

First Light

Look Up!

Josh Kingcade

Back in April, I remember reading many articles about the slower pace of life during the pandemic. "Take a slow stroll outside," they said! "Start a new hobby!"

I don't know about you, but in many ways, my life has gotten busier during the pandemic. Sure, some events and commitments have lessened, but in many other ways, my mind is cluttered. There is much to think about, and I'm ashamed to admit that it's often about me!

-How is the pandemic affecting me?

-How is the national political situation affecting me?

And yet, in my best moments (which are less frequent than I wish), I'm reminded to pay attention to others.

In his final weeks, Jesus was on his way to Bethany and ultimately Jerusalem. There were important events to be attended to there. But first, Jesus had to pass through Jericho. Imagine Jesus in this moment: on the way to the destination of his death, heading through crowds upon crowds. And what does Jesus do when he is going through Jericho?

"A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly" (Luke 19:2-6 NIV).

Notice exactly what Jesus did: "he looked up" (19:5). Most of us are prone to hurry to our destination. We have a mission, and we must complete it. But Jesus diverts his attention to someone who needs it. He took a moment to look up.

What if we took a minute to figure out where we needed to "look up"?

-Do I need to "look up" from my phone to notice a family member who needs my attention?

-Do I need to "look up" to a neighbor who could use some help?

-Do I need to "look up" from my own self-centeredness to get more curious about how the pandemic and civic unrest is affecting someone who is not like me?

May we live out the calling Paul outlines in his letter to the Philippians:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others (Phil 2:3-4 NIV).

God, today, show me where I need to "look up" to pay attention to the needs of others and not myself.