

## Zacchaeus A Wee Little Man

### Luke 19: 1-10

The story of Zacchaeus is well known, if you have been a follower of Jesus for any good amount of time you have heard about him.

*Zacchaeus was a wee little man*

*And a wee little man was he*

*He climbed up in a sycamore tree*

*For the Lord he wanted to see*

*And when the Savior passed that way*

*He looked up in the tree*

*And said, 'Zacchaeus, you come down!*

*For I'm going to your house today!*

*For I'm going to your house today!'*

The story of Zacchaeus was an answer to the disciple's question in Luke 18:26, "who then can be saved?" and proof of "things which are impossible with men are possible with God." (Luke 18:27)

In the story of Zacchaeus, the disciples are witnessing a rich man entering the kingdom of God.

### Read Luke 19:1-10

We are introduced to a man named Zacchaeus, his name meant "righteous one," how ironic for he was an unscrupulous tax collector. Tax collectors in Jesus' day were little more than government sanctioned crooks, in the Gospels they were mentioned together with "sinners" and "prostitutes."

Taxes were collected at three places inland – Capernaum, Jerusalem and Jericho, so Zacchaeus had one of the big three. If tax collectors had a cartel, then Zacchaeus would have been the kingpin, he was not just "a" tax collector, he was "the chief tax collector." As a tax collector Zacchaeus had it made. Verse 3 says, "**he was rich.**"

Notice that it does not say that Zack just wanted to see Jesus. No. He wanted to see who Jesus was. He wanted to figure out what it was that made Jesus different from everyone else. He was drawn to this man, who had just given sight to the blind beggar on the outskirts of Jericho. Now this healer was walking through his town. He may not have fully understood what was going on in his heart, but Zack had a desperate need to get to Jesus. He probably could not even explain what drew him to see who Jesus was.

Zack had at least two problems that day. The first was that he was a short man. I picture him bouncing up and down on his toes, like Tigger, trying to see above the taller guys in front of him.

His second problem was spiritual - his sins were keeping him from Jesus. **Isaiah 59:2** say that “**our iniquities have separated us from God.**” Not only was Zack of short stature, he, like us, was not able to measure up to God’s standards. He came up far short in a spiritual sense of ever entering a relationship with God. He was short on integrity and tall on sin.

**1. None of us measure up. (verses 1-3)**

- Nor will we, in this lifetime.
- Like Zacchaeus, all of us have things that keep us from coming to see and know Jesus.
- All of mankind is just like Zacchaeus in that our sins have separated us from God.
- From the moment we are fashioned in our mother’s womb, none of us measure up.

**Romans 3:10, As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:**

**Romans 3:23, For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;**

- Many of us spend our lives trying to measure up for something. We try to measure up as a son or daughter, a husband or wife, a parent and friend. To make matters worse often we set such high standards for ourselves and others.
- We can NOT measure up. We all suffer from the same disability, sin.
- We waste our time, energy and good ju-ju when we try to measure up to what man says. Or argue against mans logic. We are arguing from a corrupt position.
- Zacchaeus knew what it felt like to not measure up. The bible mentions his “little stature.” It has been said that 5’ 3”- 5’ 5” was an average height for a Jew in Zacchaeus day. I am guessing that Zach was probably under 5 foot. One of the commentaries I was reading stated he may have been a dwarf.
- Can you imagine how he was treated growing up? There was no political correctness back then, no disability act to keep him from being mistreated. He was probably picked last for everything.
- So, when the Roman government went looking for a tax collector, Zack was ready for the job. All those years of being mistreated, now was time to get some get back! His zeal for the job allowed him opportunities to advance, to chief tax collector.
- There is false hope found in filling a bottomless void with worldly and materialistic accomplishments. After living this way for so long can lead you to a place of despair and desperation.
- If we are not careful, any of us can end up like Zach. Even the born-again followers of God can end up on this road. Chasing after things that are not of God’s kingdom, leave us feeling hopeless, angry, and full of despair.

**Matthew 6:33, But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.**

- None of us measure up.

**II. When Jesus comes, it does not matter what tree you climb. (Verses 4-5)**

- That is the nice part about being filthy rich, he does care what people think. Zacchaeus, being a rich man, was free to do something others might think was silly – like climb a tree.

- But why did Zacchaeus want so desperately to see Jesus? I want to suggest several intriguing possibilities.
- Levi also called Matthew, had also been a tax collector prior to becoming a disciple of Jesus (Luke 5:27-31). Perhaps Matthew reaching out to his former circle of friends had told Zacchaeus about Jesus and what a change he had made in his life.
- Secondly, I believe that Zacchaeus had found his wealth and lifestyle unsatisfying.
- Maybe you are experiencing the same feeling of unease; nothing in your life is satisfying. Perhaps like Zacchaeus you lack peace, you lack wholeness, and you need something more than this life can offer.
- Third, it is highly likely that Zacchaeus was tired of being hated. When people hassled him, he deserved what he got, but it no doubt made him miserable. In short Zacchaeus was tired of living his sad little life. Getting revenge, not being accepted by the Romans nor his own people led to more despair.
- **Read verse 5**
- When Jesus stopped under the sycamore tree in which Zach had hidden himself, he would have naturally tensed, perhaps even broken out in a sweat. Terror is likely to have grasped Zach's heart as he braced himself to be made a spectacle for ridicule by Jesus.
- Jesus called him by name and invited himself to Zacchaeus' home.
- Jesus did not say "I would like to stay at your home," he said, "I must abide at thy house." "Must" is a translation of the Greek word (dei) meaning it was necessary. This meeting was ordained before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4-6). I believe that Jesus came to Jericho for the purpose of seeking Zacchaeus.
- Do you have a longing in the depths of you for something more? Do you feel like you have never measured up? Are you tired of trying all things you have tried to feel whole, to only be left feeling more lost than ever?
- If so, Jesus is saying to you, "Hurry up, come here, I must abide in your house (your heart)." But just like Zack, you must be willing to come down out of the tree, spectating and walk with him.

### **III. When Jesus invites you, no answer but "yes" will do. (V. 6)**

- Have you ever wondered why out of all the city of Jericho that Jesus zeroed in on Zacchaeus?
- Though Zacchaeus may have seemed like the least honest or religious person, it is possible that he was the hungriest of a new life that only God can give him.
- In the eyes of the world, Zacchaeus was a traitor, despised by everybody, but in the eyes of Jesus he was a precious lost soul.
- This is Zacchaeus' moment. Zacchaeus scrambled out of the tree, hardly believing his good fortune, delighted to take Jesus home with him. I want you to think of all the people who like Zacchaeus have had their lives changed by coming out of the tree, so to speak.
- Yes, to Jesus is the only way to make everything right with God.

#### IV. When Jesus comes in, some will not like it. (V.7)

- The reaction to Jesus' choice of a host does not meet with popular approval. The religious leaders judged that Jesus had chosen to be "... a guest with a man who is a sinner" and "they all complained."
- Although it is not stated I believe that Jesus sat down to dinner with Zacchaeus. Wouldn't you have liked to have sat in on that meal with Jesus, listening to the dinner conversation? Did Jesus explain to Zacchaeus all about God, conversion and what it means to follow him? Or did Jesus just let Zacchaeus tell him about himself and his problems?
- When you have a relationship with Jesus some will not like it. Some will walk away from you. Some will talk about you. Guess what? Many of those same people already talk about you, just about other things.
- If you are like me, I gave them plenty to say! So, if they talk about me being a Jesus freak, God fearing, bible thumping whatever, it is an upgrade!

#### V. When Jesus comes in, you WILL be changed. (Verses 8-10)

- Sometime probably after dinner, verse eight discloses that, **"Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."**
- When Zacchaeus got saved, he got saved all over. When he got saved, he immediately put his faith into practice.
- More is going on than just a surface examination will gather. In the original Greek it is a first-class condition meaning "it is true, I have cheated."
- Roman law dictated that if you defrauded someone you were to repay them fourfold. He was only meeting the requirements of the law, where he went beyond the law was his willingness to give away half of all his goods. He in effect placed his entire fortune in jeopardy to make things right. That was entirely voluntary.
- Also, when he made restitution of four times, he was following the standard required in the Jewish law when a sheep had been stolen, and a man was convicted of the theft at a trial (see **Exodus 22:1**).
- The mark of Zack's transformation and conversion was his staggering generosity. He learned the truth quickly that it is impossible to serve both God and money. Before he met Jesus, his money was everything to him. After his conversion, it took a back seat and became something to be given away.
- We often think, how can a liar or thief ever be trusted or be useful? God will make the liar, cheat to preach His truth and a thief will become a giver of his own hard-earned money. (Eph. 4:22-32)
- Zach's generosity, repaying for the wrongs he did not for his redemption/salvation, it was the result of and evidence of his salvation.
- How many times do we try to do things to earn favor with God or higher being? Karma?
- How many supposed born-again believers have asked God to save them and there is little to no change, or evidence of being born again?
- Yes, believers will still be sinful, but there must be evidence of progressive sanctification, the work of the Holy Spirit. Meaning we are continuously growing and sinning less or stumbling less with the same sins. Jesus' salvation has always been about the heart. Jesus changes your heart.

- Believers, we need to be on guard, we can callous our heart, when we quench the Holy Spirit. If we lead with the old nature; it pushes out the new nature. This is found in **Ephesians 4:22-32**.
- There is no such thing as a salvation of God that does not result in a changed life, changed behaviors. When God's children do sin, there is a correction, conviction to get right.
- Zacchaeus was not saved because he promised to do good works. He was saved because he responded by faith to Christ's gracious words to him.
- From the words that Jesus spoke to Zacchaeus in verse nine, we can learn two things. First, anyone who is genuinely saved can be assured of that salvation immediately.

**1 John 5:13, These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.**

- And secondly, once a person is saved, the evidence will be a changed life.

**2 Corinthians 5:17, Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.**

## **Conclusion**

Four Stages Zacchaeus went through:

- Curious. He wanted to know who Jesus was.
- Considered. He investigated the claims of Jesus.
- Converted. The searching savior saved him and forgave his sins.
- Changed. His life (heart) was radically redirected after his conversion.

Jesus knows you; he knows what you need and sees who you can become.