EATING TOGETHER WEEK 2

In this series we are focusing on the stories in the gospels when Jesus ate with people. This week we look at Zacchaeus, in Luke 19: 1 – 10.

What do we know of Zacchaeus? He was little, and he was rich. Perhaps we can imagine that as a boy he was teased or bullied about his size. ‘I’ll show them’, he might have thought, ‘I’ll become a big man’. So he collaborated with the hated Romans and became a chief tax collector, with the power to tax his enemies till the pips squeaked. He was a big shot in Jericho. He showed them. He was rich. But he had no friends.

And then he heard that Jesus was passing through. He couldn’t see over the crowd, and he knew they wouldn’t let him squeeze through. So he ran ahead and climbed the tree to see Jesus. Maybe he just wanted to look and keep quiet. But Jesus knew all about him. He stared straight at Zacchaeus, but didn’t criticise or tell him off. Instead he invited himself to stay. ‘Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed him with great joy’, as Luke tells us. He had a friend, not just anyone, but the amazing man everyone was talking about. He knew this was life-changing. He had to mend his ways. He stood up and promised to give away half his wealth, and ‘if I’ve cheated anyone (you can bet he had) to pay back four times as much’.

We may not be much like Zacchaeus, but Jesus knows us, the good and the bad parts, but loves us as we are, and seeks to eat with us, and stay, if we will invite him in. Have you opened the door? It can be life-changing for you too, in the best possible way. Can you, in the name of Jesus, invite someone else for a meal?

*Produced by John Wilkins on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John Wilkins).  You can find more information on the Circuit Holy Habits Programme on the Sheffield Methodist Circuit website and also the Sheffield Methodist Circuit Facebook page.*