

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

October 30, 2022



PERSPECTIVE

seeing things in different ways

by Drew Downs

Years ago, I took the *Strengths Finder* assessment. It confirmed what I already know about myself. But getting a seemingly objective "other" to see it too can be quite helpful.

One thing it affirmed was an ability to see from multiple perspectives. The skill of walking a mile in other people's shoes. A great thing for gaining more info. Not so great for making decisions.

One of the challenges of adding points of view is that it reveals to us a more accurate sense of the world. Which makes it hard to "be right" about anything *in particular*.

Of course, being right leads to making others see we're right. Certainty breeds the need to dominate. To make *them* see what we see. So even as we see more perspectives, we may also gain certainty. Humility, then, is all the more important.

ORDINARY TIME

Autumn 2022

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

Elections

The Church of England was in the news this week. Not so much for the unveiling of their new vision for the next decade. England has a new Prime Minister, who is Hindi. And because of the arcane nature of the Church of England, he will be the primary advisor to the king in the appointment of bishops. Wild!

This is more novelty than it is significant, *sounding* weirder than it is.

It is also something utterly foreign to us, not just in the U.S., but as Episcopalians. We have neither a king nor a state religion. What we do have are elections. Elections for civic offices and elections within the church for *episcopal* offices (ie: bishops).

Our civic elections are underway as we speak. So it seems a valuable time to remember what it is we do when we vote in *any* situation: shaping our community.

People are social creatures. Our greatest gift as a species is our ability to work together—to seek a shared future in common relationship. It seems most clear to anthropologists today that our survival did not depend on who was physically strongest, but on who was best connected with others. In short, sharing ensured survival; not hoarding resources or besting enemies.

We have a shared responsibility for our shared community. And as people of faith, we are commanded to craft a loving, merciful, community. Together.

With love,
Drew

ORDINARY TIME

Autumn 2022

FOR SUNDAY

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

October 30, 2022

Collect

Almighty and merciful God, it is only by your gift that your faithful people offer you true and laudable service: Grant that we may run without stumbling to obtain your heavenly promises; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading

From Luke 19:1-10

"Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today."

Reflection

Zacchaeus climbs a tree to get a look at Jesus. To see him. Because the crowds are so many. And he is so short. He wants to see Jesus and all he can see are people's backs. So he changes his vantage point. His perspective.

And when he does, he meets a Jesus who meets him *there*. Not obscured behind the crowds, wallowing in his shortness. A Jesus who recruits him to do Kin-dom work immediately.

Perspectives can change. And often do. We, too, can change our own.

ORDINARY TIME

There is a great contradiction to Zacchaeus' perspective. He is, after all, a chief tax collector and is rich. Socially, he towers over others. But not so physically. His wealth, no doubt, can get him what he wants, but it can't get him access to Jesus.

There is something about *our* perspective of Zacchaeus, Jesus, wealth, power, and access that can become part of the story, too, if we let it.

Last week, a colleague went looking for representations of the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in art. And what she found was quite troubling. Recall that the parable pits two perspectives on faith and righteousness: one with a kind of certainty and the other with humility.

Artists throughout history have tried to capture that sense of certainty and humility in the clothing and appearance of the two characters—by representing them completely wrong.

- The Pharisees are committed believers, not wealthy elites. And yet, artists paint them in fancy purple robes and with a haughty stance.
- Tax Collectors, like Zacchaeus, are frequently far more wealthy, but are presented in humble clothes and postures.

Throughout history, by attempting to convey the character of the people, artists have misrepresented who those people actually are. And why their perspective is important.

Zacchaeus' *physical* stature is a metaphor. But it is his social and economic status that is far more important to the story. Because Jesus doesn't call up to "short guys in trees." He's inviting himself over to a traitor's house to eat with the unclean. As *hundreds* of "good" people are passed over for this honor.

And further, like the tax collector from the parable, it is Zacchaeus' sacrifice—how he arranges his life—to seek the mercy of Christ that shines through. Not because the good people aren't good enough. But because this lost sheep is *right now* found.

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