

## **St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall**

[www.stmagnus.org](http://www.stmagnus.org)

Scottish Charity SCO 05322/CCL No 119086

[www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation](https://www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation)

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Welcome to St Magnus Cathedral this morning. It was founded in 1137 by St Rognvald, in honour of Magnus, his uncle. The Cathedral belongs to the people of Orkney and its doors are open to all. If you are a visitor, we hope this order of service will help you feel part of our worship together.

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You can find our Sunday worship here.

<https://www.facebook.com/StMagnusCathedralCongregation/>

or on YouTube here.

<https://youtu.be/3tOuLXDD510>

Join our Wednesday ZOOM meditation by signing up here.

[stmagnuszoom@gmail.com](mailto:stmagnuszoom@gmail.com)

**Candle Lighting and opening meditation**

Like a glowing flame, a guiding star, a beacon in the storm, a light at the end of the tunnel, a candle in the darkness, God is with us.

We have come to be together, safe, warm, connected  
and to acknowledge our awe at the forces of nature  
The sun does not always shine, winds are not always still  
there can be turbulence without and within  
We know that storms, be they welcome or challenging, will pass  
and rainbows will come again as signs of hope.  
Let us celebrate life and storms in the Presence we name God  
Let us listen to the still small voice of infinite wisdom in the Silence ...

## Reading

LUKE 19; 1-10

Entering Jericho, Jesus passed through the city. There was a wealthy person there named Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector. Zacchaeus was trying to see who Jesus was, but he couldn't do so because of the crowd, since he was short. In order to see Jesus, Zacchaeus ran on ahead, then climbed a sycamore tree that was along the route. When Jesus came to the spot, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry up and come on down. I'm going to stay at your house today." Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and welcomed Jesus with delight. When everyone saw this, they began to grumble, "Jesus has gone to a sinner's house as a guest." Zacchaeus stood his ground and said to Jesus, "Here and now I give half my belongings to poor people. If I've defrauded anyone in the least, I'll pay them back fourfold." Jesus said to the tax collector, "Today salvation has come to this house, for this is what it means to be a descendant of Sarah and Abraham. The Promised One has come to search out and save what was lost."

## Reflection

We are told that one of the Archbishops of Canterbury, William Temple was one day attending a church conference in Fulham Palace. He was looking out of the window when someone with an urgent message came in, apologising for interrupting his thoughts. "Oh the interruption doesn't matter" said the Archbishop "I was just trying to make out which of these large trees out there I found so hard to climb when I was a boy".

Climbing trees is a well loved occupation of boys and girls whether they be destined in future to be Archbishop of Canterbury or kings or Prime Ministers. There is something strange about the child that does not want to climb a tree.

The same could be said of grown ups. Our concern this morning is with the much older story of a man who climbed a tree and that was to start a chain of events for this man which made a great difference to how he lived ever after. The story of Zaccheus the little man who climbed the sycamore tree to see Jesus.

Zaccheus was one of the tax collectors of Jericho. Of all the people in Palestine, the tax collector was probably hated most. You remember that Palestine was a country subjected to Roman rule. The Romans levied taxes and recruited people to collect them. Those Jews who did this were seen as traitors.

Yet outcast though he was, Zaccheus was determined to come into contact with Jesus. Why I wonder was he so anxious to see Jesus? If he knew anything about the way Jesus thought and acted he might have been expected to steer clear of trouble and keep out of his way. But he wants to see him .

I wonder if it is because Zaccheus was a man with a conscience which would not leave him alone. A man who though he had committed many wrongs and swindled people daily, but yet could not forget it all and sleep easily in his bed at night.

Conscience has amazing power over people. Take Shakespeare's Macbeth - a great example. Duncan was king of Scotland but Macbeth one of his nobles wished to be king and his wife certainly wished to be queen. The plan was that Macbeth should murder Duncan in his sleep. But even as he thought about it his conscience held him back. As he enters the king's room with his dagger, another dagger appears in the air before him, dripping with blood. Then as soon as he has done the deed the voice of conscience comes to him. "Sleep no more. Macbeth doth murder sleep, the innocent sleep that nourishes life. Sleep no more, Glamis hath murdered sleep and therefore Cawdor shall sleep no more. Macbeth shall sleep no more." And Macbeth didn't. Every night there were dreams of remorse, there was no peace for his conscience.

Perhaps that may have been the case with Zaccheus and he wondered if he could be helped by Jesus. A case of a bad conscience. Anyway he climbed the sycamore tree. Jesus came to the place and called Zaccheus down so that he could stay at his house.

Whatever they talked about it would not be about the weather. Zaccheus must have unburdened himself of his bad conscience and for the first time for long enough must have known a sense of peace and forgiveness. He had gone far from God in his tax collecting business but now, through Jesus, has been brought back.

Then after the meal together, Zaccheus stands up and says " Here and now I give half my belongings to poor people. If I've defrauded anyone in the least, I'll pay them back fourfold." The removal of the load from his shoulders had made Zaccheus want to show his relief and his newness in some concrete way. He knew that forgiveness if it is at all real, must show itself where possible in action.

Zaccheus is offering to make restitution for his behaviour. That is a lesson we can all learn.

There is the story of the meeting in progress at which several women were giving their testimony and saying that they had been saved. One woman among them kept silent. She was asked to give her testimony but refused. On being asked why she didn't want to she said "Four of these women who have just given their testimony owe me money and I and my family are half-starved because we cannot buy food".

Compare that with the story of the man who while he was an apprentice engineer could afford to go to the cinema which he adored. But he had a pal who was the doorman who let him in for nothing by the back door. After a while his conscience caught up with him, and he made a calculation of all the cinema tickets he should have bought and then sent the cinema a cheque in compensation.

The conscience is cleared by the forgiveness of God, yes, and also the person making restitution as far as they are able. Zaccheus saw that and acted upon it. It is no good accepting forgiveness and then changing nothing.

This story of the sinner with conscience comes down to tell us and teach us of Jesus' dealings with people.

We all know the meaning of conscience. We know we are not left alone if we have done something wrong. We have all felt it. The remedy is admission of our failure, just as Zaccheus said. That is the one way which our conscience can be cleared - through the mercy and forgiveness of Jesus and when he has forgiven be assured we feel the load lighter.

But having received the forgiveness, there is still the restitution to be made as far as we are able. We have hurt someone, it has been on our conscience, we have asked forgiveness and got it, then we must make a response before we are done. We go to the person and apologise. Then and only then does peace of mind come to us.

That way we may find the joy of Zaccheus, the joy of one who has done wrong, being brought back to a relationship in forgiveness. Every time our conscience troubles, this is the way for us to walk.

#### Prayer

We pray that we might be a people who are not blind to the needs of others or ignorant of the good we can do in the world.

We pray for those affected by violence of all forms— the personal and the indiscriminate. The abused children or spouse; those who are bullied; the victims of those who lash out.

What can we do?

We wait and watch, ready to love and liberate the people of God.

We pray for those affected by injustice: those who are forced to work for nothing; those who are barred on account of race, religion or social class, from the services and opportunities others are afforded.

what can we do?

We wait and watch, ready to love and liberate the people of God.

We pray for the world wherever there is wrongdoing: where there is mismanagement on account of maximising profit; where there is abuse of power; where there is evidence of the distress caused by extremist politics.

what can we do?

We wait and watch, ready to love and liberate the people of God.

We pray for people and a World in conflict: those mired in disagreement with neighbour or caught in the middle of argument; and those who endure a life that is influenced by the war and terror that surrounds them.

what can we do?

We wait and watch, ready to love and liberate the people of God.

May we move from watching and waiting to action and serving as we do what we can to take care of the world and it's people.

Blessing

From the big vision let us play our small part,  
And plant our feet on the earth and journey with Jesus, here.  
From blue sky thinking let us find the faith to live without fear of the clouds  
Let us live in the big vision by living in hope

May you stay safe in the Way of Christ, and may you be blessed by his Spirit this day and always.