

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

For reflection and prayer

- **Habakkuk 1:** In Chapter 1 Habakkuk bemoans the fact that God does not listen to his prayers, let alone answer. The questions Habakkuk asks are similar to the questions we ask today regarding the violence, evil and injustice that we see in our world. In Chapter 2 he climbs into his watchtower to wait in silence and see what answer God will give him. The answer he is given is that he must wait patiently. God's desires will be fulfilled. But that doesn't mean that we sit back doing nothing. We must be part of the answer to our prayers. So let's be open and alert, vigilant and wide awake, waiting and listening and opening ourselves to God so that we are filled with His life and aware of His presence.
- **Psalm 119:** The Psalmist is expressing faith in a God of love and justice. Here is a modern paraphrase of verses from this Psalm from 'Psalms for Praying' for us to reflect on this week. *'Love is the great transformer, burning away false ways of the past, and filling the heart with Light. Awaken to the indwelling Presence of the Beloved. Envision the beauty that Love brings forth.'* Lord, how we need to awaken to Your presence within us, for if we did, we would awaken to Love and be filled with love and our lives would be ablaze with beauty, the beauty that Love brings forth.
- **2 Thessalonians 1:** Paul's prayer for the church in Thessalonica is that God will fill them with His grace

and peace. He gives thanks that they have grown in faith and that their love for one another is developing beautifully. This is surely our prayer, too, that God will bless us with His presence and peace and that we, too, will grow in faith and in our love for one another. So let's encourage one another and let God be to us all He wants to be to us so that we live to glorify Him.

- **Luke 19:** Did Zacchaeus want to hear Jesus without being noticed because he did not consider himself worthy? Or was it the people who despised Zacchaeus so much that they refused to let him into 'the body of the Kirk', so to speak? How many people there are sitting in our churches today who feel themselves unworthy. And how many people there are who feel excluded today by churches because they don't measure up. Jesus did not allow Zacchaeus to remain hidden, for Jesus sensed the deep need in Zacchaeus' heart and invited Himself to Zacchaeus' house for supper. And Zacchaeus responded with alacrity. Jesus wants to come and share the life of each one of us today, for He accepts us and loves us just as we are. It was Jesus' total love and acceptance of Zacchaeus that inspired Zacchaeus to change his ways and become the person he had always wanted to be. No one is beyond the love of God. We must reach out to everyone and make them feel special. But we can only do that if we know ourselves to be special in God's eyes. We are surrounded by people today who are seeking something more from life than money and material possessions can give them. How can we learn from Jesus about how to reach out to people who have deep spiritual needs today and value them, seeing them as dearly beloved children of God, as we all are?