gifts. In some cases there’s apathy, in others hurt blamed, fairly or not, on the church and in still others rejection of God’s promises. We pray that God would use us to His purposes and that if there are any roadblocks that we, the people of Mountain View bring to the table, that those be dealt with and removed. The very Gospel message itself, the exclusivity of Jesus’ claim to be God is offensive. People are going to be offended by our message but if they are, let it be because of the Jesus and not because of something else we’re bringing to the table. Keeping love for truth and love for people in the appropriate tension is a terribly difficult thing and we ask God’s help to do it well. Watch for goals – about meaningfully involving all of our Mountain View community, including our school. About resourcing our worship services with parity. About the safety and accessibility of our worship space so all can receive God’s Gifts.

The second target you heard about already had to do with **welcoming and safety** – that our campus is both welcoming and secure. This is wider than Sunday worship – it has to do with our Christian Day School, before and aftercare. It has to do with having inviting and hospitable places and providing resources appropriately for everyone who comes through our door – church member, prospective school family, transient person without a home and everyone else in between. It has to do with signage, debris, landscaping and a school classroom environment

that screams excellence in education and love for Jesus and each other. Look for goals oriented around those types of things.

And friends, we're working hard on this, planning on this. In the next couple of weeks we'll be revealing more details in the Ministry Plan and asking for you to partner in committing to this ministry future together for Mountain View. Down the line... not quite yet... that commitment may grow beyond specific ministry targets and also include physical changes to the campus and the resources necessary for that to happen. Whatever ministry changes, or culture changes, or campus changes do or don't happen on this campus, Jesus is our sanctuary. Jesus is the source of God's gifts – His body, His blood, His Word, His claim in baptism. We plan for success, we work hard, we pray for guidance but it's God who gives the growth. Planning to succeed we have permission to try and permission to fail, recalibrate, start over, not do it perfectly. This is God's church. Beautiful as this space is, thankful as we are for it, if it should come crumbling down tomorrow we know that Jesus is our sanctuary and the people, not the building are His church. Jesus comes for all. Jesus comes to connect all people to His Gifts. Jesus is our source of safety and security. Jesus sends us on His mission to love and disciple others. In Jesus' name, Amen.