

## Thought for the Day 10 July 2020 from Anna Bland

Luke 19: 1-10

Our new testament reading for today is the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). I love this story as it brings back happy memories of Sunday School and a very catchy sung version of this story which some of you may know.

I think it also brings out some beautiful themes of Jesus' ministry very clearly. One of which is Jesus accepting, or in this case demanding, hospitality. Jesus had a nomadic lifestyle for the years of his teaching and this meant that he and the disciples had to accept hospitality everywhere they went. Many gospel stories are set in someone else's home, Jesus enjoying a meal with them, sharing the good news. As we look to the future, in a less socially distanced world, I hope to have many meals of laughter and sharing. I have certainly felt the loss of this kind of hospitality – offering it and receiving it.

For church communities we have always offered hospitality and spaces of community through our buildings. However, in recent months our church communities have gathered online and our spirituality may have felt more nomadic without a physical anchor. I wonder if you could reflect on your relationship with the church building? Is it more or less important than you thought it was? And as we move forward how do we want to use these buildings in new ways? Where can we offer hospitality but also receive it with open hands?

The other heartening lesson I take from this gospel story is that none of us is a lost cause and we must remind one another of this. Zacchaeus' greed had caused hardship in the town but also hadn't done his reputation any good. One encounter with Jesus and he is transformed, his greed turned to generosity in an instant. In our deepest and darkest moments of shame and sin we can also be transformed by an encounter. Jesus sees such potential for good in Zacchaeus that of the many households in Jericho which would have gladly received him he chooses to go to Zacchaeus'. What an honour! It is transformative for all of us when someone appreciates our potential for goodness rather than judging us on our most recent mistake. All of us has the power to make other people feel judged but also has the power to make someone feel special and appreciated as Jesus does here.

So, I leave you with a two-fold challenge! First, think of one person you have judged harshly recently, perhaps for poor social distancing in the supermarket, someone who forgot your birthday or a friend who spoke unnecessarily harshly to you. Hold them in your mind and remember that they are full of potential for goodness, maybe send up a quick prayer that you will not be so hasty to judge next time. Secondly, think of one person you want to make feel special and appreciated today and maybe send them a message telling them they are wonderful.

