

# How high can you go?

Caroline Hodgson *reflects on* Luke 19:1-10 and Luke 6:20-31

There's a choice of Gospel readings today, depending on whether you are observing All Saints' Day or the Fourth Sunday before Advent. It's worth looking at these passages side by side. In the reading for All Saints', from Luke 6, we hear four of the Beatitudes listed. The last one can trip us up, stop us in our tracks: "What's that you say? I'm blessed when people hate... exclude... revile... defame me on account of the Son of Man?" I should rejoice and leap for joy? How am I supposed to spread the good news if no one likes me? Surely I have an obligation to be likeable for the sake of my faith?

Just to be clear – this isn't about being bullied – nobody should ever put up with that. Nor is it about being a doormat. Nor is Jesus telling his listeners to go out of their way to be unlikeable. We don't have to look far to find a good example of the kind of thing he might mean. In the other reading set for today, from Luke 19, we meet Zacchaeus. His example is inspirational because he has the courage to do the right thing, to seek out the truth, despite his unpopularity. And despite his short stature. He recognises Jesus and he isn't going to let anything get in the way of an encounter with him.

Never mind what people think of us – meeting the Son of Man is worth risking everything for – even, if it comes to it, unpopularity or shinning up the nearest tree. 🌳

## The creeds

*A four-part series in which Kathryn Fleming examines the Christian creeds*

In the earliest days the Church Fathers spoke of a "rule of faith" – beliefs held "always, everywhere, by all" – which are both a series of intellectual propositions and a framework for daily living. Prime among them is the simple life-changing "Jesus is Lord!" To declare this is the start of everything – but may not be enough to ensure unanimity of purpose – and so, with institutional efficiency, the early Church formed a committee – and the process of establishing the creeds began.

The creeds provide a snapshot of our corporate identity as the Church, a Church growing from deep roots in a historic tradition that helps us to frame our experience of God's activity in our own lives and our world. Each of us meets God in different ways, which can contribute to our collective understanding. But since the Church is greater than the sum of its parts, a body of systematic and agreed statements of faith confirms our corporate identity and ensures we're heading in the same direction. 🌳



Lord God, thank you for the Beatitudes, for the example of the saints and for the story of Zacchaeus. Teach me courage, confidence and commitment – not in myself, but in you. Amen.

## Richard Hooker (1554-1600)

by Alan Jefferies

Richard Hooker, who is commemorated tomorrow, was born and raised in Devon and attended Oxford University, where he developed a deep commitment to church tradition. He is traditionally regarded as having mediated between Protestantism and Catholicism – some even accused him of trying to move the Protestant Church back towards Catholicism. It's probably more accurate to say that he was opposed to the Puritanism which was becoming increasingly extreme in the

late sixteenth century, and that he advocated for a moderate approach. He believed faith should be grounded in scripture and church tradition and emphasised the importance of reason as a guide for Christian practice and belief.

His best-known work is *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. Although the term "Anglican" is not found in his writings and didn't come into general use until the nineteenth century, Hooker is considered to be one of the most influential figures in the development of Anglican thought and theology. 🌳

“Our safest eloquence is our silence, confessing without confession that His glory is inexplicable and His greatness above our capacity and reach.”

Richard Hooker, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*