



Vision and Commitment 2018
A year to focus on discipleship

Every day, in
everything
&
everywhere

Discipleship Series Sermon - Opening up (Including)

Bible Reading: Luke 19:1-10; Luke 18:15-17 (supporting passage)

Main Point: Jesus demonstrates the importance of going out of his way to spend quality time with Zacchaeus.

Intended Response: To enable people to not only see, but to act as they spot the 'person in the crowd' that Jesus wants them to engage with.

Introduction

Face in the crowd

Using a 'Where's Wally?' picture from Google Images ask the congregation:

- Where's Wally?
- How easily can you spot him?

He looks like everyone else until you learn what makes him unique. (Red and white striped top, bobble hat and glasses.)

It can be hard to spot a face in the crowd. Share an experience of being in a crowd at a roadside (maybe watching a race or procession).

Jesus is used to crowds. He's good at spotting individuals who need to be found. In this story of Jesus passing through the city of Jericho, Zacchaeus is the 'face in the crowd' that everyone wants to ignore, but Jesus picks him out.

What does this encounter have to teach us as disciples following on behind Jesus? This is a lesson we continually need to learn - it's all about 'seeing'.

Context

Seeing like the crowd

A crowd is a collection of individuals, but with shared experiences and attitudes.

- In verse 1 the crowd are excited to be meeting Jesus, whose fame has spread. What experiences or attitudes might they share?

The crowd want a hero - someone to bring about a change in their fortunes. They share a collective hatred of the Romans and those who collaborate with them.





They are burdened by religious rule-keeping and the judgmental attitudes of the Jewish leaders.

- In verse 7 the crowd have already judged Zacchaeus as a cheat, a parasite, a fraudster, a sinner. (As chief tax collector, he has climbed to the top of his profession, with all that suggests about his single-mindedness and greed. He is a man with considerable wealth gained at the expense of the people in the crowd.)

He's 'in' the crowd, but also excluded. This is how the crowd 'see' things.

Key Headings

Seeing like Jesus

When Jesus looks at Zacchaeus, he sees something different. What is Jesus seeing?

Looking past stereotypes

- Jesus does not dismiss Zacchaeus because of his profession or social position (Luke 19:5), just as Jesus didn't dismiss the children and parents who came to him for a blessing (Luke 18:15-17).
- How does this challenge the stereotypes we hold to do with class, age, race, religion, gender, ability or sexual orientation? Who are the people we find it difficult to relate to?
- [Illustration: Mother Theresa quote 'If you judge people, you have no time to love them.']

Looking past expectations

- The crowd didn't expect Jesus to want to visit Zacchaeus' home or eat with him (v 7). They didn't expect Zacchaeus to respond in the way that he did (v 8).
- How often do we limit our relationships with others because of our own limited expectations of what God can do? Who are the people we are guilty of not noticing?

Seeing potential

- Jesus looked at Zacchaeus and saw the possibility of transformation. No one else could see it (v 5).
- Are there people we think God cannot reach (even amongst our own families and friends)? What would it take to see the possibility of transformation?
- [Quote: 'Free the child's potential, and you will transform him into the world.' Maria Montessori]. It's not just children who have potential.

Offering real fellowship (not just a handshake!)

- Jesus surprises everyone when he announces he wants to spend some quality time with Zacchaeus. It had probably been a long time since anyone wanted to eat and talk with him (v 5).





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- Jesus looks to relationship - not superficiality. How does this challenge the time we are prepared to give to others? What does it say about the importance of eating with others?

Risking rejection

- Clearly, the crowd are not happy with Jesus singling out such an undeserving person. They mutter amongst themselves in disapproval (v 7). But Jesus is not swayed - even if it makes him unpopular (v 9).
- Don't expect accolades as a follower of Jesus. Noticing people others don't notice, befriending people others dismiss and valuing people for who they are will not make you popular.
- [Illustration: Lyrics of *God I Look to You* by Bethel Music -
God I look to you, I won't be overwhelmed
Give me vision, to see things like you do.
God I look to you, you're where my help comes from
Give me wisdom, you know just what to do.]

Conclusion and Application

Breaking with the crowd

[Illustration - show a photo of a crowd on an underground train. No one looks at each other. Everyone looks at their phone, or at a book or a paper or into space. It's a weird situation of being squashed up close to so many people who are trying their hardest not to connect.]

Church community should be the opposite. Jesus wants to give us new vision - new eyes to see people as he sees them. And not only to see - but to act as we spot the person in the crowd he wants us to engage with.

- What does it take to make our church community a place of inclusion and acceptance?
- What attitudes do we ourselves need to change?

Encourage people to have a conversation with someone they've known by sight for a while, but never spoken with!

