

Christian Prayer V: supplement A iii

Guided meditation - Zacchaeus

It is helpful to begin the meditation with a brief quietening-down exercise, using breathing or a mantra to quieten and centre the group.

Luke 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and was going through the town when a man whose name was Zacchaeus made his appearance: he was one of the senior tax collectors and a wealthy man. He was anxious to see what kind of man Jesus was, but he was too short and could not see him for the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus who was to pass that way.

When Jesus reached the spot he looked up and spoke to him: 'Zacchaeus, come down. Hurry, because I must stay at your house today.' And he hurried down and welcomed him joyfully.

They all complained when they saw what was happening. 'He has gone to stay at a sinner's house' they said. But Zacchaeus stood his ground and said to the Lord, 'Look, sir, I am going to give half my property to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody I will pay him back four times the amount.'

And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek out and save what was lost.'

You won't ever have heard of me. My name was forgotten many generations ago, even in Jericho, my home town. And maybe my name doesn't matter.

But I used to be a name in the town, people knew me and respected me. I worked hard, played hard, treated people fairly, supported the synagogue, all that sort of thing.

One day we heard that Jesus was making his way down the Jordan valley from Nazareth and was bound to come to Jericho. Well we all wanted to see him - this prophet, this miracle worker. We'd heard so much about him.

Some of the people from the synagogue said we should be careful. They'd heard he was not very strict about keeping the law - and had a bit of reputation for wining and dining. Sounds my sort of prophet, I thought.

Anyway, we kept hearing he was getting closer and closer and he was coming to Jericho. So we organised a welcoming party. A couple of the rabbis and business leaders - and yours truly.

When we met him, he was polite, but he didn't seem too interested in us. Or in the crowds that lined the street to see him and call after him.

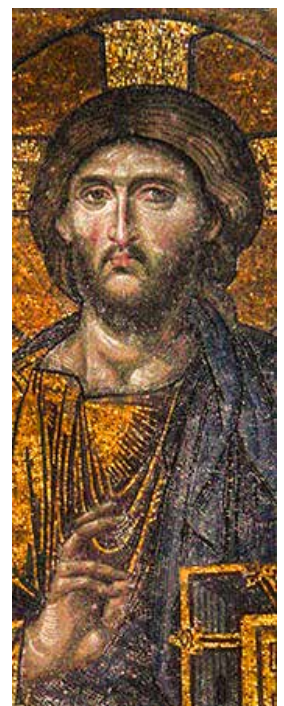
To be honest, it was all a bit deflating. Made me think maybe we weren't good enough for him.

But we escorted him through the town, and then, suddenly, I saw Zacchaeus.

PTO

★ *The exercise is written as a script. You can read it to a class. But leave lots of pauses, to allow people to notice how they are feeling etc.*

An accompanying PowerPoint includes the script read for you. The 2nd screen with the scripture passage runs for 1.5mins; the meditation screen - the 3rd screen (which will play without being preceded by the scripture passage) lasts c.9 minutes. There is a 4th screen which includes the sound of a concluding bell. All you need add is the closing 'Glory be...'



Now I don't hate anyone, but I hate Zacchaeus. Who likes tax-collectors at the best of times? But Zacchaeus caused me a lot of trouble over a bit of work I did. Said I'd not got the right permissions so had to pay double taxes. And he wouldn't let up.

And there he was, trying to get a good look at Jesus. And he was very little. But no-one would let him near - no-one liked Zacchaeus. Served him right. The little....

Then I lost sight of him, until we were coming near the end of the town, when I saw him up a tree above the crowds. He looked stupid. And I half hoped he would fall out of the tree!

Then Jesus saw him and stopped right by the tree and called up. 'Zacchaeus'.

How did Jesus know his name? And why did he want anything to do with him?

But he called his name again. And now some of the crowd joined in, jeering, making fun.

But Jesus wasn't making fun. 'Zacchaeus come down, I must stay at your house today.'

What? He'd not said anything to us about wanting to stay, and had turned down the food we offered him.

Zacchaeus seemed as surprised as the rest of us. But he struggled down from the tree, and went up to Jesus and greeted him and led him to his house.

Of course he'd got nothing ready. So the rabbis offered him the food we'd prepared. I was not having that. So I made my opinion known in no uncertain terms - told them all this man was a disgrace and if Jesus was a real prophet he'd want nothing to do with a man like this.

Jesus said nothing. But Zacchaeus, red in the face, stood his ground. And said to me, and the others, 'Look, I know you don't like me. And I'm sorry about that, but I've done nothing to deserve the way you treat me. Jesus, I don't know why you want to come to *my* house. But your kindness to me has touched my heart. I know you speak of the love of God, but I should like to show the love of man. Sir, I am going to give half my property to the poor, as thanksgiving to you and to God.'

Well you'd never see me do that. What's mine is mine. I give a bit away here and there, but half? Why would anyone do that?

And Zacchaeus carried on. 'And if I *have* cheated anyone, I will pay them back four times the amount.'

Well I was about to say 'You know you cheated me!'. But then I realised he never had. He'd only taken what was due. He was the honest one, and I was the one bearing the grudge, I was the one making trouble.

Then Jesus did speak again. 'Today salvation has come to this house'

And then he looked me in the eye. 'Because this Zacchaeus is a son of Abraham; the Son of Man has come to seek out and save what was lost.'

And then I knew just how much we all must have hurt Zacchaeus, mocking him, distrusting him, keeping him out of our homes and our lives. We'd cast him out. But now it seemed that he was found, and I was lost.

Everyone moved to go in for the feast. Everyone but me. And Jesus. Who stopped, put his arm round Zacchaeus, and brought him over to me.

'Zacchaeus', said Jesus, 'Zacchaeus. This man too is a son of Abraham. I have come to seek out and save every one that is lost. Will you invite him in?'

And he did. And we who were both lost in our way, were found by Jesus and brought home by him, healed by him. You don't need to know my name, but don't forget the name of my great friend Zacchaeus. And don't forget Jesus: he still comes to seek out and save what seems lost.

Let Jesus come to you now. In a minute or two of quiet. With friendship and love and understanding.