

---

## All-Age-Thoughts on 'The Journey Begins | **What Is the Sign?**'

---

**::: ZERO :::**

*“Grace to you and PEACE from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

*1 Co 1:3. (NRSV)*

**::: Amen.**

**::: ONE :::**

In preparing myself for this service, I saw that I can start my thoughts with the exact same words which I used in our service on 13<sup>th</sup> of August – You remember? Our Baptism & Faith Reaffirmation & Communion Service.

Oh, how much I would love to have that pool around that we had on this day...

However, this is how I introduced my thoughts and how I also introduce them today:

*Dear little, younger and older Sisters  
dear little, younger and older Brothers,*

---

*This is quite an experience today, I think.*

*And this is a very special service we're celebrating today.*

So far for the introduction.

Why do I mention this?

It is because this summer it seems like we're celebrating one special service after the other...

Just again like yesterday, Pastor Christine's Celebration of Life, today this open-air service, the 'Back to School' blessing service next week.

It seems like we as Peace Church people are on a journey, an emotional journey which leads us by so many different viewing areas with very different views on God's kin-dom.

## ::: TWO :::

Some of you might have read the biblical passage from the Gospel of Matthew chapter 18,15-20 already.

That's fine, but I will get to that later...

---

But for now, I have a question for you. And you are all already trained to gather in small groups of all ages.

So do it again, gather as 3 people, and each of you tell the others, what your most beloved sign is, the sign of all signs you know or recall, you like the most—and in one or two sentences explain why.

... ..

Would 2 or 3 share with us what their favourite sign is... come to the microphone.

### ::: THREE :::

I think my favourite sign is the “We’re open”-sign. Like in the window or on the door of a bar, café...

And I like it especially in English... because “we’re open” sound so different from “wir haben geöffnet”.

In German it's just a description of the situation. But in English it seems to say something about the owners or employees... "We are open"

### ::: **FOUR** :::

And this is the moment where our text from Matthew comes into play.

It speaks about what is to be done, when a member of the church did something wrong against another.

First try to reconcile one on one in private. If that's not working, try it including one or two others.

And now comes a turning point: If that's not working either, let the person responsible for the situation be to you like a Gentile or tax collector.

Ouch... Aha, the message seems to be: Throw them out, and do not get involved with them anymore.

"Yes, his own fault..." "There you go... bye-bye."

---

∴ FIVE ∴

But wait a second... You remember what we've just heard about Jesus' story with Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector. And Jesus went straight up to him and said: Come down, I must be in your house today.

And that's the beginning of a whole new episode in Zacchaeus' life. A new story of salvation.

It's like Jesus saying: If the evildoer in the church does not realize what they did, and no reconciliation with him or her is possible... then it is time for a restart right from the beginning.

They seem not to have understood what the kin-dom of God means, so let's start right from the beginning, focus on them because they have the need to realize what salvation means and what reconciliation is about.

---

The point is: We are the signs leading others to the kin-dom of God, showing others what it looks like to be a follower of Jesus and a messenger of salvation and reconciliation.

If you are not, then it's time to start again right from the beginning.

“We are called to be [ambassadors of salvation and reconciliation] so that others might see God through us.

We are the sign that God is God and God is still at work in the world.

We are the sign that what we say about God shapes how we live in the world and how we treat those around us.

We are the sign.”

::: Amen.