

ST. MARY OF NAZARETH /ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI – WEST WICKHAM

9th August 2020: Ninth Sunday after Trinity

Hazel writes:

During this next week we are going to try out a midweek communion service on Wednesday 12th at St Francis'. The following week the midweek service will be at St Mary's – both at 10.45am. This provides an opportunity to come to a quieter service if you are wary about going out, but you're unable to make 8am on a Sunday. It is hoped that, with all the different times and places where our services happen, everyone will be able to get into a new pattern of worship that suits them. If any times and places prove not to be helpful to many people, then we will look again at the schedule being followed. The schedule may also change in response to national and local restrictions being increased or eased.

An on-line video and printed version of the weekly service will continue to be provided in addition to in-person services. Currently the audio version is not being viewed by many people and so we are thinking of taking a break from producing this version. Please would you let someone from the ministry team (Hazel, Richard, Brian, Ken, Rowena, Debbie and Nicky) know if you would like the audio version of the sermon to be continued.

Next Sunday, 16th August there will be services of **Holy Communion** in St Mary's at 8am and at 10am in St Francis'. There will also be a service available **on-line** from 9am.

Richard's daughter and son-in-law, who are mission partners at St Francis' Church, are holding a "**Mission Matters**" event (via Zoom) on Saturday 15th August from 10:30am to 12 noon. If you know of anyone who has an interest in overseas mission, or in supporting people who go overseas to share the gospel, please ask them to email liz.jeggo@omfmail.com for more information or to sign up to the event. Liz and Mike Jeggo will be sharing examples from their time in Japan, looking at what the Bible says about overseas mission, what is involved in missionary life and some of the issues, challenges and joys that missionaries face overseas.

The **Bereavement Support Group** will meet on Wednesday 12th August at 2.30pm in St Francis' Church. If you know of anyone who has been affected by the loss of a loved one in the past few months and would benefit from talking with others about it, please do let them know about this support. Maybe come with them if that would enable them to get there.

The church buildings will continue to be **open for private prayer** in August at the following times:

- Tuesdays – St Francis' from 2 to 3.30pm;
- Thursdays – St Mary's from 10 to 11.30am.

Please do bring **Foodbank donations** to the Vicarage. Currently they need cold meat, custard, small bottles of squash, jelly, Instant Whip, mashed potatoes, jam, coffee, washing detergent, **male and female shampoo (very urgent)**, shaving gel/foam, adult & children's toothbrushes & toothpaste. There are large stocks of pasta, beans, soup, UHT milk, rice, cereals, tea, toilet rolls and tomatoes and these items are politely discouraged at the present time. Thank you for your continuing support.

The **St Francis' APCM** will take place after the service on Sunday 20th September. The venue is to be decided (in church or on Zoom). Everyone is welcome to join us at this meeting, but only those who are on the electoral roll can vote for matters that need approval, such as new members of the PCC. If you would like to be added to the electoral roll, please would you contact our Electoral Roll Officer, Rowena Griffiths at rowena.griff19@btinternet.com or on 020 8777 6112 before Sunday 30 August.

Resources and updates for the week ahead – An audio file of the sermon and a video of the service have been posted to the websites for today. All other files have been combined and posted as a pew sheet which has been sent on paper to those who have told us that they are not on-line. Other worship and resources that you might want to listen to or look at on Sunday:

- The Church of England's national virtual service will be available on their website at www.churchofengland.org.
- The BBC have the following programmes to watch and listen to:
 - Sunday Worship at 8.10am on Radio 4 exploring the cross as a symbol of hope and liberation;
 - Choral Evensong at 3pm on Radio 3 from St Martin-in-the-Fields;
 - On BBC 1: Sunday Morning Live at 10am and Songs of Praise at 1.15pm celebrating the National Trust, founded 125 years ago.

Each week our **"coffee/tea & chat"** on Thursday at 2.30 pm is an opportunity to share with others. It is just 40 minutes and you don't need to commit to joining each week. Please let Rowena (rowena.griff19@btinternet.com /020 8777 6112) know if you would like the log-in details.

Any items for the joint pew sheet to Hazel and items for the websites to brian.griff19@btinternet.com.

Collect

Gracious Father,
revive your Church in our
day, and make her holy,
strong and faithful,
for your glory's sake
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

Jesus was going through
Jericho, ² where a man
named Zacchaeus lived. He
was in charge of collecting
taxes and was very rich. ³⁻
⁴ Jesus was heading his way,
and Zacchaeus wanted to
see what he was like. But
Zacchaeus was a short man
and could not see over the
crowd. So he ran ahead and
climbed up into a sycamore
tree.

⁵ When Jesus got there, he
looked up and said,
"Zacchaeus, hurry down! I
want to stay with you
today." ⁶ Zacchaeus hurried
down and gladly welcomed
Jesus.

⁷ Everyone who saw this
started grumbling, "This
man Zacchaeus is a sinner!

And Jesus is going home to
eat with him."

⁸ Later that day Zacchaeus
stood up and said to the
Lord, "I will give half of my
property to the poor. And I
will now pay back four
times as much to everyone I
have ever cheated."

⁹ Jesus said to Zacchaeus,
"Today you and your family
have been saved, because
you are a true son of
Abraham. ¹⁰ The Son of
Man came to look for and
to save people who are
lost."

Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily
bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin
against us.
Lead us not into
temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory
are yours now and for ever.
Amen.**

Post Communion Prayer

Holy Father,
who gathered us here
around the table of your
Son
to share this meal with the
whole household of God:
in that new world where
you reveal the fullness of
your peace,
gather people of every race
and language
to share in the eternal
banquet of Jesus Christ our
Lord.

Closing prayer:

May God who seeks and
saves,
who invites and welcomes,
who loves and cherishes,
be your strength today and
every day.

TALK:

Last time I did the talk for a service, I was reflecting on healing and how God provides healing through Jesus when we recognise ourselves in a place of conflict, or only seeing scarcity, or thinking of ourselves instead of others, and then we make a commitment to do better and to find peace and abundance in the future.

This week I want to continue this healing theme, by looking firstly at the word salvation, or being saved, which is what Jesus told Zacchaeus had happened in verse 9 of our reading.

In medieval times, healing ointments were called salves. These were creams made with herbs, oils and fats. Although the formula has changed, the name – or variations of it – can be still found. For example, there's a brand of ointment sold today, used for scratches, stings, etc. called Savlon™. There's another variation of the word, often used to describe those who are sent to retrieve the remains of a shipwreck or a car crash, and those who look to reuse or recycle the materials brought back. This is known as salvage.

Salve and salvage are both words that mean rescue. Sometimes we say that we salve our conscience by doing a good deed or giving a present, which means we save or rescue – or heal – our conscience. We make it feel better. We make it better. Salve, salvage – and salvation: they all have the same underlying meaning.

It is, our reading says, what Jesus brought to Zacchaeus and his household. Zacchaeus was healed and rescued. Before Jesus arrived in town, Zacchaeus was the unacceptable rich person of his day – he had money but no respectability – I wonder who might be the equivalent today? Jesus turns things inside out and does the last thing that anyone expected: Jesus chose to speak to Zacchaeus and to visit his home. He chose to honour Zacchaeus before Zacchaeus had said or done anything – certainly before he had shown any repentance or amendment of life. How do you react to the idea that Jesus talked to someone like this and went to their house, rather than to the home of someone religious, someone respectable?

Let me take you into Zacchaeus' mind, so that we can think about how this all felt to him:

My name is Zacchaeus. I am very rich - when I want something, I just send a servant out for it. I'm a tax collector – well, actually, I'm the chief tax collector for Jericho. I want to tell you about the day that Jesus came to town.

That day I came out onto the street myself because I wanted to see this teacher, Jesus.

I wanted to see him because I had heard that he was special – tough on religious people but friends with tax collectors like me. But the crowd was very big and I'm not very tall, and there was no way they were going to let me through to the front where I would have been able to see.

So I gave up and climbed a tree. It was quite tricky, but I got settled in the branches, up out of everyone's way. Most people didn't even know that I was there. I thought to myself, I've got the perfect view up here – I can just watch this teacher and see what he does, see what I think of him.

I waited for a while, and then people began moving and calling out: 'Here he is! Here he is! The Teacher's coming!' He was quite hard to spot in the crowd – but then I saw him – he was bending down talking to a child. The child smiled. The men near the Teacher were frowning and trying to get the Teacher to move on, but he took no notice and carried on talking to the child. Strange thing for an important man to do!

The next moment, though, he did something even stranger – he straightened up and looked right up into my tree! I could see him asking one of the important men of Jericho,

'Who is that, sitting in the tree?'

The important man squinted upwards, shading his eyes. He recognised me, and gave Jesus his answer. 'That'll be the end of it,' I thought. But no. Jesus came right over and stood underneath my tree. Now everybody was looking up at me. It was embarrassing.

Jesus said,

'Come on, Zacchaeus, come down from there! I must stay at your house today!'

My house? Well, imagine how you would feel if all your best birthdays happened at once – that was how I felt, so happy and proud. The Teacher had honoured me, in front of everyone. I hurried down from the tree.

People began to mutter. They didn't like what Jesus was doing at all. I could hear words like 'sinner' and I knew they were talking about me. But I wasn't about to let anything spoil this moment – Jesus was coming to my house – so I called out, 'I will give half my money to the poor and, if I have cheated anyone out of their money, I will pay back four times as much.'

Everybody went quiet. Then Jesus came closer and said.

'God has come close to you today. You are as much a part of God's family as anybody else.'

What can I say? He changed my life.

So, you see, this story is about a life-changing personal encounter. Zacchaeus was rescued from loneliness. Rescued from poor self-image. He was healed by Jesus' friendship. As a result of feeling better – of being made better – Zacchaeus gave away half of his possessions and paid back the money he had taken from others four times over. This healed him further; Zacchaeus had salved his own conscience. Salvation came to Zacchaeus and his household. Jesus' care for Zacchaeus was like a salve that brought immense healing to someone who had previously been lonely and mean.

I wonder what healing Jesus can bring to you today. Now, you might not think of yourself as someone who needs the kind of healing that Zacchaeus did, but we can all change through being befriended by someone who really shows care for us. It's also possible that God might want to use you in being a friend to someone else. Think about it. How can you change a life – whether that be your own, in accepting the friendship that's offered by Jesus, or someone else's life, by showing care and concern for someone that you wouldn't normally give any attention to. Following our Black Lives Matter meeting last month, it was suggested that we might look at joining the network of Inclusive Church, which recognises that there are many groups of people who have been excluded from churches, albeit unintentionally in many cases. How can we look out for those who are different to us and find a way that Jesus can help us to get to know them and include them in God's kingdom, just as he did for Zacchaeus?

This is what Jesus is all about – bringing salvation, changing all lives for the better.

Amen

Prayer Pointers

Forgive us, Lord, when we are slow to see opportunities for change in our lives and in the lives of others.

May we never turn away those you would welcome, or turn aside from your welcome for us; but grow in faith and trust and generosity and walk more closely towards Jesus, our friend and our guide.

We give thanks for:

- those who have invited us into their homes for meals and celebrations;
- those who have invited us to join the church fellowship;
- those who have helped us to make changes in our lives, both minor and major.

May we be open to your prompting and make change where change is needed, and be ready to open our hearts to those you have placed on our minds who might be in need of kind hospitality [*pause to think of someone you know who is in need of hospitality*].

Today salvation has come to this house.

We pray for those who long for healing, for those who long for welcome, for those who long for rescue. The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.

We pray for all those who seek out:

- 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.**