



SUNDAY 30 OCTOBER 2022

DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

The Parishes of: Bishop Auckland || Newton Aycliffe & Shildon || Willington
Crook, Tow Law & Wolsingham || Tudhoe || Coundon, Ferryhill & Windlestone

ESCOMB PARTNERSHIP NOTE

31st Sunday of the Year (C) : Luke 19: 1-10

Are we all people-watchers? I recall a press photographer saying to me years ago that we're all watching one another all the time. I've had cause to think its true many times. It ranges from the best caring instincts to the worst prurient gossip. People fascinate us.

We may perhaps be less frequently aware that others are watching us. Do they have the same interest or curiosity about us that we bring to our observing? How does it feel to know we're being watched, thought about and assessed? You could drive yourself paranoid if you let it get to you.

Individuals often want to be seen, loved to be noticed and acknowledged. No one likes to be overlooked or ignored. Our need for love and recognition can drive us to some odd behaviours. Hopefully we understand and spot in each other the self-same need to matter, to be received and welcomed. There are people around us always that crave to see the signals of respect and appreciation. Too many individuals of all ages are starved of basic marks of inclusion and equality as the pace of life quickens mercilessly.

Today's Gospel story introduces us to Zacchaeus, a wealthy chief tax collector— you may want to register your feelings and reaction to such a description. Do you like this man? His contemporaries certainly didn't. They called him a sinner—making money out of collecting taxes from his own people on behalf of the Roman occupying army. Not the way to win friends and influence people.

Zacchaeus is also a people-watcher. In his job he can't afford not to be. He wants to see Jesus—a man who can pull crowds and they all want to hear him. He's so intrigued that he runs ahead and climbs a tree. He's short and needs some height! He knows he'll be laughed at but taking the risk changed his life. He discovers that Jesus wants to see him.

Jesus is looking out for you and for me—all the time. Thankfully we don't have to climb trees or do anything unusual—unless finding regular bits of time to engage with him throughout the day is difficult. If it is, we need to do something about our timetable.

Maybe today's Gospel story leaves us with some other questions too. What made Jesus so attractive to people? What makes him attractive to you? Are there things that we, the community of his followers, need to do to make us more attractive to others? Do we do what Jesus did in this story - approach people one at a time—some other churches do this—we need to think about it. Converts to our faith tell us that they may have come to us earlier but no one asked them. Is there a lesson there? Are there 1 or 2 people you might invite to come and see and learn more about how we express what Jesus means to us? It might change lives—ours first.

It's painful to think we have a lot to learn. But in our changing world if we are not changing then we've missed the bus. Jesus wears many disguises. We meet him looking for us every day. Stay sharp, light on your feet. We may need to move.



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Pope Francis talking of prayer

Prayer, because it is nourished by the gift of God present and at work in our lives, must always be marked by remembrance. The memory of God's works is central to the experience of the covenant between God and his people. God wished to enter history, and so our prayer is interwoven with memories. We think back not only on his revealed Word, but also on our own lives, the lives of others, and all that the Lord has done in his Church. This is the grateful memory that Saint Ignatius of Loyola refers to in his *Contemplation for Attaining Love*, when he asks us to be mindful of all the blessings we have received from the Lord.

Think of your own history when you pray, and there you will find much mercy. This will also increase your awareness that the Lord is ever mindful of you; he never forgets you. So it makes sense to ask him to shed light on the smallest details of your life, for he sees them all.

- Rejoice and Be Glad para 153