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A few days ago I wrote a reflection, and I posted it online, and in this reflection I admitted to something. I admitted that I don't always find God in the places that I used to. You see, the past handful of years has contained a lot for me. I imagine it's contained a lot for you as well. In the past handful of years I've witnessed the death of a beloved parent, I've gone through a divorce, I've rebuilt my call and sense of ministry, and I've witnessed so much trauma and heartache in the lives of my loved ones and the lives of the entire world. And all of this has shaped me. It's changed me, it has re-shaped and molded my heart. Writer Anne Lamott talks about prayers as falling into the categories of help, thanks, and wow. And while I find these categories really helpful I've found myself just as often uttering the prayers help, damn, and why.

So in this post that I wrote I confessed a gratitude for this more complex, more intimate faith, while also grieving the loss of a simpler faith contained solely within the box of Sunday mornings.

My confession acted as an invitation and I began hearing the stories of countless others who too are seeking the holy, who too are struggling to find the Divine in places that they used to, and instead encountering God in previously unexplored places, in places they would not have expected.

Today in Luke's gospel we hear the story of one seeking out the holy, Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus the wee little man that so many of us learned about in Sunday school. So eager is Zacchaeus to encounter the divine that he climbs high up in a tree as Jesus passes by. Now at first glimpse it seems as if Zacchaeus might be satisfying a curiosity, he might be dying to see for himself what this Jesus guy is all about. For whenever Jesus passes through a town, there are as many people coming out so that they might catch a spectacle as there are people coming out who want to encounter God and who expect to have their lives transformed. Who's to say what Zacchaeus's motives were that day but something happened that day that altered the trajectory of Zacchaeus's life: he didn't simply see Jesus, Jesus saw him.

Being seen, being truly seen, is a basic human need but we do plenty to keep ourselves from being seen, at least fully. To be fully seen feels vulnerable and vulnerability is at its root the risk of emotional exposure. Now the word exposure makes us all want to cover up if we're thinking about exposure to the elements we put on heavy coats and gloves. If we're talking about exposure to a virus we put on masks and stay inside. Exposure feels scary.

When we're seen in our wholeness, we can also be seen in our brokenness. Now several years ago I was talking to someone who was interested in coming here to St Martin's and they said, "I don't think I can come, not at least right now, because everyone there has it all together."

Now having been behind closed doors with many of you and being in some deep pastoral relationships I resisted the urge to respond "Oh, honey, if you only knew." The truth is we're all a little bit broken.

When Zacchaeus was seen he was called out by Jesus. "Zacchaeus, I'm coming to your house" and his vulnerabilities were put on display. His status as one who exploited others and made his money dishonestly were discussed widely. Perhaps even his stature, which he might have been ashamed of, was seen fully, but it wasn't just brokenness that Jesus saw in Zacchaeus. Jesus saw the wholeness to which we are all called.

So yes, I imagine many of us are trying to see the holy but are we allowing ourselves to be seen. As part of my ministry I teach in the work of Dr Brené Brown who's a sociologist. Brené teaches on vulnerability and self-compassion and empathy and so many of the building blocks that allow us to be our best selves and to be in right relationship with one another. One of the questions Brené asked is this: where in your lives do you want to show up, be seen and live brave? Where do you want to show up, be seen, and live brave? None of those questions can be isolated from the other. There's no showing up without being seen and all of that requires a whole lot of courage

So what does it mean to be seen? Being seen means so many things, it means claiming the unique gifts that we have. The unique gifts that each of us has been given by the Divine and being able to share those gifts boldly with the world. Being seen means admitting that we're struggling and we need help. Being seen means leading with authenticity in relationships and sharing the parts of ourselves we'd rather keep hidden. Being seen means proclaiming without shame that we are beloved.

Many of us are hoping to catch just a glimpse of God, but remember that day Jesus was hoping to catch a glimpse too. Jesus was searching for Zacchaeus and when He saw him he called out to him, He knew him by name.

It's not just us who are seeking, but it is God who is seeking us, who is longing to catch a glimpse of each of us, to be able to fully see each of us. Perhaps your heart has been reshaped, perhaps you don't see God in the places that you're used to, but God still wants to see you.

If you find yourself in that category of people seeking the divine, ask yourself "Am I willing to be seen? Am I willing to be seen in my brokenness and in my wholeness?"

God is on that road. We are in that tree and God looks up and points out to us and calls us each by name and says "I see you. I see you and you are beloved so let's show up and let ourselves be seen.

Amen.