



The Church of Scotland

Church and Society Council

Surveillance and Social Justice – May 2017

Section 14. Visibility

14.1 Whilst we will struggle to find 'privacy' directly within the Biblical narratives, the notion of being made more or less visible is present.¹ To varying degrees Jesus managed his own visibility, often removing himself from the crowds or going off to pray on his own. Much of the infancy narrative is about Jesus being made invisible on the journey to Egypt so that the holy family are kept safe from King Herod. Once his ministry begins to unfold, Jesus consciously makes his table fellowship both obvious and controversial: "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (Matt 9:12).

14.2 In another example, Jesus makes Zacchaeus very visible, not only in the immediate moment of summoning him from his vantage point, but in Zacchaeus' response - paying back in abundance what he has taken from the poor (Luke 19:8). If anything is going to make you hyper-visible in your community it is giving people money, especially when that is money that you have illegitimately taken from them. It was not Zacchaeus' choice to manage his visibility in this way. His visibility was taken out of his hands by Jesus with profound implications for how Zacchaeus and his family lived.

[See the full report](#)

¹ Sociologist, Andrea Brighenti has proposed that proper attention is paid to visibility as an important dimension of how we organize our social relations, Andrea Brighenti, 'Democracy and its Visibilities,' in Kevin D. Haggerty and Minas Samatas (eds), *Surveillance and Democracy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 51-68. Visibility is a social process in which 'seeing and being seen are intimately connected', A. Brighenti, 'Visibility - A Category for the Social Sciences,' *Current Sociology* 55: 3 (2007), 323-42 at 325.