**New Kilpatrick**

**30th October 2022**

**Luke 19:1-10**

**YouTube**

**Gathering**

Climbing trees

Or in a pew

Through a bible

Or in prayer

In our imaginations

Or questions and doubts

Where do we find Jesus

How might we seek him

From where do we look for him

However that is, may we find him close

Beside us

Between us

Within us

In worship

Good morning… I’m Roddy Hamilton the minister of new Kilpatrick Parish and thank you, as always, for your invitation to be with you this morning. I really should be doing this risking life and limb hanging from the branch of a tree because we meet Zacchaeus today… traditionally the small tax collector… who was too small to see Jesus… but after a power-lunch… came out as a forgiven sinner who would give away all he earned… or perhaps not, because the story isn’t as certain as we tend to be about Zacchaeus…

**Prayer**

Loving God

Unexpected God

May we have eyes to see you anew

To find ourselves in new spaces

That offer a different insight

A different perspective

That opens up your relationship again

Full of new possibilities and hopes

Great God

Welcoming God

May we be among the ones

Who seek you out

Time and time again

Never presuming we know you fully

But always ready to be led again

Into new places and possibilities

Creative God

Generous God

May we trust what we know

And explore what we don’t

As we grow in companionship with you

Deeper into that place where we meet

And renew ourselves

Let go that which limits us

And pick up that which brings life in us all

So here

We lay down

That which reduces us

And make new spaces

For that which renews us and sets us free

Hear us O God

Hold us O God

Heal us O God

As we share the Lord’s Prayer together

**Scripture Introduction**

We have such a well-known story today, that we have grown up with. It is emblazoned on our minds. We have the pictures of Zacchaeus and Jesus and trees and meals, and they are probably the images we had when we were in Sunday school. I know I still have. I can still see Zacchaeus, dressed in white for some reason, precariously hanging from a branch of a tree, lots of leaves around him, looking down on Jesus, also dressed in white but with a head covering, surrounded by an enthusiastic crowd.

And that hasn't changed in all my days. However, I invite you to listen to the story, and perhaps reimagine it. Not easy, I know, but, perhaps swing the story round a bit, the tree in a different place, the crowd a different intensity, Jesus wearing a different tunic. And as you listen and reimagine, might you hear a different retelling, pick up the ambiguities in the story because there are a few which we will explore later.

**Scripture**

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.’

**Reflection**

One of the comments that has been made regularly as we change prime ministers with a somewhat unhealthy regularity… in this cost-of-living crisis… is that any of them should try and live on my income… spend a week with my budget… even just a few days in my housing scheme or my business or my school… thus they’d change perspective… and decision might be different…

And indeed, that is what candidates regularly claim by citing their background… their upbringing… their lack of opportunity at some point… and fair enough…

A lot of that is in their past however… and it is a different world now… the difference between rich and poor is much larger now… and that perspective perhaps needs to be renewed…

Zacchaeus wasn’t poor… He was one of the ones who lived on the wealth side of the gap between the least and the powerful… and so didn’t necessarily chime with what Jesus was talking about… didn’t quite wear the same shoes as those who were the focus of Jesus concern… unless… unless…

You see… I’ve always found this story of Zacchaeus intriguing… Why did he want to see Jesus?… Out of interest for someone who was stirring things up… or perhaps he’d heard the rumour that he had some generous words… for tax collectors… Jesus wasn’t on the side of the wealthy… so Zacchaeus’ tree climbing has always been a story I have wondered about…

And the tree climbing is perhaps part of the issue… He’s up there because he is too small… so goes up to look down and Jesus sees him…

Except… the bible is rather ambiguous about who it is who is small… The original Greek doesn’t actually say it is Zacchaeus… It could equally be Jesus…

Now… how does that change your perspective on the Jesus… Zacchaeus was up that tree because it was Jesus who was small, and Zacchaeus had to climb the tree to see him…

It’s not a strong point… except that it suddenly makes us see things from a different perspective… Jesus is the small person… What does that do to our image… and prejudices… and our relationship with Jesus…

But it is yet more intriguing… because as Zacchaeus comes down the tree and Jesus has a meal with him… when they both come out the house… after scones and cake… Jesus says… salvation has come to this house because Zacchaeus says… “I will give half my goods to the poor and if I have defrauded anyone… I will restore it fourfold”… but the passage can equally read… and various translations have it this way… “I give half my goods to the poor and if I have defrauded anyone… I restore it fourfold”…

He is already doing that… It is not something he will do in the future but something he does now… which again… completely changes the perspective… Zacchaeus is already doing kingdom work… he isn’t as bad as everyone thinks…

In fact,… Jesus could be making him an example of the kingdom for all those Pharisees, tutting that he went to eat with an official sinner… It is as if Jesus is saying… all you who are holier than thou… and judge others… He’s the one who is already doing better than you… He’s the one who is living the kingdom life… Shame on you…

A change of perspective… and the story is once more intriguing and newly alive… It is Zacchaeus who is standing in the shoes of the least, not those who are quick with the prejudices for Zacchaeus…

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

Loving God

May we see the world differently

As a place of possibility

A place with the potential for peace

Within each one of us

Where our nation finds a balance

And the gap between us shrinks

Between Ukraine and Russia

A pause for justice and renewal

In the Horn of Africa

A sharing of food and medicine

In our communities here

A sharing of wealth and resources

In our families, a place of love

Our hospitals, a place of healing

Our churches, a place of hope

Our institutions, a place of truth

Our neighbourhoods, a place of grace

Hear our prayer

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**