



Thirty First Sunday Ordinary Time

Wisdom 11:22-12:2 2Thess 1:11-2:2 Luke 19:1-10

We've all watched a tiny droplet of water on the end of a leaf, marvelling at its beauty and fragility. The writer of Wisdom says to God, "Before you the whole universe is as a grain from a balance or a drop of morning dew." He goes on to wonder at the goodness of God who loves us and all creation as we are. God cares for us in our fragility because we are God's creation and therefore precious.

The story from Luke bears this out in a tale of love and forgiveness. The story of Zacchaeus is unique to Luke. It's amusing, the description we are given of a wealthy tax-agent who puts aside his dignity to scramble up a tree to get a better look at a passing curiosity. Zacchaeus would have been as conspicuous as a parrot on a branch because of his expensive garments.

Jesus looks up at the little rooster, and calls out, "Zacchaeus! get down I'm having dinner at your place".

Quickly and joyfully Zacchaeus responds. Opportunities like this, graced moments, may be fleeting and we need the ability to recognise and respond however unlikely the moment seems. His welcome of Jesus was like Martha's, warmly hospitable. Luke is emphasising that Jesus sees the *so called* sinner as the same as a good person when each responds to God's loving call.

If Zacchaeus response was joyful, the response of some in the crowd was the opposite, a ripple of grumbling discontent rolled around the crowd. It has ever been difficult for people to accept that God judges quite differently from the way we do. There is always an trace of vindictiveness in us if we think others are treated better than we are. We have to learn to pray for the graciousness of God in our dealings with one another.

The grumbling of the crowd was directed at Jesus, he should know better.

In the sight and hearing of the crowd Zacchaeus makes an act of trust in the goodness and mercy of God. He promises to give half of his possessions to the poor. Not just half of what he has but half of what he will acquire, meaning that his alms-giving will go on. He offers restitution well beyond the demands of the law to those he may have cheated in the course of his work.

Jesus reply is a spontaneous proclamation of recognition of the action of God. The sense of the words is that in Zacchaeus action lies salvation. In other words the

grace of salvation is made present in the saving words that Zacchaeus utters. This is truly a sacramental moment.

An encounter with Jesus becomes the channel through which God touches the heart of the other.

As other Christ's we too are called to be channels of grace for those we meet.

In the letter to the Thessalonians we read that we need prayer to enable us to be worthy of this great call to be channels of grace. We must allow Jesus the Christ to be what people meet in us, for not to do so would hinder the gracious gift of God.

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