

'ARE WE LIKE THE TAX COLLECTOR?' – HOMILY - 30 OCTOBER 2016

Last week we heard the parable of the ['Pharisee and the Tax Collector'](#).
Jesus told this parable while on the road going from Galilee towards Jerusalem.
Now he has arrived at Jericho, and will begin the climb to Jerusalem.
A real person, a real tax-collector meets Jesus.

Will this be any different from the parable Jesus told?

We know his name. It is Zacchaeus.

He is an [arch](#) tax-collector, what we'd call a chief tax-collector.

He was ['plousios' \(Gk. καὶ αὐτός\)](#), which we translate as wealthy or rich.

We know he was short in stature and had enough fitness to run and climb a sycamore tree.

He had initiative. He climbed the tree so that he could see Jesus when he passed by.

QUESTION 1:

WHAT INITIATIVE DO WE SHOW IN SEEKING JESUS IN OUR LIVES?

Jesus looks and calls Zacchaeus by name. Personally.

And tells him to hurry and come down, as he is going ['meinai' \(Gk. δεῖ με\)](#), to remain, at his house.

Rather than popping in for a chat or for a few minutes,

We, as Christians, ask Jesus to remain, to stay with us.

QUESTION 2:

HOW DO WE OFFER HOSPITALITY TO JESUS THAT HE MAY REMAIN WITH US?

We can grumble and offer excuses, but notice how Zacchaeus responds.

He hurried down and – ['hupedexato auton chairon'](#) – **WELCOMED** him with **JOY**.

QUESTION 3:

HOW DO WE WELCOME JESUS IN OUR LIVES WITH JOY?

Not a question of which bed or which bed linen,

But what change of heart would be welcoming, inviting to Jesus,

Not just privately but publicly as well, as witnesses to Jesus.

Zacchaeus decides that he will give to the poor and will reimburse anyone he has defrauded,

Not once, but four times the amount.

QUESTION 4:

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME WE WERE STIRRED BY AN ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS?

One of my favourite Church documents is –

[Justice in the World *Justicia in Mundo*, World Synod of Bishops – 1971](#)

The document still has much to say today, 45 years later.

It examines Christian witness to justice both in the **WORLD** and **WITHIN THE CHURCH**

And the **RELATIONSHIP** between the two.

Zacchaeus speaks to Jesus, and nearby people are listening to him.

Zacchaeus makes a **PERSONAL** and a **PUBLIC WITNESS**.

QUESTION 5:

HOW DO WE HUMBLY SHARE OUR WEALTH, OUR GIFTS, OUR TIME AND OUR ADVOCACY?

QUESTION 6:

HOW DO WE ACT JUSTLY AND MAKE RECOMPENSE FOR THE WRONG WE DO?

Jesus sees the genuine change of heart in Zacchaeus.
He says to him 'Today salvation has come to this house'.
He affirms him as a son of Abraham.

QUESTION 7:

HOW DO WE VALUE, TREASURE AND NOURISH THE INCREDIBLE GIFT OF FAITH IN GOD?

Then Jesus speaks of his ministry as he came to seek and to save the lost.

QUESTION 8:

HOW WILL PEOPLE NOTICE THE WORK OF JESUS IN US, BY LOOKING AT US?

We share with others the times we have been lost and how Jesus heals and saves us.
We too witness to Jesus.
But not in a boastful way.
Remembering the parable of Jesus last week, we can say too,
"God, be merciful to me, a sinner".

In this Year of Mercy,
We remember the many moments of mercy that Jesus has shown in our lives.
Like the tax-collector in the parable, receiving God's mercy.
Like the real tax-collector Zacchaeus, receiving God's mercy.
Like ourselves - as sinners - receiving God's mercy.

But wait a moment...

After the parable of the 'Pharisee and the Tax Collector',
The disciples sternly ordered people not to bring their infants to Jesus.
Jesus corrects the disciples who have put up barriers.
Jesus invites the children to come to him.
God's mercy is offered to all.

QUESTION 9:

DO WE EXCLUDE ANYONE; DO WE PUT UP BARRIERS TO GOD'S MERCY?

After the encounter with Zacchaeus in Jericho,
Being not far from Jerusalem,
The disciples thought that the kingdom of God is immediately to appear.
Jesus corrects them by telling another parable about faithfulness over a period of time.

QUESTION 10:

IN OUR RUSH TO HAVE EVERYTHING NOW, HOW FAITHFUL ARE WE IN PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE OVER TIME?

I invite you now to add any other questions to those above. (A few moments pause)

In a spirit of **APPRECIATION**, let us acknowledge the mercy we have received.
In a spirit of **OPENESS**, let us now thank Jesus.
In a spirit of **HOSPITALITY**, let us welcome Jesus joyfully.

Fr Gerry Hefferan – 'Are We Like the Tax Collector?' – 30 October 2016]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/103016.cfm>]

[Reference: [Justice in the World *Justicia in Mundo*, World Synod of Bishops – 1971](#)]