

Poole Bay Methodist Circuit worship

Sunday 2nd November 2025

“Zacchaeus.” - Led by Dr Julian Tawn

This service can be found on my YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/61gW6lPZak4>

Good morning, friends! Julian Tawn here, after a couple of months, with online worship for Sunday 2nd November 2025. Today we will be reflecting on the familiar story of Zacchaeus.

Every day we meet with God,
but Sunday is a special day and this is a special time.
So, we gather together to spend time with God in Jesus,
in excited expectation that our lives will be enriched,
and that we will journey into the week ahead
as changed and ever-changing people.

Let us pray.

God of friendship,
you are our life's companion –
a guest in our homes
and our host in this world.
May we always be eager for your company
and, as we meet you here today,
may we be open to your transforming presence.
Amen.

So, let us begin our worship as we sing a great hymn of praise, “O worship the King, all glorious above”, which is number **113** in Singing the Faith. There is an organ track on the video, and a YouTube link for those who wish to use it:

<https://youtu.be/MWe1j0G-aM?si=NVyVHTBVQY1tii1j>

O worship the King, all glorious above,
O gratefully sing His power and His love;
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise.

O tell of His might, O sing of His grace,
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space,
His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,
And dark is His path on the wings of the storm.

The earth with its store of wonders untold,
Almighty, Thy power hath founded of old;
Established it fast by a changeless decree,
And round it hath cast, like a mantle, the sea.

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Thy bountiful care, what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;
It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
And sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.

Let us pray:

All-forgiving, all-loving God,
we worship you today.
We acknowledge your greatness,
confessing we cannot understand your ways –
but we know that they are wonderful.
We bring you all our praise,
joining our voices with your children around the world,
lifting our hearts and faces to you.
You, God of our lives, our hearts, our world,
we bless your name today.

Gracious Lord, who sees all,
you know all that we hide in our hearts.
We lay before you all the things that dishonour you and us,
acknowledging the damage they cause.
We turn from hate and greed and pride.
We ask that you would restore us and renew us,
transforming our lives by the words and actions of your Son, Jesus,
and cleansing us with your Holy Spirit, through whom you make your home in us.

The God who called us, calls us still:
cleansing our hearts and renewing our minds.
We delight in knowing that we are forgiven,
that we can turn away from wrongdoing,
that we can start afresh today.
In God's great love, we choose to live differently.
For Jesus' sake,

Amen.

Jesus, thank you that you want to meet with us;
that you want us to know you.
Thank you for your willingness
to step into the messiness of our lives,
to console us, change us, and celebrate with us,
whatever the season or circumstance.
Thank you for challenging us to live differently,
for modelling integrity and love,
and for your indwelling Spirit
who makes transformation possible.
Thank you, Lord, you are worthy of all our praise;
may our lives proclaim your glory and tell your story, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Our Bible reading for today is from the Gospel of Luke 19: 1-10.

Zacchaeus the tax collector

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.’ ⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.’

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.’

⁹ Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.’

Our second hymn is a call for each of us to hear and follow God’s voice, “Master, speak! Thy servant heareth”, which is a rather unfortunate number **666** in Singing the Faith. There is an organ accompaniment on the video and also a YouTube link:

<https://youtu.be/raPJHiezEhw?si=UI3NCfNFQEso7urP>

Master, speak! Thy servant heareth,
Waiting for Thy gracious word,
Longing for Thy voice that cheereth;
Master! let it now be heard.
I am listening, Lord, for Thee:
What hast Thou to say to me?

Speak to me by name, O Master,
Let me know it is to me;
Speak, that I may follow faster,
With a step more firm and free,
Where the Shepherd leads the flock,
In the shadow of the rock.

Master, speak! Though least and lowest,
Let me not unheard depart;
Master, speak! For O, Thou knowest
All the yearning of my heart,
Knowest all its truest need:
Speak! and make me blest indeed.

Master, speak! and make me ready,
When Thy voice is truly heard,
With obedience glad and steady
Still to follow every word.

Reflection

Jesus is determined to go to Jerusalem... His journey to the holy city had begun long ago near the end of chapter 9 in Luke's Gospel. Three times Jesus has told his disciples exactly what would happen once they got to the city. He speaks about himself in third person: *“the Son of Man will be handed over to the Gentiles. He will be mocked, insulted, spat upon, and flogged. They will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again.”* (18: 31 – 33) But the disciples understood nothing that Jesus said.

Jesus is intent on reaching the city, but there will be two interruptions before he gets there. The first interruption is a voice: *“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”* It was the voice of Bartemaeus, a blind beggar crying out from his place beside the road. He cried out louder even though people told him to shut up. Jesus stops and calls to him. *“What do you want me to do for you?”* he asks the blind man. *“Lord, let me see again.”* Could the man be speaking not only for himself but for the disciples who still don't see what Jesus has been talking about? Could the man be speaking also for us? *“Receive your sight,”* Jesus said, and it was so.

Then Jesus went on to Jericho and planned to pass through. But there will be another interruption. There was a man who lived in Jericho named Zacchaeus. We don't know much about him – except that he was a chief tax collector and he was short in stature. I don't know if he thought much about being short, but it makes for a good story. It is a popular story in Sunday School. We sat on our miniature Sunday School chairs and sang: *“Zacchaeus was a very little man/A very little man was he...”* Or maybe you never sang that song. Maybe being short didn't bother Zacchaeus. He lived before anyone played basketball and from archeological evidence it appears that people were shorter in those days anyway.

He probably thought more about being a chief tax collector. It certainly wasn't a dream job. Children wouldn't dream about such things. If your father was a farmer, you became a farmer. If your father was a carpenter, you would be a carpenter. Take Jesus, for example. Who would want to be a chief tax collector?

It wasn't just that collecting taxes was unpleasant, but it was being part of the Roman system. Zacchaeus was an agent of the state, a Jew turned oppressor of his own people. *“Somebody has to collect taxes,”* he may have told himself, *“If I don't do it somebody else will -- if I quit, it won't make taxes go away.”* He probably had that conversation with himself almost every morning.

At least, he was well off. *“Wealthy,”* according to the story. Short of stature, but rich. Some days it was almost enough, but not every day. So, he tried to list the positives: I'm a good supporter, my family has a roof over their heads and food on the table, and I don't have to beg in the streets. He knew people despised him because of his work, but he also knew more than a few who would take his place if they had the chance. Work, even unpleasant work, is better than no work. And so it went, one day upon another upon another.

He longed for something more. He didn't talk about it much, but he knew that making a living wasn't the same as making a life.

Then one ordinary day he heard shouting in the street: *“Jesus of Nazareth is here in Jericho!”* Zacchaeus had heard of this prophet. Though he usually tried to avoid crowds, he wanted to see Jesus. One day on

the street, he had overheard somebody say, “Jesus of Nazareth? Yeah, I’ve heard of him, but I wouldn’t go near him. He’s a friend of tax collectors and sinners.”

What if it was true? He pushed through the crowd, but people were already standing three-deep along the road. It was then that he saw the sycamore tree. He had always been good at climbing -- it had been his way of feeling tall as a child. He didn’t care who stared or pointed or laughed, he hooked his legs around the bottom branch and hoisted himself up. He felt like he could see the world, and he could surely see the man everybody was talking about. He felt like he could see all the way to Jerusalem. Later he’d go home and tell his family, “I saw Jesus, today -- you know, the man everyone’s been talking about. He was so close I could have touched him.” Just then, Jesus stopped and looked up. It was probably a second; it could have been a lifetime. ““Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.””

Some things you can never explain. Zacchaeus couldn’t explain why he climbed up in the tree, and he had no idea how Jesus knew his name. That day changed his life in radical ways. There was something about Jesus. Something in the way he seemed to know what you were thinking or wondering about. Zacchaeus could hardly believe the words that came out of his mouth. He promised to give half of his possessions to the poor and to pay back fourfold anyone he had defrauded. Jesus heard the complaints from some in the crowd – “Look, he’s going to be the guest of a sinner!” Zacchaeus was smiling a bit because he thought, “Maybe that’s the same man I overheard on the street, the man who called Jesus a friend of tax collectors and sinners.”

Jesus turned to the crowd and said, “Today salvation has come to this house for he, too, is a son of Abraham.” A few chapters ago Jesus had healed a bent-over woman in the synagogue. When the religious leaders protested because Jesus healed on the sabbath, he told them, “Ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?” A daughter of Abraham! Nobody had ever called her that before. I guess she and Zacchaeus are now related.

We don’t know if Zacchaeus left his job, but if he stayed, he would surely have changed his business practices. Jesus had set his face toward Jerusalem ten chapters ago. He didn’t plan to stop until he got there. But while passing through Jericho, he saw a short tax collector up in a tree. He stopped. He looked up. Then, he called Zacchaeus to come down. Jesus found him that day and Zacchaeus found that life was more than making a living. Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

That’s not a promise postponed until we die. It’s a promise now to those who have lost jobs and those who no longer find meaning in their work. Those who will change careers many times and those who feel so angry they have to blame immigrants from taking the jobs nobody here wanted in the first place. Jesus stops today to meet us wherever we are -- proud of our successes or ashamed of our failures. Something inside us knows that making a living is not the same as finding your life.

“Come down,” says Jesus. “I have a surprise for you.”

Amen

Prayers of intercession

Lord, the world is in turmoil.

Our nation is in turmoil.

Your created ones are in turmoil.

Come, Lord Jesus,

surround with songs of deliverance and bring about change.

We pray for an end to the war in Ukraine and for a lasting peace in the Middle East. We pray for Somalia where people are enduring drought and facing famine. These are just a few places in the world but many more are in need of your hand.

Come, Lord Jesus,

surround with songs of deliverance and bring about change.

Our nation, Lord, is in need of your stability and unifying hand. Bring order into the chaos. We pray for an upturn in our economy as more and more people struggle with the ever increasing cost of living.

Come, Lord Jesus,

surround with songs of deliverance and bring about change.

Lord, there are many people today lining their pockets at other people's expense. We pray for all victims of scammers, cheats and fraudsters. We pray for all enduring dark times; for all who can see no way out. May the leaders of your church encourage and build in your name, offering hope where there is none. May your church shine a light on our communities and reach out to all, including those whom society views as unpopular.

Come, Lord Jesus,

surround with songs of deliverance and bring about change.

Lord, when you called to Zacchaeus, he gladly welcomed you to his home. His meeting with you brought about inward and outward change. We pray for change to be wrought in your world, in our nation, in us your created ones.

Come, Lord Jesus,

surround with songs of deliverance and bring about change.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. **Amen.**

Zacchaeus would have felt a sense of wonder that Jesus not only spoke to him, but also transformed him. Our final hymn for today captures Charles Wesley's sense of wonder at Jesus' transforming work in his life, "And can it be that I should gain", which is **345** in Singing the Faith. I have provided the usual accompaniment and YouTube link:

<https://youtu.be/dC8HSEKtuio?si=BHOzfq503dZBhJrK>

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And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain-
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be,
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

'Tis mystery all: the Immortal dies:
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
To sound the depths of love divine.
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
Let angel minds inquire no more.

He left His Father's throne above
So free, so infinite His grace-
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race:
'Tis mercy all, immense and free,
For O my God, it found out me!

No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach the eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

A sending out prayer

Thank you, Jesus,
for being with us today and every day.
In our noisy, busy lives,
we pray that we may hear you calling our names
and make the effort to see your face in the crowd.

Amen.

Thank you all again for allowing me to share this time of worship with you. I wish you all well for the week ahead and may you feel and reflect God's presence with you, each and every day.

I am closing again today with a personalised blessing based on Numbers 6:24-26:

*May the Lord bless us and keep us;
may the Lord make his face shine on us and be gracious to us;
may the Lord turn his face toward us and grant us his peace.*

Amen

Julian Tawn

26th October 2025