

# Pandemic Times

Issue 52

Sunday 21 March 2021

## From the Pastor



### Friends

Welcome again to worship during this season of Lent! My prayer is that you continue to know Christ's real presence through what has been a long and arduous season for so many. As a church we seek to carry that presence with us so that others too may be comforted through the comfort we have received (2 Corinthians 1: 3-4).

We had a brilliant evening on Zoom this past Wednesday as we continued our theme of listening together as a church. We gathered around Luke 15 and listened to each other as God spoke through the message of the text. I understand that not everyone is able to join us for these but please continue to pray for the church during this season wherever you are. Prayer is and will continue to be the lifeblood of the church!

For the next, and final, listening exercise we're looking to make plans for the church to be open for a day of individual prayer on the Wednesday of Holy Week (31 March). Our plan is to create a Covid-safe environment where you can spend some time in the sanctuary engaging with a number of interactive prayer stations. For those who don't feel ready to come to the church building a 'pray from home' pack will be made available. There will be more details on this next week but in the meantime, please mark it in your diary.

We're grateful to Vivien who is contributing to our worship today in our 'Brooklands Favourites' series. We're looking for different ways we can involve others in the service and this series allows for some to share about their favourite hymn or worship song before we sing it together as a church. We still need some more people for these so please, if you would like to contribute, speak to Mark Bolton or me and we can help get you involved.

At the end of this month it will be possible for small groups (up to 6 or two households) to gather outdoors. I'd love to use this as an opportunity to meet with more of you. If you fancy a gathering in a park, or a garden, or out the front of the church building, between myself and your family then please let me know. I'm still so keen to hear about you and your journey of faith.

We continue to remember those in our congregation who require prayer in these days. We remember particularly Brenda following Keith's funeral on Friday past. Also those who continue to experience ill health. If you have something that you would like to be remembered in prayer, please speak to Lucy or me

Peace,  
Mick

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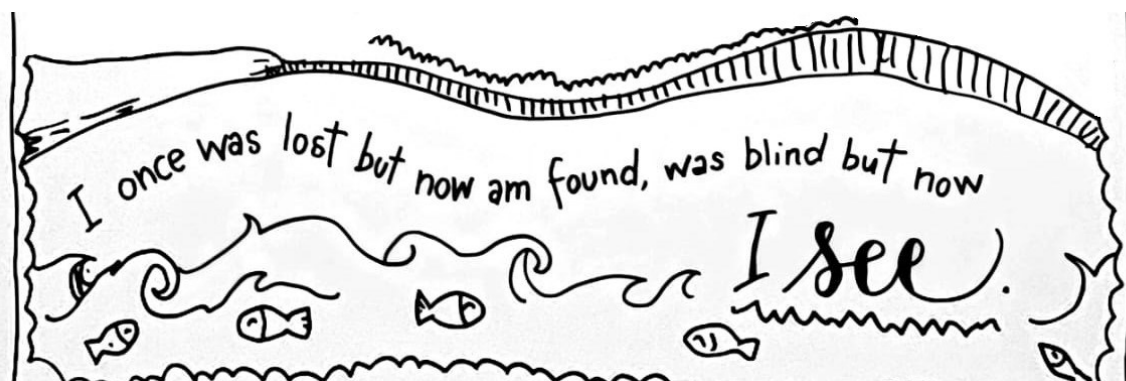


## Daily Reading and Prayer Guide

Date	Reading	Pray for
Monday 22nd March	Mark 16	Phil Evans and family
Tuesday 23rd March	Luke 1:1–38	Peter Evans and family
Wednesday 24th March	Luke 1:39–66	Jon Fisher and family
Thursday 25th March	Luke 1:67–2:7	Jamie, Maida, Jimson and Jewell Filoteo
Friday 26th March	Luke 2:8–38	Sylvia Findlay
Saturday 27th March	Catch up	Karina, Edwin and Kiyarahy
Sunday 28th March	Luke 2:39–52	Jean and David Hall

## Special Prayer Requests

- ◇ We continue to pray for Brenda Hambleton following Keith's funeral on Friday. We remember also the wider family circle in these days.
- ◇ Continue to pray for those in our church facing illness – Jon, John, Isobel, Claire S, Bill E.
- ◇ Pray for the British Isles South District of the Church of the Nazarene as plans are coming together for the District Assembly next month.



## Encounters on the Road to the Cross (4 )

### Zacchaeus the Tax Collector

#### Luke chapter 19 verses 1 to 10

Several years ago, when I was a pastor in Carrickfergus, in the north of Ireland, a young couple who lived local to the church asked me if I would dedicate their new born baby. As I always do with such a request, I told them that I would meet them to discuss it. It was a lovely meeting and the outcome of it led to a beautiful ceremony for their family in the church. However, what has always stuck with me about that meeting was a question they put to me that caught me off guard a little. They said to me that they were Christians, which was why they wanted their baby dedicated but they had never heard of the Church of the Nazarene. So they asked me, “what is the Church of the Nazarene, what does the Church of the Nazarene believe?”

Now, there are several ways I could have answered that question, I think. I could have spoken about the fact that we are a Wesleyan-Evangelical Church in the Holiness tradition, but I’m not sure that would have been too helpful to them and would have likely led to more questions. Or I could have spoken about the how the name of the church, the Church of the Nazarene, comes from our history of being committed to ministering in some of the most challenging and forgotten corners of society. “Can anything good come from Nazareth?” is Nathanael’s slur in John 1:46, indicating Nazareth’s status as a dismissed and forgotten place. And yet we wear the title ‘Nazarene’ as a way of aligning ourselves with our Saviour who not only hailed from Nazareth but often stood in solidarity with other Nazarenes- those on the edges of society; this is one of my favourite characteristics of our denomination, actually. But I didn’t speak about that either. The way I did respond can only be attributed, I think, to an intervention of God as, without hesitation, I gave this reply: “We in the Church of the Nazarene believe that if you’re a Christian, that should make a difference to the way you live your life.”

“Interesting! How so?” was the reply and from that I was able to talk about things like repentance and the fruits of the Spirit and even a little bit about sanctification (I didn’t use that term exactly, but we spoke about it, a lot). I was able to share a bit about my own story and the mistakes I’ve made in the past and how, in coming to understand God’s love and mercy in Jesus Christ, and through the help of God himself through his Holy Spirit, I’ve experienced transformation. I spoke about how some of that transformation happened quickly, almost overnight, and some of that transformation is still happening now as God continues to work in my life.

Question: What difference has salvation brought to your life?

What we see today in our story is the fact that salvation looks like something! Up to this point in our journey I think we’ve encountered some beautiful truths. We started with the question of a lawyer several weeks ago: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” And Jesus gives this answer, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself.” Okay, so salvation and eternal life have something to do with love, got it. And then we encountered salvation and eternity a bit like a banquet which all are invited to – especially those on the outside – but not everyone comes. All are welcome and the only ones to be excluded are the ones who exclude themselves. Then in the last two weeks we sat in themes of being lost but now found, of going home and being greeted by the love of a father who runs to us even when we’ve made a right mess of things – stunning images!

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At Brooklands, we are big enough to be part of a world-wide denomination, yet small enough to invite you to make our church your home. Please visit our website and contact us if you would like to get in touch or need more information on any of our events.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, we are holding weekly services on our YouTube channel, starting at 10:30 am each Sunday.

We look forward to welcoming you to our fellowship!

Manchester Brooklands Church of the Nazarene, Registered Charity No: 1159881

But, as beautiful as these images are. What do they look like when lived out? What does salvation look like when the rubber hits the road? When grace is received by a sinner, what does that look like?

Well today we find out because Jesus continues his journey to Jerusalem and on the way to Jerusalem he goes through Jericho and in Jericho he meets none other than Zacchaeus the tax collector. Now if you were to paint a picture of someone who was as far away from God as they could be I wonder what you would think up. Luke, presents Zacchaeus to us as an example of someone who embodies all of the characteristics of someone who is entrenched in sin and far from God. Zacchaeus was a Jewish tax collector, which means he was betraying his own people by helping the Romans in their position of power. Jewish tax collectors were despised as being sell-outs. But Zacchaeus wasn't just any old tax collector, he was a chief tax collector, and that meant he was despised among the despised. Not only was he a tax collector but he was wealthy. Now, if you have been reading Luke's Gospel closely enough you'll know that wealth, and money, and power are all highlighted by Jesus as being huge obstacles to salvation. Zacchaeus is the outsider of outsiders. So what chance does Zacchaeus stand? Surely someone who is so entrenched in sin has no hope? That is until Jesus comes to town.

And what Jesus does is interesting, I wonder if you notice? He invites himself to his house in this tremendous act of grace and hospitality which seems to be a catalyst for Zacchaeus' salvation, I think. When do you think is the last time someone was a guest at Zacchaeus' house? This man who is despised. And now the Messiah singles him out. Him! People are furious! "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner!" But these people haven't been paying attention, have they? Jesus has come to save sinners, not the righteous.

And so salvation comes to Zacchaeus' house. How do we know? Because salvation looks like something. Zacchaeus stands up and pledges to give back everything he has ever stolen, four-fold.

So I ask you again: What difference has salvation brought to your life?

Revd. Mick Kane