

A grace-filled community

discussion guide

based on **Luke 19.1-10** (Linked to sermon of 1/10/17)
which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/current-sermon-series

This was part of our 'What sort of community should we be?' series.

Intro: Share a time when you've either been made to feel very unwelcome, or been given an unexpectedly warm welcome.

See if you can remember the actions to our 5 key values as a church (God-dependent, grace-filled, Bible-based, mission-focused, authentic community)!

Read Luke 19.1-10

Dan drew a contrast between

- the 'coconut' approach (rock hard shell and soft centre) which tells people they need to behave in a certain way and believe certain things before they can belong to the club – leaving people feel unwelcome.
- the 'peach' approach (very soft outside and rock hard centre) which tells people they're welcome to belong, and what they believe and how they behave can be worked out in the context of belonging to the community.

Is it fair to characterise much 'religion' in Jesus' day and our day with taking the coconut approach?

How have you seen people damaged by the coconut approach?

In what ways might we / our church inadvertently give off coconut-y vibes? What could we do to counter that?

Is it fair to characterise Jesus' approach as peachy – welcoming people first, then dealing with their belief / behaviour issues? What other examples from the gospels can you think of which demonstrate this approach / a different approach?

How could you be more peachy / grace-filled in the welcome you give to people at work / in your community / at the ministries we run as a church / in Sunday services?

Dan talked about the lies that Zacchaeus would have believed about himself, God and the world (eg money is all you need; God wouldn't be interested in him) before his encounter with Jesus, and the truth Jesus would have shared to counter the lies – enough to prompt a radical life-change (v8).

What lies do you think your friends believe about themselves, God and the world?
What truths do they need to hear to counter those lies?

Up: Spend time worshipping God for his grace in our lives, and pray for a fresh sense of God's grace to fill you to overflowing.

In: How could you help each other become more peachy? If you are being peachy in your welcome to all (and eating peaches is very messy!!), how can you encourage each other to keep going?

Out: Pray for people you know to have persistence in figuring out who Jesus did - like Zacchaeus did (v4). Pray that we'd have eyes to see (as Jesus did (v5)) those who are curious about Jesus, whatever their current beliefs / behaviour.

Pray that we'd be a grace-filled community, one where we join in with Jesus' mission to seek and save the lost (v10).