

Are you weighed down by possessions?



Kathryn Fleming *reflects on* Hebrews 4:12-end and Mark 10:17-31

The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword," says the reading from Hebrews today.

Ouch – I just cut myself on scripture!

Indeed, I do so whenever I hear Jesus' words to that rich young man, who has somehow become possessed by his own possessions and just can't let go. Perhaps, like me, you'd love to be the kind of person who really does put the kingdom of God before everything else, but who struggles to jettison precious inessentials that we seem to take a lifetime to accumulate. On a good day, perhaps we can sit reasonably lightly to our material possessions, but sitting lightly to our relationships is another matter altogether. The prospect of leaving children, in particular, for Jesus' sake is quite simply impossible for me to contemplate. So, what am I, what are we, to do with these challenging, uncompromising words?

Thankfully, we have two comforts in today's readings.

To quote my son in his teenage years "Jesus gets it." Or, if you prefer the words from Hebrews: "we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses". No matter how abject and frequent our failures, Jesus understands the tangled muddle of motivations and longings that shape our actions, and if we can't order our priorities properly ourselves, there's the immeasurable comfort that "for God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26), even when we can't quite let go. 🍷

Gracious God, when we fail to put you first, when we lean on other things, when we are tempted to give up following altogether, thank you that you understand and love us still. Help us to trust you always. Amen.

People of the New Testament

Part 5 – Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)

by Caroline Fletcher

Caroline explains what inspired her to write about one of the characters in her new book.

The author Michael Card has called Zacchaeus "a genuinely bad man". And it's true that to have risen to the position of chief tax collector, he is likely to have been particularly corrupt in a system based upon greed and deceitfulness.

The Law demanded that he repay what he had taken plus a

fifth, although after his encounter with Christ, he promised to repay four times the amount he had embezzled and to give half his possessions to poor people.

Luke's readers would have been shocked at Zacchaeus' wholehearted repentance. Christ's unconditional love melted this man's heart and turned him completely around. And all these centuries later, Christ's love continues to overwhelm and transform the unlikeliest of people, no matter who they are and what they have done. 🍷

“ Whatever we do that creates deadness is a sin.”

John V. Taylor (1914-2001), Anglican bishop

Prison chaplaincy

by Heather Smith

Today is Prisons Sunday, which is held each year on the second Sunday in October and marks the start of Prisons Week. For forty years, Prisons Week has prepared prayer literature to enable the Christian community, both individuals and churches, to pray for prisoners and their families, for victims of crime and their communities, as well as for those who work in the criminal justice system.

The aim of Prisons Week is to encourage prayer and awareness. It motivates volunteers to step forward and give their time and gifts, whether in prison or in their own community. It provides an annual focus and reason for Christians to work together, building capacity and motivation to make a difference for people who are out of sight and often out of mind.

We will be looking at prison chaplaincy over the coming weeks. In the meantime you can find out more at: <http://prisonsweek.org> 🍷