

# Sunday Thought

30th October 2022 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time

## Readings

Habakkuk 1: 1 - 4, 2: 1 - 4  
Psalm 119: 137 - 144  
2 Thessalonians 1: 1 - 4, 11 - 12  
Luke 19 1 - 10

## Uncertain Times

A few people have remarked lately, 'I don't listen to the 'news' much. It's too upsetting, unsettling and uncertain. I'm interested from a 'nosey' point of view', one went on 'but I can't do anything about it. It doesn't seem as though God can either!' The prophet Habakkuk had similar uncertain thoughts and may have been surprised to recognise the Lord saying to him, 'Don't sit there muttering among yourselves. Why don't you talk to me about it?'



Why don't you talk to me about it?' The country was in the grip of destruction. Warring factions and violent quarrels were everywhere. The prophet saw self-opinionated leaders opposing justice, while religious moral laws were being cast to the winds. And our country? What a sad week, when well-dined, well-warmed and well-healed politicians swirl around amid floods of poverty and columns of disgruntled work forces. Jesus would say, 'If only you would talk to the Father.'

Talk to God! Well, Habakkuk did and God told him 'There's worse to come.' **but** 'the wrong will be swept away by those who listen to me and trust my words. As for you and those like you who say 'Not my problem', there are four things you can do - Watch, Write, Wait and Pray. The prophet is told to make himself a prayer-tower from where he can gain a drone-like view of events, wide enough to see his part in it. Surrounded by prayer he is to write down on clay tablets, what he hears God say. The words will then be available for encouragement in the future - as they are still for those who spend time with the scriptures. So, Wait for God, trusting him even when it seems nothing is going right and then share what you believe. Prove the watching, waiting and praying is not in vain.

The psalmist's song today brings the same message of faith and hope - perhaps he would add, 'and keep singing while you wait'. He too is full of *trouble and anxiety*, but nevertheless encouraged by the power of God's words for all who believe them as the truth for today. We may share his feelings when he says - 'My own word counts for nothing - they won't listen to me - but I'm trusting and witnessing, Lord, to your unchanging promises written down for us by others.'

Paul has a similar message for the Christian Church in Thessalonica. He was proud of those who had responded to the Gospel there. They were people of the *prayer-tower*, living in their uncertain times for their fellowship, faithfully and courageously waiting, watching and listening. Paul's first visit to the city had been a comparatively short stay. Though he had been compelled to leave, he kept in touch with them and sent young Timothy to help consolidate his work. Persecution continued to afflict the church. It came from both Jews and unbelievers. Conversion involves the whole of one's living and thinking. Conflict was inevitable. There were issues of Christian standards and conduct, plus the theological ones like disparity over details of Christ's final return. Paul commends the believers for tenacity of faith in God as Father, and Jesus as Lord. Their trusting endurance was witness to the Lord's eternal truth and as a result faith was growing not only in the fellowship but in the wider city community too.

Today we hear the familiar story of Zacchaeus' life-changing moments. He too was having his personal *uncertain times*. Obviously, he had been challenged and convicted by Jesus' words. Maybe Matthew had been involved. Zacchaeus had a rather different *prayer-tower* that day – a tree!



Jesus was not expecting to stay in Jericho, nor to see the city's chief tax-collector in the branches of a sycamore tree! I believe Zacchaeus was deeply longing for a change of life circumstances – to no longer be a pariah among his people, outcast from their society by his service to Rome and his defiance of religious authorities. He had likely talked to God about it because he anticipated a further conversation. Not up a tree though, where it became impossible to hide from the crowd. There were further surprises – like the healer Rabbi knowing on which branch to find the short-legged enquirer, then requesting hospitality and a chat in a more comfortable place – at the Tax Office. Of course the crowd grumbled. The poor were to have half Zacchaeus' wealth and the cheated would be quadruply compensated, but Jesus could not do right for them. I hear him saying. *'You came to see miracles? What about this one then – a foundling has been saved and restored to God's family. A changed life is powerful. It can transform the whole city and beyond. 'Have the prayer-tower view– God's view.'* There are so many Sunday Thoughts today!

#### **A prayer of Thanks for God's Right Rules** [based on Psalm 119: 137f]

Lord, you give the same gift to every successive generation – Your Rule Book.

The simple volume of three commands:

To love you totally: to share your love with all, just as we would want them to share it with us:

to love one another in fellowship with you.

Sometimes we feel angry because others break your rules, but we must love them and pray for them too.

In discouraging times for our society, country and in world affairs

teach us to watch events and listen to your words

until we learn, and live by your right rules

helping to move the whole world closer to your will being done and your Kingdom of love, come!



