

Genesis 28:10-17 - Justin and Sarah Tivey

Luke 19:1 - 10 - Claire / Mike Botto

Dear St James - God has given us so much, we are so blessed, lucky, fortunate - we have a staircase to heaven!

Our first reading talked about Jacob's ladder - on which angels came up and down. But our dear forebears who dug up stone and carted it by hand and horse to this place 173 years ago decided that they could go one better - and we have 2 magnificent staircases going up either side of the West End porch, on the gable wall. All the better to help us reach up to God.

For that is what we are about - loving God, drawing closer to God, trying to go up one step at a time.

Loving God - with our heart

We decorate God's house with beautiful flowers

We give of our best care and attention

We come here, week by week

We are fed with bread and wine, body and blood

We sing songs of love and devotion in worship and adoration

Loving God with our mind

We read the bible

We ask difficult questions of one another and God

We read, watch films, go on pilgrimages

We seek to know more, to understand more

Loving God with our strength

We put up tables and put out chairs.

We take up mowers and strimmers

We bake, and we bake, and we bake!

And we make tea.

Whether our strength be great or small, we pour ourselves out for God and St James

Loving God with our soul

We pray - we open ourselves to God

We share our vulnerabilities, fears, shame, with God, and with him alone.

We share our joy, and dreams, our answered prayers.

And by these little steps, we try to walk up the stairs

To get closer to God.

For we are drawn by love - we love God, we say.

Yet we do not realise we would have no love to give if he did not love us first.

(Illustrate with jug and glass)

We are empty - we try to do things in our strength and fail.

So we look for all sorts of other things to fill that hole - sport, TV, gardens, politics - all great - all can be squeezed to give us a little energy or life or care for others.

But only God is the source of love, and he fills us up.

So our loving of God, our drawing nearer the source - is so that we might receive his healing love.

But do we receive just for ourselves, just for St James? No!

We heard today of Zaccheus - a man so miserly and mean that he didn't feel safe to go out in public. He had less than nothing to give - he was a taker!

And yet, he was changed, turned inside out, by Jesus's love.

This man who would suck out your life suddenly has so much love to give away!

How is this miracle possible?

Because God has no limits - no shortage of love, of grace, of money, of supplies - God just keeps on giving. You can't out-give God!

And Zaccheus receives so much love from Jesus,

he can't keep it in, cannot keep it to himself - it overflows to all those around.

In generous abundance.

And just like that little man, so we at St James share God's love that we've received - with those around

We make tea and cake for others at the coffee shop

We put on a festival in a field, - 5 short words, but 8 months of planning and a month of intense labour!

We visit the bereaved and lonely

We do crafts and cook breakfasts for families

We gather small groups around interests - like stitching or whist

We run coffee mornings

We write, edit, publish and finance a magazine to help communication in the village

We support young families, we go into school and work with them

We give money, food, time to charities, and we learn and pray about their work and the people they help

We actively work to look after the beautiful creation that God has given us

This is where our overflow goes - as we make bridges into the community, our friends and families - sharing God's love

And we pray, and hope and believe, that all those who receive God's love will want more.

Will make the journey with us, back over the bridge, into church.

And they will journey with us, up the staircase, up the ladder - to find the source of love

God themselves.

I wonder, on this Patronal festival, which bit of the journey most calls out to you today?

Do you wish you were climbing more stairs?

Do you wish you were carrying buckets of God's love out to others?

Maybe you feel your bucket is running empty?

Maybe you feel you're getting tired, or a bit stuck up the stairs.

We'll take courage

Look up - and See your redeemer drawing near.

Look down and see that you stand on the unshakeable rock of Jesus.

Amidst the fear of war in Europe and the worry of rising prices.

Despite the pandemic and illness and crisis in our environment

Yet - we have a hope that is steadfast and certain.

The Kingdom of God and The city of Zion

Cannot be broken or shaken.

God's streams of living waters

Will keep us well supplied,

We shall not live in fear.

While we know that God is near by,

He is leading us on, to our final home,

He has a plan and a purpose for each of us.

Oh God -

May your strength give us strength

May your hope give us hope

May your life give us life

Genesis 28:10-17

Jacob's Dream at Bethel

10 Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. 11 When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. 12 He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 There above it[a] stood the Lord, and he said: "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. 14 Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring.[b] 15 I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." 16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it." 17 He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

Luke 19:1 - 10

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. 5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. 7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." 8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." 9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Do you not know?

Have you not heard?

The Lord is the everlasting God,

the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He will not grow tired or weary ...

He gives strength to the weary

and increases the power of the weak.

... those who hope in the Lord

will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;

they will run and not grow weary,

they will walk and not be faint.