

Weekly News

25th September

JESUS: FRIEND OF THE OPPRESSED...AND THE OPPRESSOR?

Last Sunday we continued our new sermon series called 'Encounters', by looking at the story of the Blind Beggar in Luke 18. This week we will pick up where we left off, as Zacchaeus, the deeply unpopular Tax Collector, meets Jesus (up a tree of all places!)

The two stories are connected not simply by coincidence of Luke's gospel arrangement. They serve to highlight an interesting truth about the extent of Jesus' love: It can reach anyone.

Over the past century, Christians across the world have increasingly discovered (or more accurately *rediscovered*) that the God of the Bible has a bias towards the oppressed.

The poor, the marginalised, the widow, the refugee...all receive special treatment and attention in scripture.

So it is no surprise when we see Jesus' compassion displayed to the blind beggar.

But what about the oppressors? What about those who are responsible for the marginalisation and poverty of others? The greedy; the corrupt; the dishonest?

The assumption to make would be that they should be opposed. Indeed, in Luke 1:52-53 we read the words: "He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and the rich he has sent empty away."

Presumably then, if we want to support the oppressed, we must oppose the oppressor?

Jesus' response to this is fascinating. He manages to balance opposing an oppressor whilst at the same time extending comfort and hope to him.

In the same way as the story of the blind beggar, Jesus refuses to fall in line with the crowd and its assumptions. His willingness to not be trapped by binary thinking both transforms Zacchaeus, and also the lives of those he had been oppressing.

While we will unpack this story in much more detail on Sunday, it strikes me that there is an important lesson to be learned about the place of nuance and the need to try and understand those we might be tempted to dismiss or who we simply dislike (even if we do so with good reason).

Are there times when we get caught up with the crowd and make unhelpful false equivalences? (Eg: "If he's good, you must be bad!" Or "You made my friend suffer, so I want you to suffer.")

Jesus entered into the messiness of our world with a radical message of love and hope. It was a message which was offered to all; oppressed and oppressor alike.

As his disciples, we are charged with taking that same message into the world, and consistently living it out through our interactions and attitudes to others.

Peter

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CHURCH NEWS

SIMON MOFFAT

Barbara and family would like to thank everyone for their prayers and support, both during Simon's illness, and following his recent death. The fellowship and care we have received during this difficult time has been very much appreciated.

CHURCH MEMBERS MEETING

Please note our next Church Meeting is this **Sunday 29th September**, following the service.

The agenda and other documents are available in the members area of the website.

ORGAN CELEBRATION SERVICE: SATURDAY 12TH OCTOBER, 2PM

In anticipation of the upcoming building works and the removal of the organ, we wanted to give it a fitting send-off, with a Songs of Praise style celebration service.

A number of our past and present organists will be joining us to play a selection of favourite traditional hymns in an hour-long service on Saturday 12th October at 2pm.

This will be followed by tea and cakes in the Foyer.

CHURCH BUILDING WORK UPDATE

You may notice some movement of 'stuff' around the church in the coming weeks...

In preparation for the building works in the Hall (due to start on 11 November), the Street Pastors office/storage is moving to the upstairs 'purple room'. The current Street Pastors office (which is in the corridor between the church and hall) will be used to store Giggles and Wiggles equipment, before being converted into a prayer space after the building works are completed. If you think of anything which may be an issue as preparation continues, please email nbcbuildings@newburybaptistchurch.org. Thank you.

HARVEST & VOLUNTEER SUNDAY: 6TH OCTOBER

Our Harvest service will take place on Sunday 6th October, and once again include a collection for the Newbury Foodbank.

We will be exploring the theme of 'giving', including the giving of our time. As part of this, there will be an opportunity to think about serving God in various ways in church. A number of our groups are looking for new volunteers, and will be on hand after the service to talk about what helping in their group involves.

DEACONS ELECTIONS

At our Church Members Meeting on 29th September, we will be holding a deacons election.

The following people have been nominated to stand:



Name: Tom Clifton

Nominated by: Nick Freeman

Seconded by: Dave Andrews



Name: Tim Dent

Nominated by: Valerie Vardy

Seconded by: Angie Bryant



Name: Neal Rankin

Nominated by: Di Cullen

Seconded by: John Cullen



Name: Steve Vardy

Nominated by: Nikki Wilby

Seconded by: Daph Appleby

LIGHT PARTY, 31ST OCTOBER: BOOK NOW!

The Light Party will be returning on 31st October, 5-6:30pm, for a fun evening of games, crafts, food and stories. This is for all children in primary school (reception - year 6).

Online booking is now open, and invitations will be made available for children to give to their friends in the next fortnight.

You can book on our website [here](#).

We also need some more volunteers to make the party a success. This includes helping the children with the crafts and games, food preparation, registration, and a pack-down team to clear up and put the chairs back in the church afterwards.

We would also like a team of people praying for the event whilst it is happening. You can do this in your own home or meet up with others to pray together.

Please email Sian if you would like to help: sianc@newburybaptistchurch.org

Prayer Space

**Do you have something you'd like to share for prayer?
Please let us know by emailing: office@newburybaptistchurch.org**

Ahead of Sunday's Church Meeting, and with various church projects and events on the horizon, our focus for prayer this week is life at NBC. Let us pray...

Father God, we bring before you today our church. We give thanks for the life and vibrancy at NBC, and the sense that you are at work across the generations, drawing people closer to you and to each other.

As we look ahead to the Church Meeting on Sunday, we thank you for the four individuals who have been nominated to stand as deacons. May your will be done as we vote to elect them at the meeting. We thank you too for Carol and Di, as they prepare to step down as deacons, and for the support they have received from James and John. May they know of your blessing and be afforded space to rest and recharge, following a busy and often demanding two years on the diaconate.

Lord Jesus, we have been considering the proposals around 'Project Violet', and are mindful of our place within the wider Baptist community. As we prepare our response to this project, we ask that you would open our eyes to any barriers which may exist in NBC preventing people from pursuing the calling you put upon their lives. Give us an added dose of grace where there may be differences in Biblical interpretation, that we might listen carefully to one another with love and a desire to understand.

As we look ahead to a busy October, we commit before you some key events being planned. We pray that the organ celebration service would indeed be just that; a celebration of how that particular instrument has been used to lead us in sung worship, and its presence at key moments in the lives of many. We thank you too for the organists who have so faithfully played it over the years. May those who are sad to see it removed be reminded of your continuing faithfulness, and find peace in the knowledge that we will continue to sing hymns of praise for many years to come.

We also pray for the planning of the Light Party and Youth Weekend at the end of month. We are grateful that there are dedicated teams who give up their time to plan and deliver these events, and ask for both to be opportunities for children and young people to encounter you in dynamic and powerful ways.

As the building team work to make final preparations, we pray for Tim, Mark and Claire. Thank you for their willingness to take on the leadership of this project, and we ask for your Spirit to go ahead of us in making the paths straight. We ask that there might be no major or expensive surprises as the work begins, and that it would be delivered on time.

In all these things, we pray that we would remain in submission to your leadership and see the fruits of your Spirit at work among us. We ask this in Jesus' name, amen.