

## Podcast

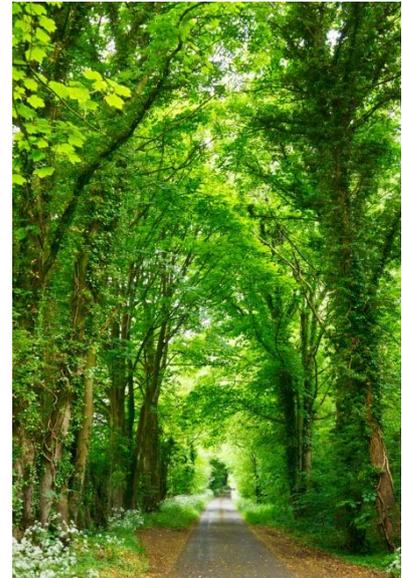
2<sup>nd</sup> August 2020

Luke 19:1-10

## Music

### Welcome

Hello, and welcome to this week's worship podcast from New Kilpatrick Parish Church. I am Jeanette Peel, the probationary minister, at New Kilpatrick. Worship has not restarted in the church just yet, but preparations are under way for it to happen soon. But for now, we meet again through the imagination of sound.



Welcome, to our podcast today, whatever time you are listening, or wherever you may be listening from. Cairns Church also join us again today so welcome back. But if this is your first time, or you have been here every week or something in between, welcome. It is very different from meeting together in one place, but that does not mean we are not a church community, we very much are, and are very much here for you.

And over the next twenty minutes or so we will spend time in each other's company, and as time moves on, we become closer to meeting in person. Until then, we listen or watch online.

This week we are in Jericho. The home of Zacchaeus the Chief Tax Collector. And again, we have a story centred on hospitality and redemption. Sometimes the smallest of acts can have a huge impact for others.

May we enter the house of redemption  
where the past is left behind, and the future transformed.  
May we understand and find ourselves doing the same,  
not grumbling from the side-lines.

May we find our own transformation  
in among the story, each entwined with our own.  
And in doing so recognise the importance  
Of neighbour and love and forgiveness.

### Reading – Luke 19:1-10

He 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.”

## Prayer

Let us turn our hearts and minds to God in prayer. Let us pray.

Loving God, from the beauty of the early morning until the setting of the evening sun, you are in each moment. You are there and you hold us in love and hope and forgiveness. Each new day offers a chance to start again, to move forward, and transform our being, our doing, to experience you.

As we come together at this time, wherever we are, we thank you for the opportunities that this day will bring. For conversation, smiles, acknowledgements, and recognition of who we are.

Lord God, we do not always get it right, we make mistakes, we say things we regret, we do things that hurt others be it with our words, our actions or even our silence. Forgive us and support us as we change our ways to show the way of your kingdom here on earth.

Be in our words, our listening, our reflections, this day. Speak to us anew bringing your words to life, to live out in our own lives this day and all days.

And now as a community of faith, wherever we may be, we come together as one voice as we say 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 debts,  
as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever.  
Amen



## Reflection

If ever there was a story that should make us sit up and listen. For me, this is it. Everything about it seems wrong. The traditions, the rules, the people. And it makes me question who was more in the wrong. Zacchaeus or the crowds? There is no doubting that Zacchaeus was unscrupulous in his behaviour – he was after all a Chief Tax Collector for the Romans and did not get rich doing an honest day's job. And he was rich. But he is the first to offer an apology to Jesus and the people. An offer to give away half of his possessions and pay back fourfold for any defrauding he has done. He is making amends for his wrongdoing. A modern-day restorative justice system perhaps. Meanwhile, the crowd grumbles on...

Zacchaeus, up in a tree trying to get a glimpse of Jesus. Jesus looks up, addresses him directly and tells him he is coming to his house. Zacchaeus is to offer hospitality to Jesus, but I wonder if it is maybe the other way round, with what transpires. But what about the crowd? Did anyone else offer Jesus hospitality if they were not happy with the situation? It would seem not. Hospitality was an important part of life and there are many stories in the Old and New Testament of hospitality being offered to the stranger and those in need. It was part and parcel of everyday living. Instead we heard that, 'All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner."' "

The name Zacchaeus is Hebrew and means 'pure' or 'righteous.' Who, in the end, was the more righteous, Zacchaeus or the crowd? Now, generally, we do not have people climbing trees when someone important comes to town, especially someone of Zacchaeus's status. But we have plenty who bemoan others for what they are perceived to have. Or people are cast aside because of who they are or what they have done. After serving a prison sentence, ex-prisoners are less likely to get a job, or even an interview, than someone who has a clean criminal record.

Discrimination comes in many guises. Some subtle. Others, not so. Zacchaeus was disliked because of what he did, and how he went about it. Working for the Romans, being part of the tax system, while lining his own back pockets. Not an occupation that is advertised today but plenty of people are discriminated against because of how they look, how they sound, where they are from, their race and background, what they do for a living. The list goes on. And if they are chosen for something, there are plenty who will mock and scorn and ask why them? What have they done to deserve it? There have been several reports of black people been stopped driving expensive cars recently - just because they are black. Prejudice and discrimination? Of course it is. It is all about perception of what that person should have.



If this were how Jesus had operated, there would be no gospel message. There would be no message of love for all, looking after neighbour or going the extra mile. But he did not. He came to show what love looked like. What being a neighbour should look like. What God looks like. He offered Zacchaeus that chance to start again, to transform his thinking, his doing, his very being to that of God. For Zacchaeus, it was a chance to be redeemed.

“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.” Zacchaeus understood. He recognised that he was wrong. He understood what Jesus was asking of him and did more than anyone would have expected him to do. The law did not even ask this much of him.

By accepting Jesus’ invitation, not only did he change his own life, but he changed the lives of all those other people he had ever taken extra money from. It is amazing how one small act of redemption can change so much for so many.

And where does today’s society fit into this story. There are plenty of unscrupulous people out there, ready, and eager to make money at the expense of someone else, someone vulnerable. But there are plenty of people openly discriminated against and not given a chance – just because... Maybe if we can be the ones to give them that chance, to invite them in, it will not only be their lives that are transformed but our own. Amen.

### Prayer

In our time of prayer, there will be a short period of silence for your own individual prayer to God. Let us pray.

Loving God, just as Zacchaeus recognised Jesus for who he was, may we recognise you in all those we meet, stranger, neighbour, colleague, or friend. May we extend a hand of hospitality for all those in need regardless of their situation.

We are aware that people who have been shielding for several months are now able to go out more and visit family and friends more easily however, we recognise that in this comes relief and anxiety. Help us to support and comfort those in this situation and all people who are worried about what the future may bring. Help us find the right words at the right time, even if that reminds us it is just by being with them in silence.

Loving God, as worry continues about the pandemic, may be reminded that some countries do not have the facilities and health systems to cope, that people are still caught in war torn countries with no means of escape and less aid able to get through. Loving God, may we find the means to provide for them, however that may be, and recognise that they too are our neighbour.

We now bring those we know and do not know to you in prayer. The prayers of our hearts and minds for those who need our love and support. We name them in the stillness and the silence.

Gracious God, accept these, our prayers, as an action of our faith, as we step out to be the love and support and neighbour to those in need. One and all. Always.  
Amen.

## Epilogue

Sitting up here I can see him coming,  
out of the way where I can remain invisible  
anxious to see and hear what he says.  
He stops and looks.  
He looks directly at me.  
He calls out.  
To me.  
A sinner.  
I fall to my feet.  
I will return what I have taken.  
Give away what I have.  
Today, I understand.  
Today, I experienced God.

## Benediction

Loving God, may we go out prepared to change the things we do not get right and in doing so transform the lives of others. May the blessing of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest upon us and with all those we love, today, tomorrow and for evermore. Amen

## Announcements

Our online worship, however, you may access it is here for you whenever you need it. We know things are changing slowly but this part of our worship remains. This new is more familiar and we thank you for sharing in it with us.

Each week you can find us here or online at [nkchurch.org.uk](http://nkchurch.org.uk) where you can engage with us in different ways. The church website and bulletin will keep you updated with all the latest news and projects that New Kilpatrick are engaging in.

A special thank you to Graham Charters, who shared in our time together to make this podcast. Until we meet again next week, goodbye for now.

## Music