

**Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
11th May 2021**

READINGS

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.' Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

Luke 19:1-10 (NRSVA)

Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.
If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and the light around me become night',
even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

Psalm 139:7-12 (NRSVA)

REFLECTION

One of the wonderful things about the way that Jesus treated people (and equally one of the terrifying things about the way that Jesus treated people), is that he saw right through their pretence to the heart of who they really were. He wasn't blinded by the person they pretended to be. He wasn't deflected by the front they presented to the world. He saw people as they were.

He saw the faith in a woman wracked with disease and out of options, when she touched his coat:

He saw the value in a man whose friends would go to any lengths to deal with his brokenness, ripping the roof off to lower him to Jesus;

He saw the want for meaning in the eyes of a woman at a well with a complicated and fallen life:

He saw the deepest longing in Nicodemus, the religious expert who had such need of faith;

And he saw in Zacchaeus, a man so hated, so filled with self-loathing, so shockingly awful that he would be the villain of any story, the potential for such great faith and love as to warrant a miracle.

Jesus saw people not as they pretended to be, not as they wanted people to think they were. Jesus saw people not as everyone else saw them. Yes, he saw the sin, he saw the failures, he saw the compromised lives, but, he looked beyond, and saw who they were in God's eyes.

Richard McKenna in his wonderful and challenging little book "God for Nothing" writes these words:

"We are naked before God, but instead of trying to hide our stretch marks, spindly legs, acne, birthmarks or beer guts, we slowly come to realise that we are beautiful and loved."

God looks at you, stripped of all your pretence, with all the barriers of life that we put up knocked down. But what does God see? Does he see our failure? Does he see our sin? Does he see the things that we cannot do? Does he see the shame?

No.

He sees his children. He sees us as we were made to be.

God sees you as you really are. God sees in you all the potential, all the wonder, all the love, all the opportunity, all the power of one of his children.

As you move though this week, remember you are a child of God. You are loved just as you are. You don't have to pretend to be good - for, in Jesus on the cross your sins are forgiven, and you are whiter than white. You don't have to pretend to be all powerful – for, in faith you walk with God and have available to you all the power of the divine in your life to live his way. You don't have try to get to the top of the heap, - for, In Christ you are already a son or a daughter of the king of all creation with an inheritance of eternity. So listen for God, look for God, trust in God's love for you, so that you might live

the life God created you to live and find the peace and the wonder and the hope and the joy of bring a child of God.

PRAYER

Lord God,
All-seeing, all-knowing, all-loving
We cannot hide from you
We can wear no pretence that you do not see through,
Nor can we pull the wool over your eyes.
You know us.

But you do not turn away from us,-
Even knowing the things we have said and done and thought -
Still you call us close, still you welcome and forgive and heal and make new.

Go before us as we venture out into the days of the week;
Open our hearts to your blessing.
Grant us the vision to recognise you at work around us
And bless us with the faith to stand up and be counted among your people.

In Jesus name we offer our prayers,
Amen.

