

(Trees in the Christian Experience) 2. the Man Up the Tree

by Roy Hession

The sermon teaches that true fellowship with God and others requires honesty and vulnerability, and that salvation and victory can only be found by coming to Jesus as a sinner.

Duration: 44:00

Scripture: Luke 19:1

Topics: "Christian Experience", "Grace", "Humility"

Description

Roy Hession explores the story of Zacchaeus, emphasizing that true transformation comes not from striving to be better but from recognizing our need for grace. Zacchaeus, a tax collector, climbed a tree to see Jesus, symbolizing our attempts to elevate ourselves spiritually. However, it is Jesus who sees us and calls us down, inviting us to embrace our shortcomings and receive His grace. Hession highlights that salvation and true Christian living stem from acknowledging our status as sinners in need of redemption, rather than from our efforts to climb higher in spiritual stature.

Transcript

Now, this morning we are going to look at the second incident, and this is the incident of the man up the tree, which of course is that well-known character so beloved of preachers, because they've given so many sermons about him, Zacchaeus. Actually, I feel almost ashamed to bring this old story of Zacchaeus to you, because it has been so often preached upon, even from this very platform. But may I say again, the incident, and it's a bit quaint in part, is not all that important, save as it illustrates certain great eternal truths, and I trust we won't miss them being occupied with the outward incidents of this quaint story.

Luke's Gospel then, chapter 19, it's the story, one of the great conversions of the New Testament. Zacchaeus became a wonderful trophy of grace, for he had nothing about himself which would commend him on the ground of merit to God, but grace reached this old sinner and did a wonderful thing for him. And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho, and behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, that is, the tax collectors, and he was rich.

And he, strangely, sought to see Jesus who he was. All sorts of people are in our congregation for all sorts of motives, and I suppose it was sheer, straight-down-the-line curiosity that led this unlikely character to seek Jesus who he was. But he could not for the press, because he was little of stature, and he ran before

and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way.

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste and came down and received him joyfully, not thinking that he, he hadn't thought was ever likely to be asked to entertain none other than Jesus. And when they saw it, and when something of grace happens in other lives, there are always some people which we call they.

They saw it. They all murmured, saying that he was gone to be guessed with a man that is a sinner. Actually, they preached the gospel for the Lord Jesus in saying that.

That was his great glory, his willingness to go to be guessed still with sinners. And that great hymn is based on it, Christ receiveth sinful men. And though perhaps it did look as if Jesus was compromising some, and grace, because it does such good things for such bad people, does appear a bit strange.

Look at the effect of grace upon this old sinner, because these tax collectors, all of them used to exploit their position, and Zacchaeus had grown very rich as a result of doing it. But Jesus in grace came to be his guest, and I don't think wagged his finger at him, perhaps told him what he was going to Jerusalem for, and that it was going to be for Zacchaeus. And Zacchaeus was so affected that he stood, that is came out of the house, and said unto the Lord, Behold Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.

He who had been taking half the goods of the poor is now going to give half his goods to them. And more than that, he says, and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I've only wished he didn't put that in. If I have offended anybody, that's what they say.

In the house of common sometimes, if I have given offence, if I have something, I regret it. Don't have an if. He had taken many things by false accusation, but anyway, let's be grateful for the repentance as far as it went, because it went a great deal further than sometimes ours does.

And if I've taken, perhaps we might read it, and where I've taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. Yes, he really did repent, and he repented in style, four times as much was given back as he had taken. That was a sort of revival that the people of Jericho didn't object to.

And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation, come to this house. This was a demonstration that the real thing that happened to Sir Kears, is his giving the money back and so on, wasn't the way to be saved, it was a result of it. It was a result of grace coming to him.

There was a demonstration, I suppose an illustration of James saying that we're not only justified by faith, but by works. Our faith in Jesus is justified by the effect it has, and there's nothing quite so compelling as when people, having met Jesus, are willing to put things right, and when needed, to make restitution, and to do so on a grand and generous scale, as God shall lead them. What an evidence of the real thing.

For he goes on to say, the son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Oh, I missed out that line. For as much as he also is the son of Abraham, he's still a child of that covenant that God made with Abraham, but a lost one.

But I've come to seek him, see, and I have found him. Now it would seem at first sight that Sir Kears was not like Adam, hiding from the presence of the Lord God behind the trees of the garden, because he is deliberately, and at considerable trouble, seeking to see Jesus. He's really anxious to see him.

The trouble was he couldn't, because he was little of stature. He was a short man, might have made up for it in other ways, in other directions, but not in height. And everybody seemed to be higher than he was, and he couldn't see over their heads to look at Jesus.

Now we too can see ourselves in Sir Kearsie. Perhaps you feel that you're not really like Adam. Quite honestly, you're not really hiding from the presence of the Lord God behind the trees of the garden.

Rather, you are seeking to see Jesus, who he is. You see, my very presence here demonstrates I've come a long way and prepared to pay money and be involved for one purpose. I'm seeking to see Jesus, who he is.

It could be you've been seeking to see him for quite a time, and you're hoping great things, that you're really going to see him here. But like Sir Kearsie, you may feel yourself to be of little stature. And because of that, you don't seem able to see him.

What I mean is, you may, many people do, all of us at one time had, and perhaps still do, suffer from an inferiority complex, especially when it comes to moral and spiritual matters, and especially when we find ourselves plunged into a group of other earnest Christians. We feel so small in comparison. They're so much more zealous than we are.

They've got so much more joy than we have. They can talk freely about the Lord and their experiences of him without embarrassment, which we we've never been able to do. And when you hear them pray, my, you see, these people, I'm not like that.

And you feel so small in comparison. And they seem to know their Bibles. And I don't care who you are.

So often, one of the effects of coming into a conference like this is to be made aware again of the fact that you are little of stature and to have a sense of inferiority with regard to these things compared with other people. And you feel that you cannot possibly hope to see Jesus when you're such a poor sort of Christian, when you compare so badly with others. And so we are very much in the same state as the Kyrgyz, seeking to see Jesus but being unable to do so, because we feel ourselves to be of little stature.

Well, because of this fact, Zakir said, what I need is elevation. I've got to get some elevation above these other people and then I'll be able to see him. And he hit on the idea of that sycamore tree down the road past which the procession was going to come.

So he runs ahead and in spite of his figure and his weight perhaps, he climbed up that sycamore tree from which he hoped to have a wonderful ringside seat of Jesus as he came. And there you see that man up the tree. And he in a special way is a picture of ourselves.

I'm absolutely sure that so many of us really are to be pictured as men or women up a tree, feeling ourselves to be inferior, feeling ourselves to be so lacking in our Christian lives. We seek to give ourselves elevation by climbing various trees from which we hope to get a real view of Jesus. We don't expect to be able to see him as poor Christians.

It's only as better Christians that we're going to see him. And so we try to make ourselves such. We climb the tree of self-improvement, trying to drop off some of the things that are unpleasant, some of the trays about us.

We've done it before, tried, and we're going to try again. And we climb up that tree of self-improvement, feeling only when we're better than we are, are we likely to see him. We climb the other tree of cultivating our spiritual life.

How many times have you promised yourself to spend longer in prayer, to be more regular in the study of God's Word, to be more involved in his service, feeling that if you can do all that, that's going to help no end to getting that clear sight of Jesus. Others climb the tree of intellectualism, and they like to have a more intellectual understanding of the scripture, and the latest book is duly studied, and so on. And if you went to seminary, theological college, or Bible college, that would help no end, you'd have a real leg up that tree of a more intellectual understanding of the Christian faith.

Now, I'm only suggesting odd trees which we may be climbing up. But it may be not none of these. Actually, only the Holy Spirit can show you what is the tree up which you're climbing.

It's something you feel you ought to do, but you find mighty hard. But you're determined to do it because that's the only way to see Jesus. It'd be something quite subtle.

And it's a wonderful relief, as we shall see, when in love for our souls, he shows that thing is the tree up which you're climbing. Now, I said these incidents, the important thing is the truth which they illustrate. And this climbing up trees illustrates the truth of seeking righteousness that is a right relationship with God, not by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law.

In saying that, I am quoting from Paul himself. He tells us in Romans 10, at the end of that chapter, of how the Gentiles, who made no profession of religiousness, when they heard the gospel, got therein abound. Whereas Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to it.

And then he asks the question, why? Why have the Gentiles got there? But the Jews haven't. And he says, here's the reason, because they sought it, not by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. And this is a constant tendency for every one of us.

Before we become Christians, and even after we become Christians, we're going to get a right relationship with God, we're going to get peace, we're going to get power, we're going to be used more. And it's going to come to us, all these coveted blessings, not by faith, but it's going to come to us by the works of the law, by our endeavouring to climb some sort of tree. And these trees, and there are so many and different ones, are all variants, at bottom, of the way of works.

In our common parlance, you know, Christians use phrases to express themselves. That's why, perhaps, clichés arise. But it's quite reasonable.

You can't forever be quoting a whole text to talk about something, and we use a word. Well, those who understand what the word means, it's just fine. And we use the word striving.

Striving. Well, as long as you understand what I mean. Well, this is what we mean.

Climbing trees, trying to do more, trying to be more, trying to improve, in the hope that that's going to give us the coveted peace, and the coveted sight of Jesus. It really means, at bottom, we feel we can only get a new sight of Jesus, and all that that will bring to us as a better Christian. And therefore, my endeavours must be directed towards trying to become that better Christian who qualifies.

But I want to tell you, dear friend, you're never going to see Jesus that way. And for this reason, it is getting that little bit better that's always going to defeat you. At least it does me.

It may be not very much better, but that little bit better. I care not how little it is. If I've got to be even that little bit better, it'll be that little bit that's always going to defeat me.

I'm never going to make it that way. But let's continue with the incident and the further lessons it teaches us. Here is Zacchaeus climbing his tree.

And when he got up there, he found, of course, the tree was full of leaves. And that suited him very well, because he realised he could see Jesus that way, without Jesus or anybody else seeing him. And so there he was, not only climbing a tree, but having got there, hiding behind its leaves.

So he wasn't so unlike Adam after all. What Zacchaeus wanted to do was to see without being seen. He wanted to see Jesus and yet be hidden from Jesus.

But he found it was impossible. For when Jesus came by, bless my soul, he came to the very tree up which Zacchaeus was climbing and hidden. And having come there, he looked up through the leaves and he spotted him and said, Zacchaeus, he knows my name, he knows all about me.

And the story is really much more the story of Jesus seeing Zacchaeus than of Zacchaeus seeing Jesus. And so it is with us. Whatever your tree is, by the doing of which you hope for such great things, it invariably has some sort of leaves, it has some sort of capacity from hiding the truth about yourself from yourself, stranger you feel, and from God too.

We can understand a man hiding behind the trees of the garden who's not seeking to see Jesus, but here's someone who is, and who's trying to improve that he might, and yet he's hiding nonetheless. We're not honest with ourselves or God. And what we want to do is what Zacchaeus wanted.

We want to see without being seen. I've very often gone to some special meetings, I haven't heard that preacher before, I'd like to see the way they do things. So I slip in, but I find that I cannot very seldom do that unless I'm prepared to be fully identified, because, bless my soul, though I want to see without being seen, somebody spots me, and then I'm called up to the platform and have to lead in prayer.

And I may not be ready for that, I don't know whether, I just wanted to see. But so often you can't. In earthly things like that, see without being seen.

And certainly when it comes to Jesus, you can't see him without him seeing you. You and I cannot be blessed, we cannot see Jesus without, to use a standard phrase, a moral confrontation with him. And the story is invariably far more the story of him seeing me, searching me through and through, showing me things about myself I never knew, rather than me seeing him.

Now this tendency and desire to see without being seen is particularly prone, it's particularly a tendency to be found amongst ministers and preachers in myself, like myself. And dear friend, you may, as a preacher, as a minister, have come here to see, but please, without being seen, without any moral confrontation with that Jesus, without any painful disclosures. Quite frankly, men have said they've come with a notebook, they're expecting to get all sorts of new insights to help them with their preaching.

They come to see, but it's impossible to do it. You don't really see unless we're willing for him to see us. But it's not merely a picture of one man up one tree, but it's a picture, strangely, of many people up many trees.

It's almost comic. Maybe in our conference there are many people up many trees, each hiding behind those leaves and hoping the other person won't discover what an inferior, poor sort of person they are. And so they don't make any disclosures, they talk very little about themselves, except in generalities, because they don't want the other person to realise how weak and frail they are.

But the strange thing is, the other person is feeling exactly the same about you, and he feels you're up there and he's down there, and he dares declare he's such a fumbling Christian as he really is. And we call that having fellowship. And in our prayer meetings, people all pray, and they all pray in that great generality, and we, all praying up their trees, being careful to make no disclosure.

It's a breath of fresh air when somebody prays, I, oh God, I want to tell you, I've had a bad day today, but I'm coming to the one who puts bad things right, to Jesus. You know what happens when that happens? Hearing you pray. Who's that? I want to tell you, when men, personal knowledge like that, it not only attracts the attention of others who are in that prayer meeting, but God's attracted to it.

If you want to get his ear, be plain honest. It's the one great condition of a happy Christian life. I've got in my Bible a quotation from the German writer who was put to death by Hitler, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and he talks about in one of his books that he who is alone with his sin is utterly alone.

It may be that Christians, notwithstanding corporate worship, common prayer, and all their fellowship in service, may still be left to their loneliness. The final breakthrough to fellowship does not occur because, please turn the cassette over now, do not fast wind it in either direction. The final breakthrough to fellowship does not occur because though they have fellowship with one another as believers and as devout people, they do not have fellowship as the undevout, as sinners.

The pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner, so everyone must conceive his sin from himself and from the fellowship. Well, all I say, God save us from the pious fellowship. Oh, it's wonderful when we see what we shall see at the end of this incident.

A couple of people who've made haste and come down to Jesus, and they can share their testimony one with another. But going back, the one that Zacchaeus was seeking to see wasn't up at the top of the tree, he was down there. And the one that we are seeking to see, listen, is not to be found at the top of the ladder of attainment, but down there on that cross of disgrace on which he hung at Calvary.

It was a disgrace. Crosses were the way in which they put criminals to death. And in subjecting to that sort of death, he was willing to be accounted a criminal.

Everybody thought he was. There was a criminal one side, there was a criminal the other side, it was obvious he must be one too. And he never disabused them, he let them think it.

He laid aside his reputation when he came and stood by me because the place of disgrace he took was mine. If you want to know what I'm really like, I mean this personally, don't look at a man who preaches occasionally, but look at Jesus in disgrace, in shame. Counted a criminal.

What sort of a man must I be if, to save me, he had to take my place and that was my place. And I'm seeking to see Jesus. I'll never find him at the top of the ladder of attainment, but I will down there as I come in spirit and take a sinner's place and own that place.

It's my place. It wasn't yours by right, but mine. But you laid aside your reputation when you came and stood by me because that's me.

But praise the Lord, in taking that place, he settled everything that stood against me. That old account was settled long ago when he cried, it's finished, and the blood was shed. And he has made available, as a result, all that you covet of a fuller Christian life, he's made it available to you as a sinner.

The great illustration to me of this story is that you can find salvation or victory or revival or power, you can find it only as a sinner. Jesus has made it available to you as a sinner. You'll never find it.

I'll never find it as the better Christian. I'll never make it in any case. In any case, it's been made available to me down at the cross, where the fountain's been opened for the soul unclean.

The blood of Jesus is available for my restoration and cleansing, and where mercy there is great and free and part and multiplied to me. And so the great word of Jesus to us is the word that he spoke to Zacchaeus, make haste and come down. You thought he was saying climb higher.

The word of Jesus is the very opposite to what we've thought. Try harder, come up to the standard more. He's saying exactly the opposite.

Come down. I believe if the word was climb higher, the message would be well received. It's coming down that isn't very easy.

It really pictures what repentance is. It means coming down from striving to confess the truth to Jesus. You can't climb up and come down at the same time.

And you can't be striving and repenting at the same time. If you're striving to be that person who's going to get the blessing, you are not repenting. Indeed, you're probably hiding the real things that need to be repented of.

You might be almost unaware of what they are. If you're striving and not repenting, but listen, if you're repenting, you're not striving. Repentance at the feet of Jesus is just about the most restful thing in all the world.

You say, Lord, this is who I am. What in the world can a man like me do to be an adequate Christian? And the Lord says, I'm so glad you're saying that. You can't do a thing.

That's what I want you to know. And there's something very restful when you quit striving and you start coming down to admit the truth. Say, Lord, I'm in bad shape these days.

And I often do. Sometimes I tell a congregation, you know, I'm in real bad shape these days. And they're shocked.

They, oh, they know they're in bad shape, but not the preacher. He's surely come blessed up and prayed up, but not always. But I've discovered to be clad, the way to be clad in the righteousness of Jesus Christ, to confess I am in bad shape.

I've had to tell them, I'm not filled with the Holy Spirit at the moment. That's the way to be filled. The way to be filled is to confess you're empty.

Come down, man. Don't hurry. Cover.

Come down to Jesus. And he's settled every deficiency, every lack already for you, in his body on the tree, and it's available to you on street level. And really, when you begin to come down, it may be around certain issues.

It may be in general terms. It's probably over something or other. Thank God for the something or other that precipitates a crisis.

And we learn perhaps for the first time what coming down to Jesus, to the cross, to find power in the blood is. Because it's putting us on the trail of a wonderful secret. And we're going to find what we need.

Not only forgiveness. I find everything there. Tears so often I am crying.

The very responsibility of Christian service makes me tense and striving. And sometimes sitting on the platform, I've only just come down at the last moment. I said, Lord, I want to tell you.

I'm all tensed up. I'm real worried. And I want to tell you, Lord, I haven't got any peace at all.

I'm just worried how the world I'm going to get by in this meeting. It's just fine. Anything else to tell me? You want to know some more? Yes.

What else? Well, I want to tell you something, Lord. I don't love these people. I'm not deeply concerned that they should be blessed.

I'm only concerned how I'm going to get by. All right. Anything else? Go on.

There's a place for a lot of it at the foot of the cross. It all gets dumped in the fountain, filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's name. And there, at the feet of Jesus, I am given the very thing, I confess, I haven't got.

Such is the mighty power of the blood of Jesus. And so, dear struggling one, the one who's blaming himself, make haste. Don't delay.

Come down! It's made available in Jesus already for you. This has all sorts of practical implications. As I say, we sometimes get a bit condemned by other Christians and their experiences, and their very way, and their joy.

They say, well, I'm not like that. And so you try to make yourself like that. Now, what was it that blessed him or her? Well, I'll try and get that same thing.

And there you are, up a tree, trying to get something or some special blessing, that you imagine is the secret why old so-and-so is so full of joy and free, and is so helpful to others. But as I say, that's only time again, the thing to do surely, is admit, Lord, I haven't got these things. But my very lack of those things, rightly understood, I'm beginning to see, makes me a candidate for grace in a way I never was before.

I'm sure my dear brother Stanley won't mind me sharing a testimony, which, in a little degree, he was involved. Some years ago, Pam and I were over in the States, having a tour, and after several months,

Stanley was to come out and join us for the last two months together. And it proved to be a wonderful time.

Well, in the months before he came, we'd gone round, and God had blessed, but sometimes only by the skin of our teeth. I don't expect to be blessed other than by the skin of my teeth. It says in any case, the righteous are scarcely saved, surely saved, only scarcely.

If you're saved at all, it's by the skin of your teeth. Is it fair to live like that? Well, that's how we were. We were praising the Lord, but always at the beginning, we always felt pretty weak.

And we arrived at a new church, and felt quite inadequate in view of the long series of meetings that lay ahead of us. We were tired, and we were feeling somewhat cold in heart. And there was a letter from our dear brother Stanley waiting for us, and God had been blessing him in a wonderful way.

And he told us the tremendous things God had been doing for him, and in his church, and so on. They were almost itemised, and the more we read this glowing letter, the worse we felt. We felt smaller and smaller, and we said to ourselves, how in the world are we going to keep up with Stanley when he joins us? But the Lord reminded me, reminded us those of the way of grace.

And we saw that our very lack of those things, our very failure to match such a testimony, was our qualification for that marvellous grace of our loving Lord. The grace of God is for those that don't deserve it, who haven't got what it takes. It's not for the fool, but for the empty.

And therefore, we turned the tables on the devil, and we helped ourselves to our very lack, our very weakness. We said, Lord, we haven't got this, we haven't got that, but hallelujah, we fit at Calvary. Hallelujah! Grace is for people in our condition.

And we were free. I wonder if that would help you. You haven't got this and the other, and you strive to get it.

Friend, understand that under grace, lack and emptiness, if faith and belief, it is your qualification, and bring it to Jesus. And probably the very people you feel have got more than you have, that's how they haven't got anything at all. And in some areas in their lives, they're relaxed.

And so I wrote to Stanley, I said, brother, I can't match your testimony, but you know, we've been seeing that need and lack is our qualification for grace. And dear Stanley said, I'm sorry, my letter had that effect. Well, there's nothing wrong with the letter, bless his heart.

It was the effect I allowed it to have on me. And it got me striving. And you can hear people tell of the great experiences, and it only gets you struggling, rather than seeing your lack of any such experience.

It's your qualification for that marvelous grace of our loving Lord, grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt. Yonder and Calvary is Mount Athos, there where the blood of the Lamb was spilt. Make haste, dear man, and come down, for then Jesus is going to abide in that poor old heart of yours in a new way.

The secret is in the coming down. And what is the result? Well, in Zacchaeus's case, he put things right after he'd come down and received Jesus into his heart. He didn't put those things right in order to be saved, in order to receive the grace of God, but because he'd already received it.

It was out of an overflowing heart, he can't go on with these things. You know, I heard a story from Major Batt, when I was staying with him some months ago, of how he led a homosexual, a practicing

homosexual, to Jesus, and he was saved. And he couldn't go on further with him at the moment, the interview had to stop, and he went away happy in Jesus.

But he thought, well, of course, that mean man needs a lot of help, he's acquired some terrible tendencies and habits. And he wondered, there had to be another deliverance, and so on. And he met him again, later on.

He was bright as a penny, rejoicing in the Lord, and he was free! He said, you can't go on with those things after you've known forgiveness. He didn't need any other terrific counseling. He just needed to know what sin was, and what God's forgiveness was, and the old account was settled.

And that motivation was so great, that things were cut out, associations were finished with, and so it was with the fears. He went as a glad, happy man, not in order to be saved, but one whom grace had already reached. And so it is with us.

Really, it's far more a testimony than a confession we sometimes have to give. Oh, you tell about a bad time, but brother, I'm sorry, here's this and that. You may not have anything to pay back, but well, the Lord will show you.

But this is the thing, it's not to be done in a slavish way, but with a happy hallelujah! Though you may not always easy at the moment as well, and I'm humbling for a man to go to his boss. It's been done, with tremendous impression on that boss, make haste, come down. And the results are going to be so sweet, and the other thing that happens, I like to think, is that you meet others who've come down.

There was a time when you were each scared of one another, but first one man's come down, then another. And you meet one another around the cross, and you give your testimony, and we're no longer afraid of one another. We love one another.

I would say this is a lovely picture of how revival can come to a church. One man in that church begins to come down, and because some of the things that have happened need to be put right with the church, or with his brothers, and he feels he owes them a testimony, because he's been a bit of a fraud all this time, he comes down, and people know he's come down. Well, of course, that puts somebody else on the spot.

They've been just the same. And the dear Holy Spirit begins to work in that manner. He starts coming down, and he says to the pastor, can I give a testimony? Doesn't always work by public testimony, it could.

And somebody else comes down. And so it goes on. And sometimes the blessing of one meeting can ricochet for weeks afterwards.

First one coming down, then another coming down. What happens? They meet together. They're a revived group because they're a penitent group, and they've found peace.

Not as better Christians, but they've found it as sinners. And it is not a pious fellowship. Well, maybe in your church you've got a long way to go yet for that pious fellowship to become a sinner's fellowship.

But start with yourself. And God knows what the tree is up which we've been climbing. All our struggle has been so hard, but of course it is, it always is, climbing up.

But oh, the rest and peace when we have come down. We don't mind giving our testimonies. Not that testimony is always to be given publicly, it's to the next person.

That's the way. And remember, it's much more testimony than confession. We don't want to know merely, or the other person may not be all that interested about a certain thing, but are you praising? Yes.

Oh, I've had a bad time. I've struggled with this, but I'm free at last. Where is it? I am too.

And so it goes on. So there's the story of the man up the tree. And they come down, even as Jesus came down for us.

Let us pray. Yes, it was a coming down for him. None of us can judge it.

And maybe it's because of our reputations that we don't come down. But he laid aside his reputation. In being identified with people like that, like us, he couldn't do it without laying aside his reputation.

Like that doctor that couldn't stand by his drunken wife without losing his reputation in the eyes of that town. Let's thank him. It'll help us to see him again and encourage us to come down.

He laid aside his reputation when he came and stood by me. So we say the grace together. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.

Amen.

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