

Jesus was passing through Jericho¹

Alan Gaunt (1935 -)

Tune: JERICHO SONG - A. Ian Sharp (1943 -)

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Jesus was passing
through Jericho,
the street was crowded
with people, so
little Zacchaeus
couldn't get through.
Eager to see him,
what could he do?

Little Zacchaeus,
eager to see,
ran on ahead and
climbed up a tree;
he sat there watching
from up on high,
waiting for Jesus
to pass him by.

There was Zacchaeus
perched like a bird;
along came Jesus
and then occurred
the thrilling moment,
the great surprise:
Zacchaeus could not
believe his eyes!

Jesus was stopping
under the tree;
saying, 'Zacchaeus,
climb down to me.
Come and invite me
without delay,
and I will stay at
your house today.'

¹ Alan Gaunt, *Delight that Never Dies: Hymn Texts 1997-2003 by Alan Gaunt*: (London: Stainer and Bell, 2003), no. 6.

Lonely Zacchaeus
had been so sad;
as host to Jesus,
he felt so glad!
God's child forgiven,
a life made new!
This is the story
of me and you.

Reflection: Ian Sharp

Scripture reference: Luke 19: 1-10

The author's own note explains that this is 'a song for all-age worship. Designed, of course, not to be used in isolation but as a supplement to the reading or telling of the whole story.' It is entirely suitable for this purpose, and indeed reinforces the axiom that what is learnt as a child should never have to be unlearnt as an adult. Written to be sung, it could equally well be read aloud, as a passage of prose. (Try it!)

There are other texts about this subject. Many of us will be familiar with the traditional children's song, 'Zacchaeus was a very little man / and a very little man was he' (anon.), with its associated actions of climbing, looking and walking. And the rhyming of 'tree' with 'tea' makes it fun to sing. But Alan Gaunt's song takes us beyond teatime and reminds us that the story is relevant for all of us. 'God's child forgiven, a life made new! This is the story of me and you'. Yes, me and you!

Alan Gaunt, a former Executive President of our Society, is both poet and pastor, and his corpus of writing is a testament to his sensitive command of language and his understanding of the needs of worshippers. He is rightly regarded as one of the leading writers of recent times. To quote from Professor Richard Watson's Foreword to *Delight that Never Dies*:

During the last thirty or more years, Alan Gaunt's hymns have become well known and much loved by those who value serious hymnody. To those for whom contemporary worship is, in part, a difficult, anxious wrestling with the problems of everyday life, they are an expression of a Christian Spirituality which meets this age and confronts it. They are trying to understand and come to terms with it, carrying into the twenty-first century both hope and faith.

Alan's song, 'Jesus was passing through Jericho' invites us, with hope and faith, to invite Jesus to stay at our house, for like Zacchaeus, we too can be a host to Jesus.

The tune, JERICHO SONG, was written by me for this text.

A prayer, commending those, like Zaccheaus, who followed God's call.

The words are the first verse of a hymn by Marjorie Dobson (1940 -)²

*The Bible is full of adventures of faith
of people who followed God's call;
from Abram and Moses to Peter and John,
from Samuel and David to Paul.
'Whatever I do you can do,' God said.
'Wherever I go, you can follow.
Power will be given for your work today,
if you trust in me for tomorrow.'*

Amen.

Ian Sharp

² Marjorie Dobson *Multi-coloured Maze*, (London: Stainer and Bell, 2004), pp. 44-5.