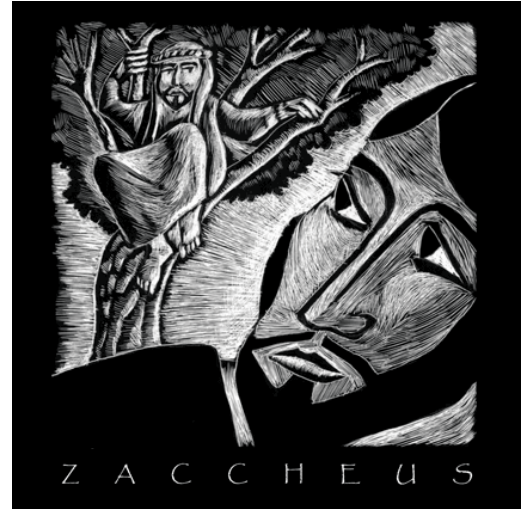


Thirty First Sunday: Year C

If you knew who I really am then you wouldn't like me. That is a sentiment that many of us share. If you know what I am like then you wouldn't like me. For the leader of a Christian community that has so many expectations of its priests I think perhaps those thoughts can be even more powerful, perhaps obsessive. If you knew what I sometimes think, if you knew how I've behaved, the harsh words I've spoken and the even harsher judgements I've made, I'd be afraid you wouldn't like me at all.



At its most basic, and when everything is stripped away, this is nothing other than a fear of being known. I'm afraid if you knew me you might not accept me. And you, many of you anyway, share this feeling too I am sure. Ask any priest and I'm sure he will say the same thing, 'we see people on their best behaviour'.

Accordingly, we all spend a lot of time and effort hiding, not all of ourselves, but parts of ourselves from others. Those parts we do not want revealed we hide in the shadows of our hearts. We think, as long as they are hidden from view we won't, I won't, be rejected.

In the scriptural encounter of Zacchaeus we hear of his shadows. He's rich and a tax collector, all of this is a matter of public knowledge. His shadow side is revealed to us too, however, by his own words; he has clearly disparaged the poor and even cheated and stolen from people, he has broken the trust placed in him. He is even lower than people realise. By his own words tell us what a public sinner that he is.

Like all of us he is a mixture of darkness and light, grace and sin. Christ knows that, for he knows all of Zacchaeus, and yet nothing of what he knows prevents him from calling him.

"Zacchaeus hurry down because I must stay at your house."

This Jesus who calls him knows him better than he knows himself, and not only does he not reject him, he stays at his house. Why? Because he has come to seek out and save the lost.

Those areas of shadow that we hide from others are not just hidden or lost to others, those shadow areas are lost to ourselves also. We need not fear that Jesus will reject us because of them, but be assured that it is *because of them* he is so interested in us.

Others may not cope with our weaknesses, flaws, faults and past but Christ knows them already and loves us just the same.