

**Worship at Home with Alan Sharp for
October 30th 2022**

Call to worship:

All-forgiving, all-loving God, we worship you today. We acknowledge your greatness, confessing we cannot understand your ways – but we know that they are wonderful.

We bring you all our praise, joining our voices with your family around the world, lifting our hearts and faces to you.

Amen

Hymn STF 28 Jesus calls us here to meet him

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ModYoPReYYw>

Jesus calls us here to meet him
as, through word and song and prayer,
we affirm God's promised presence
where his people live and care.
Praise the God who keeps his promise;
praise the Son who calls us friends;
praise the Spirit who, among us,
to our hopes and fears attends.

Jesus calls us to confess him
Word of life and Lord of all,
sharer of our flesh and frailness,
saving all who fail or fall.
Tell his holy human story;
tell his tales that all may hear;
tell the world that Christ in glory
came to earth to meet us here.

Jesus calls us to each other,
vastly different though we are;
creed and colour, class and gender
neither limit nor debar.
Join the hand of friend and stranger;
join the hands of age and youth;
join the faithful and the doubter
in their common search for truth.

Prayer of confession

Gracious Lord, who sees all, you know all that we hide in our hearts. We lay before you all the things that dishonour you and us, acknowledging the damage they cause.

We turn from hate and greed and pride.

We ask that you would restore us and renew us, transforming our lives by the words and actions of your Son, Jesus, and cleansing us with your Holy Spirit, through whom you make your home in us. **Amen**

Luke 19:1-10

Jesus meets Zacchaeus

He 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."

Reflection

I wonder when you last climbed a tree? Probably when you were much younger than you are now! I guess that when you did it, it was for fun, for simple enjoyment. But when Zacchaeus climbed the tree in this story, it wasn't for fun. He was desperate. It was because he wanted sight of Jesus, and people pushed him out of the way.

He's a tax-collector, someone who works for the Roman authorities, and has probably enriched himself at the expense of others. So not a popular man. And he is "short in stature", so has to climb a tree in order to see Jesus passing through Jericho.

Well, we all know this story don't we. We may have memories of hearing it in Sunday School and singing the chorus "Now Zacchaeus was a very little man." - you can finish it off! So, we know who Zacchaeus is.

But there's a puzzle about this story. It's very strange to find it, in Luke's Gospel. Luke tells us many stories about Jesus reaching out to "outsiders".

To lepers, to disabled people, to women, to people in great need, to many who were considered sinners. Not usually to someone who is rich.

But this man was rich. And yet he was also an outsider. Probably not a man with many friends. Luke doesn't even tell us if he was married, or had family. So, when Jesus saw Zacchaeus, I believe that he saw something that the crowd did not see. And they began to grumble - "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." But Jesus had seen someone with needs, needs that no one else knew about. And that no one cared about. But Jesus cares. He has time for Zacchaeus and asks to stay at his house.

This story is not so much a story of a little man climbing a tree; rather, it is a story that brings good news for all who may be considered outcasts in any way. People who feel that no one cares about them. This may be good news for us, if we're carrying problems that are hard to bear.

But it also challenges us to watch out for people who may be in that position. Can we, like Jesus, see something that the crowd does not see? And avoid just judging people. When we judge those around us in this way, we insult the forgiving power of Jesus - and God's Grace. Can we learn to see ourselves and others as Jesus sees? Because he sees someone that is worth loving.

There's a type of Bible study that asks: "Where are you in the story?" If we are honest, we may be standing with the crowd, shaking our head because we think that Zacchaeus isn't worth it? Or dare we believe that we'd be next to Jesus, as he reaches out to someone that others think is a sinner? But perhaps, we're a bit like Zacchaeus - out on a limb, hoping for a glimpse of Jesus and a whole new way of living?

Let's be glad that Luke tells this story. Because it's a reminder that no one is excluded from the love of Jesus.

Prayers of intercession:

We pray for all who seek out those in need: the vulnerable in our world, and offer them protection;

the elderly hidden away at home, and save them from loneliness;
the abandoned, and save them from suffering;
The mentally distressed, and help them find peace and stability;
the poor, and save them from starvation;
your rejected people, and save us from forgetting them.

We pray in the name of Jesus,
who ate with Zacchaeus, and changed his life.
Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn: STF 443 Come let us sing of a wonderful love

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XCSx7ZZ3-2I>

Come let us sing of a wonderful love,
tender and true;
out of the heart of the Father above,
streaming to me and to you:
wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Jesus, the Saviour, this gospel to tell,
joyfully came;
came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,
sharing their sorrow and shame;
seeking the lost,
saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
home! Weary wanderer, home!
Wonderful love
dwells in the heart of the Father above.

Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love,
come and abide,
lifting my life till it rises above
envy and falsehood and pride:
seeking to be
lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Blessing:

May God who seeks and saves, who invites and welcomes, who loves and cherishes, be your strength today and every day. And may the blessing of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you always. **Amen**