

Explore faith and belonging together

27 June 2026

# SALVATIONIST



**THE WRITE STUFF**  
BIBLE STORIES  
IN YOUR WORDS



# Bible stories retold

This summer, *Salvationist* and *Kids Alive!* teamed up for a joint writing competition. Following National Writing Day (24 June), we share your creative submissions inspired by Bible stories. What helps you to see Scripture in a new way? Read entries from young people in the 27 June issue of *Kids Alive!* at [salvationist.org.uk/kids-alive](http://salvationist.org.uk/kids-alive).

## The Change in My Purse

by Captain Katy Shubotham (Nunhead)

**T**HE offering bag always seems to move slowly when it's coming towards you. My body tenses and I grip my purse so tightly that my knuckles sometimes turn white.

I'm sitting somewhere near the middle of church, in my usual spot. Not right at the front and not quite at the back. Just a quiet spot where I can sing, pray and be part of things without drawing attention to myself. It feels safe here.

I love Sundays here. The familiar songs, the prayers, the joyful chaotic noise of the children playing and worshipping in their own way. The sense that, for an hour, everything slows down.

Then the offering bag begins its journey down the rows.

And, if I'm honest, that moment can make me feel a little uncomfortable.

It's not that I don't want to give. I really do. But life is expensive.

Rent, food, school shoes that barely last a term. By the time everything is paid, there isn't much left.

I sometimes wonder if it's me. Am I doing something differently to everyone else?

But the truth is that most weeks what I have is just the change in my purse.

So when the bag gets closer, I quietly open the zip of my purse and tip the coins into my hand. Copper, a few bits of silver. Maybe a pound if it's been a good week.

When the bag reaches me, I drop them in.

Clink. It sometimes feels like the loudest sound in the world but also the smallest sound, because it never sounds like very much.

The man in front of me usually puts in a note. The couple across the aisle give online now. Everything looks neat and organised. Meanwhile, I'm emptying the loose change from the bottom of my purse. I sometimes think I'm the only one who puts coins in. Sometimes I wonder if it even matters. If God notices the difference between a tidy note and the last handful of coins someone has.

But every week, I still tip them in.

Because I remember a story Jesus told about a widow at the Temple. People were giving large amounts, but she quietly dropped in two tiny coins. Hardly anything at all.

But my Jesus saw it differently.

He said she had given more than everyone else, because they gave out of their wealth, but she gave everything she had.

So every Sunday I will continue to empty my purse. Not because it's impressive. But because it's what I have.

And I trust that the God who noticed two small coins will still notice the quiet gifts that barely make a sound.

Inspired by the widow's offering (see Luke 21:1-4; Mark 12:41-44)



## The Next Big Thing

by Major Violet Smart

**C**LOTHED in the velvety dark of night, I look into the starry realms above me. My ears are on the alert for predators. The sheep in my care must be protected at all costs. I've learnt the skill of sling and stone and, even though I do say it myself, I'm almost always accurate. Of course, there have been occasions when a predator has crept close and I've been forced to deal with it physically too.

When you are the youngest of eight boys, you learn quickly. Watching my brothers and listening to them – sometimes even arguing and fighting with them – has taught me to fend for myself.

Tomorrow morning my father wants me to take food to my three eldest brothers who are soldiers in Saul's Israelite army.

When I arrived, I saw that we were on the opposing hill to the Philistines, with the valley in between. There was no sign of a battle being fought. Our soldiers looked very worried and downcast and I wanted to find out why.

'Look at the Philistines' champion. He's one big giant. To win this battle, one of us must fight him!'

Just then the giant roared out his challenge.

'Kill me or be killed,' he hollered threateningly. 'I'm invincible and you lot are dead meat.'

I thought of my sheep and how I'd been able to protect them from the wild animals. Stepping forward to fight the giant, I felt confident in the presence of God and told the scornful giant so.

Saul wanted to see me look like a soldier and dressed me in a soldier's armour, but I tossed the armour, shield and sword away. God looks at us differently than men. He could see I trusted him more than these outward things.

So I killed the giant as I would any predator, with the skill that God had blessed me with.

My God doesn't do battle with sword or spear. He really is the greatest champion of all.

Inspired by David and Goliath (see 1 Samuel 17)

## Heated

by Brian Colley (Clowne)

**W**HEN Shadrach arrived home late, Mrs Shadrach was not in a good mood.

'I went shopping and mislaid my purse; I'd left it in the butcher's. When I got back, because it had poured down with rain, the washing on the line was sodden. I had to wring it all out and hang it around the house to dry, then when I tried to rock the baby to sleep he was sick down

me, so that meant more washing. Now, to top it all, you are late back.'

Shadrach listened sympathetically. He sat down and answered: 'You have had a bad day? Mine hasn't been too good either. You know that barmy king we've got, Nebuchadnezzar, he said everyone had to bow down to worship a massive golden image. Well, me and my two friends, Meshach and Abednego, refused - we worship the one true God, not a pile of precious metal.'

'There was a big band of assorted instruments and, when they started playing, everyone bowed down, but we three remained upright. Some so-called stargazers told the king about us. They must have taken their eyes off the sky for a moment to spy for him.'

Nebuchadnezzar went mad. He sent for us and said if we didn't bow down when the music started, we would be thrown into a fiery furnace.

'No way were we going to let our God down, and we told him so - we said that our true God would look after us, not his so-called gods. He was furious - talk about a temper, he was red in the face. He asked for the furnace to be made seven times hotter. We were tied up and taken to be thrown in there.'

The soldiers who took us to the entrance were passing out from the heat.

'We were thrown in fully clothed. The king, who was comfortably seated watching, jumped to his feet in amazement because he saw four men in there - he knew that was one more than went in. We were no longer tied up and we were not burning.'

'He thought this other man could be the son of one of his false gods, but of course it was our living God, the one true God who saved us. We were completely unharmed. Nebuchadnezzar's now threatened that anyone who speaks out against our God will be punished. He even promoted the three of us, but I don't think he mentioned a pay rise.'

Mrs Shadrach said: 'Thank goodness you were saved from being cremated and you're here alive. Now eat your dinner, but be careful: don't touch the plate, it's red hot!'

Inspired by the image of gold and the blazing furnace (see Daniel 3)

## Steve the Bailiff

by Christine Barrett (Christchurch)

JESUS entered the town and was passing through. A man was waiting by the roadside. His name was Steve. He was a bailiff: wealthy and highly regarded by his employers.

Steve had seen a lot on social media about Jesus and his supposed powers. He wanted to judge the man for himself, but plenty of other people had heard about Jesus too and were as curious as he was. Steve was short and the crowd was blocking his view.

Just for once, he forgot his dignity and scrambled up a convenient tree. He hadn't done that since he was about 14 years old!

Thankfully, no one noticed. They were all watching the road and, once he was up the tree, the leafy branches hid him from view.

Jesus appeared along the road: a quite insignificant figure really, with a bedraggled and dusty group of followers trailing behind him.

Jesus reached Steve's tree and, to his consternation, the preacher looked up and saw him.

'Steve, come down, please. I will be your guest today.'

Something about this gentle man appealed to the friendless Steve. He slid down the tree in a rush and proudly led Jesus and his followers to his house.

A curious crowd followed them, complaining to each other: 'This man's a bailiff, and a sticky-fingered one at that. Why is Jesus mixing with someone who has such a dubious reputation?'

But Steve didn't listen to the grumbling. His burden of guilt and loneliness had suddenly disappeared, and he could look the preacher in the eye.

'Look here, Lord. I'm a rich man, as you can see. I'm going to give half of my money to charities. And if I've cheated anyone out of anything, I promise to pay them back four times what they're owed.'

Jesus smiled at him and said to the grumblers: 'Today Steve and his household have received the gift of salvation. He is a child of God, just as much as any of my followers. I came to rescue those who want and need my help; not to keep company with self-righteous people.'

Inspired by Zacchaeus the tax collector (see Luke 19:1-10)



## Who's Lost?

by Peter Woodroffe (Southport)

Jesus told this story  
of a man who owned a farm.  
He had two sons, and did his best  
to keep them out of harm.

But one of them, the youngest,  
was getting really bored.  
'I don't want to be a farmer.  
I'd just like to go abroad.'

And so he asked his dad to split  
the farm up into two.  
He took his half and sold it  
and then off abroad he flew.

He spent a lot of money  
on lots of useless stuff  
and naughty things I can't describe  
- I've told you quite enough!

But when the money all ran out,  
he was really in distress.  
He had no home, no clothes, no hope.  
His life was just a mess.

He'd have to go and find a job.  
He thought of picking figs.  
But the only man who'd take him on  
said, 'Go and feed the pigs!'

Now, feeding pigs is not a job  
a Jewish lad should do.  
But he really had no other choice,  
the jobs were just so few.

He had no food, he really starved.  
The future looked so bleak.  
Even the pigs got peas and pods.  
He was really up the creek!

He started thinking, 'It's no good,  
I've nowt to eat tonight.  
Even Dad's servants get well fed.  
I've got to put things right.'

I'll go back home and say to Dad:  
'I've let down God and you.  
I'm just not fit to be your son,  
Make me a servant too.'

But while he was a long way off  
his father saw him there.  
He ran and gave his lad a hug  
- an answer to his prayer.

This dirty, skinny, ill-clothed boy  
had been through so much pain.  
His father thought that he was dead.  
He's back - alive again!

He called the servants: 'Bring some clothes,  
The finest - nothing creased.  
And kill that special fatted calf,  
we're going to have a feast.'

Now don't forget the other son,  
who'd stayed to help his dad.  
When he found out his brother's home  
he really went quite mad.

'He's spent his money, lost the lot.  
I suppose he's back for more.  
I've worked hard all these years for nowt.  
You'd best show him the door.'

His father was upset by this.  
He said, 'Now look here, son.  
Everything I have is yours.  
And that can't be undone.'

'But he's your brother I thought lost.  
And now he has been found.  
It's right that we should celebrate  
to have him still around.'

The meaning of this parable  
is really plain to see.  
God's family is for all of us,  
those brothers, you - and me.

Inspired by the parable  
of the lost son  
(see Luke 15:11-32)



## Little Big Man

by Jim Burns (Dunstable)

**T**HIS is a story about a famous little big man in the Bible. Zacchaeus, or Zac for short. Little Zac to his friends – or it would be, if he had any. For that is the problem, he had no friends.

The reason was that he was a tax collector, so everyone hated him. Not much has changed in 2,000 years.

Now he wasn't just any tax collector: he was the chief tax collector for the area. He charged over the odds to line his own pocket. He was a robbing little wotsit, but he liked the big house, the fancy car and all the fine things that money could buy. He liked being a big man!

Now when I say car, of course I really mean a camel, one of those big 135-litre jobs.

He heard that Jesus was passing through Jericho and he wanted to see him. It's curious that we aren't told why Zac was so interested in Jesus, but perhaps he was already dissatisfied with his life and, despite all the wealth and possessions he had, felt that something was missing.

Now being hated so much, he didn't want to draw attention to himself. So he changed out of his fine clothes into some jeans. They were Levi's, but Levi didn't seem to mind.

When he got to where Jesus was to pass, he couldn't get near because of the press. There were reporters there from *The Star*, *The Herald* and *The Guardian*, which was called *The Guardian Angel* back then.

So Zac ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a tree to see Jesus. Climbing trees wasn't one of the strengths mentioned on his CV.

Soon Jesus came along that way and was going to pass right under the tree. 'Cushty,' thought Zac, 'I'm going to get a really good view from here.'

But then Jesus stopped under the tree and looked up. And you know what happens when someone stops and looks up at something? Everyone else looks up to see what they're missing. So now you have most of the crowd looking at the tree. Zac was mortified, and things were about to get worse.

Jesus shouts to Zacchaeus: 'Come on down! I'm staying at your house today!'

Zac was thrilled to bits. The crowd wasn't very happy. Some of them even started climbing trees to see if that would catch Jesus' eye.

Then they trotted out the sinner thing: 'This man has gone as a guest to the home of a sinner.'

Anyway, Jesus went off to Zac's. Fortunately Zac had been to do a big shop that morning at M&S. He had some tasty ice cream made by Walls of Jericho that was so good it fell apart in your mouth.

After lunch, Zac said to Jesus, 'I will give half my belongings to the poor and, if I have cheated anyone, I will pay him back four times as much.'

Jesus replied, 'Salvation has come to this house today.' Zac was about to say 'I thought your name was Jesus,' but thought better of it.

When Jesus left, there was an even bigger crowd.

Now the Bible doesn't tell us that Jesus gave Zac a hard time about his life, or reminded him about the Ten

Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount. And there's no mention of repenting. But Zacchaeus decides to turn over a new leaf and live a better life. And he chooses to start in the area that is often the most difficult for us: our belongings and money. Things that had previously been Zac's idols and reason for living.

Jesus said that he came to seek and to save the lost. That seems to include tax collectors, so none of us is beyond saving!

He is also interested in the little people – people of any age who feel small and generally unimportant. God loves you and wants to find a place in your heart.

And sometimes it's not enough to start living a new and better life; you may need to make restitution to those you have wronged or hurt. As for Zac, I hope that he found a church and new friends. Genuine ones who loved him for who he was.

Inspired by Zacchaeus the tax collector (see Luke 19:1-10)

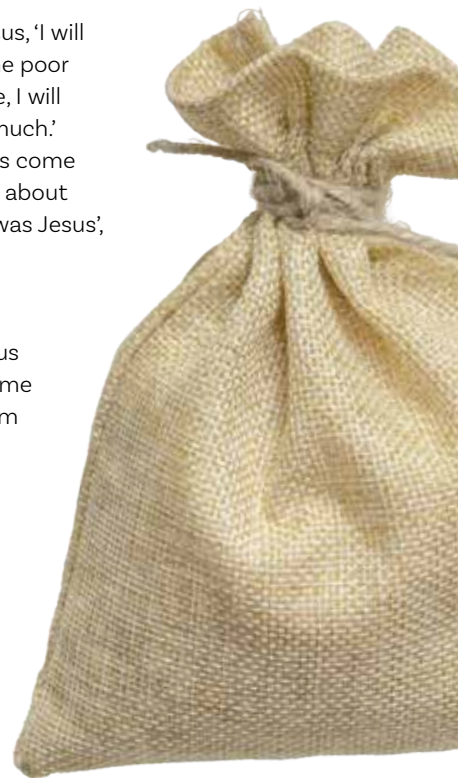
## A Word from Jenny

by Malcolm Dragon (Maltby)

**H**AVE you ever wondered what some of God's creatures might think about us humans, and the way that we sometimes treat them?

Let's hear from a donkey – quite a famous one, actually – whose timely intervention saved a man's life:

I'm an ass – or a donkey, if you prefer the term.



Actually, I get called all sorts of things by humans: some of those names I couldn't possibly repeat here. You can call me Jenny.

I belonged to a man called Balaam, who had quite a reputation for putting bad spells on people.

You know, I hate how people say that they own me and my fellow creatures. They treat us just like inanimate possessions, and don't seem to care about our feelings at all. Maybe someday people will come to recognise that we aren't really their property and have just as much right as them to live out our lives peacefully and in comfort.

I think the problem has been around for a long time. When our Creator originally put us here on Earth - I believe you humans call him 'God' - he was by all accounts quite happy with what he'd created, but he decided that he needed someone very much like himself to put in charge, to look after everything. So he created humans. Unfortunately, they seemed to misunderstand his instructions - I think it was the word 'dominion' that they tripped over - and as a result, many of us creatures have been badly treated ever since.

But I digress.

One day we set off on a long journey to meet the king of Moab. Several princes were riding with us. We were happily trotting along when suddenly a shining man with massive wings appeared in front of us, brandishing a great gleaming sword.

'Stop!' I shouted.

Unfortunately, Balaam didn't seem to understand and became impatient. He obviously hadn't seen what I had. He dug his heels into my sides and hit me with his stick. Then I spotted an opening into a field, so I quickly turned off the road, hoping that the scary man wouldn't follow us. But there he was again, blocking our way. In trying to squeeze past him, I squashed Balaam's foot against a wall and he cried out angrily, hitting me again.

I wanted to shout 'stop' once more, but it seemed futile - humans can be so heedless.

We tried to carry on but, finally, the man with the sword completely blocked our way and I had no choice but to stop. I dropped to the ground and Balaam tumbled off my back. Grabbing his stick he started to beat me mercilessly.

'Help!' I cried.

Then, something amazing happened - I found I could speak in human language.

'Why are you hitting me?' I asked.

Balaam didn't seem at all surprised, but just replied that I was making him look foolish. He even threatened to kill me - after all those years I'd served him so faithfully.

'Didn't you see that man with a huge sword standing in front of us?' I asked. 'Look: he's still there, right now.'

Suddenly, Balaam seemed to notice him at last and crouched down, covering his head with his hands.

'Why are you beating your donkey?' the figure asked him.

'I'm so sorry, Lord,' Balaam sobbed. 'I didn't see you until now. I thought she was just being stubborn.'

'She saw me long before you did,' he replied. 'I was sent to tell you that your journey was against God's wishes and it's only because of your donkey's intervention that I've spared your life. But if you are willing to humble yourself now, and agree to only do what God tells you to when you reach king Balak, I'll let you go on your way.'

Of course, Balaam agreed. So we were allowed to continue our journey, and he survived to tell the tale because of my warning.

Not such a stupid donkey now, huh?

Inspired by Balaam's donkey  
(see Numbers 22:21-35)

