

Bulletin for Sunday 30 October 2022

Good morning friends.

Just a reminder that this is the last Bulletin for the foreseeable future. There are many online worship opportunities and resources - for pointers to them, you can always contact me, or look at the URC website. The Sunday evening Zoom service is also moving to a new, monthly, slot - details and dates are again available from me.

Let's pause as we prepare to worship... and then praise God as we sing our first hymn:

Hymn: Now thank we all our God (R&S 72)

Prayers: God: Creator, Word, and Spirit,
with joy we praise and worship you.
Thank you for your generosity to us -
for all our many blessings,
some acknowledged, others rapidly forgotten....
You call us each by name,
may we hear you, turn to face you,
and respond by following you.....
We ask your blessing on everything we do,
and on everything we give in your service,
today and every day. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: 2 Thessalonians 1: 1-4, 11-12 and Luke 19: 1-10

Reflection: Do you remember the children's song, 'Zacchaeus was a very little man'? It left me with a mental picture of Zacchaeus as a short, tubby, middle-aged man unaccustomed to climbing trees... Now I discover that the word in the gospel might mean short, or it might mean young; and, on reflection, I suspect that Zacchaeus must have been both - short enough to need the extra height of the tree, and young enough to shin up it! For many of us, our understanding of the Bible was formed by a weekly diet of simple colouring sheets and cheerful, catchy songs; which is a good way to establish the basics, but lacks the nuance to see gospel stories through adult eyes.

This isn't really a reading about being short, or climbing trees. It's about a lonely, anxious outsider, feeling the pull of Jesus and tentatively responding. Zacchaeus has followed a well-worn path, trying to cope with the pain of loneliness by acquisition - hoarding as a substitute for happiness. And, of course, it hasn't worked. It's also a story about Jesus who understands the misery behind Zacchaeus' economic 'success' and cares about him as a person, not just a tax collector. As Jesus becomes his guest, Zacchaeus is included - accepted into a community by Jesus and his disciples, even if still outcast and despised by his neighbours. Jesus has noticed him, understood him, and called him. Zacchaeus has heard the call and responded - and in doing so he has started to change. Now he is capable of looking beyond his own needs to those of others.

How have we been changed (or continue to be changed) by encountering Jesus?

Hymn: Jesus calls us! O'er the tumult (R&S 355)

Prayers: Compassionate God
we pray for our beautiful but suffering world.
As poverty and war, greed and cruelty,
continue to spread pain and grief,
we hold before you their victims...
and we pray too for those working for peace,
for healing, and for justice...
We remember in prayer our neighbours
who are lonely, sick or in need...
and pray for our friends and families...
In Jesus 'name we ask all our prayers,
including the unspoken prayers of our hearts. Amen

Hymn: Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us (R&S 373)

Blessing: Now may the blessing of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us and with all those we love,
this week, and always. Amen

Sunday at Six service on Zoom at 6pm this Sunday - all welcome.

Anne Lewitt phone (01798) 872535 email aelewitt@gmail.com [day off Thursday]