



# Jesus at the House of Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1 - 10



Everyone who knew Zacchaeus knew that he was a thief and a traitor to his people. Still, there was something about Jesus that drew Zacchaeus. Jesus called him to follow, and Zacchaeus placed his faith in Jesus. He repented from his sin, showed generosity to people, and had joy in his heart. We see Jesus' transforming power in the changed life of this man.

## Day #1: Tax Collector

**Tax** is money that each person must pay to the government. In a good and fair system, the government uses this money to pay for things that all of the people need, such as roads and police protection. Throughout history, however, there have been governments who have taxed their people unfairly. In this week's story, we find that the Jewish people were under the rule of the Roman Empire. The Jewish people had to pay tax money to the Roman government. The Jews were not Roman, and they did not like paying this tax at all. To make matters worse, the Roman government hired Jews to collect the taxes from the other Jews. In many cases, because of greed and corruption, the tax collectors demanded more money than was actually due to Rome. The tax collectors kept this money for themselves (Luke 3:13). Because of this, the Jews felt that the Jewish tax collectors were traitors and thieves.

There was a Jewish man named Zacchaeus who lived in the town of Jericho. The Bible says that he was a chief tax collector. We will see that he had been involved in cheating people, and he was not a respected man. By this time, Jesus had become quite famous. Crowds gathered wherever He went because people wanted to see the miraculous things He did.

✝ *Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man named Zacchaeus lived there. He was a chief tax collector and was very rich.*

*Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was. But he was a short man. He could not see Jesus because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree. He wanted to see Jesus, who was coming that way.* - Luke 19:1-4

It must have been a humorous sight to see a grown man climb a tree just to get a glimpse of Jesus. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus so much that he risked embarrassment by climbing a tree like a little child.

*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 19:5-6 (NIV)

Surely, an invitation from Jesus was not what Zacchaeus was expecting! Zacchaeus was despised by his fellow Jews and by the religious leaders. Much like the lepers we studied earlier, no one wanted anything to do with Zacchaeus - no one but Jesus. We see over and over again that Jesus spent time with those who were unlovely, unhealthy, and unlovable. Later this week, we will look more closely at what Jesus said about those who are rejected by those around them.

✱ Each one of us has felt that we were the one that nobody wanted to be around at some time. Know that Jesus always wants you, and you are always welcome to come to Jesus.

## Day #2: To Heal the Sick

You probably went to the doctor the last time you were sick. But, does anyone ever wake up in the morning, feeling great, and decide to go to the doctor because they feel so good? "Doc," he or she would say, "I feel wonderful. I can't remember ever feeling so good. Could you please take some x-rays and give me a couple of shots?" That is ridiculous! X-rays and medicine are not for people who are well. They are for people who are sick.

Some people in Jesus' day, especially the religious leaders, did not like the fact that Jesus spent time with people they considered to be sinners. When Jesus went to Zacchaeus' house, many people complained.

✝ *All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'" - Luke 19:7 (NIV)*

Jesus knew that His actions would shock some people. Earlier, Jesus had called a tax collector named Levi to follow Him. Levi was also known by the name of Matthew. Just like the fishermen before him, Matthew left everything and became one of Jesus' twelve disciples (Matthew 10:2-3). When the Pharisees saw Jesus having dinner at Matthew's house, they grumbled about it.

*When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does He eat with tax collectors and 'sinners?'"*

*On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* - Mark 2:16-17 (NIV)

Jesus was explaining why He came. He came to find those who were spiritually lost. He came to heal those who were spiritually sick. He came to teach the truth (Luke 4:43), to show people that they needed a Savior (John 4:13-15), and to die for our sins (1 Timothy 1:15). In most cases, it was the needy, the lost, and the sick that recognized their NEED for Jesus and the healing only He could bring. The religious leaders thought Jesus should only spend time with the respectable people who looked good on the outside. These would be the people who seemed to follow the Law of Moses. However, these people did not see their need for Jesus; they thought they were good enough on their own. 1 Timothy 1:15 says, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Of course, He would spend time with those who were looked down on because of their behavior. If Jesus had not spent time with them, how would they hear, turn from their sin, and be saved?

✱ All those who know God's truth are called to tell that truth to others. Do you spend time with those who do not know the truth of Jesus' sacrifice and God's forgiveness? These people must hear, so they can turn from their sin, and be saved.

*You will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard. **And now what are you waiting for?*** - Acts 22:15-16a (NIV)

## Day #3: Light and Darkness

Try to find a room that is completely dark. Sit in the dark room for a few minutes. As you sit, try to remember exactly what is in the room.

### Day #3 continued:

The longer you sit in the darkness, the more distorted your memory will become. The darkness covers what is there. After a little while, flip on the light. Now you can see everything as it really is. The light exposes everything that is in the room. The Bible calls Jesus, "The Light of the world." (John 8:12) Just as shining light into a dark room exposes what is in the room, the Light of Jesus exposes the evil that is in the hearts of men (John 3:20).

After Jesus invited Himself to Zacchaeus' home, Zacchaeus was overwhelmed. Much like Simon Peter, when Zacchaeus saw the holiness of Jesus, he instantly saw the ugliness of his own sinful condition.



*But Zacchaeus stood up. He said, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of what I own to those who are poor. And if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay it back. I will pay back four times the amount I took."* - Luke 19:8

Zacchaeus had faith in Jesus and quickly turned from his wicked ways. Zacchaeus **repented** by turning away from his sin. To **repent** means to *change your mind*. It means to agree with God that your sin is wrong, and to turn in the opposite direction. It is like a car taking a U-turn in the road. At first, the driver is going in one direction, but he realizes he is going the wrong way. He turns his car around and drives in the opposite direction. Zacchaeus had been going in the direction of greed. He recognized his greed was sinful. He chose to turn his life around. He showed the fruit of his decision by his generosity. Not only would Zacchaeus stop stealing, but also he was going to give half of his wealth to the poor. He planned to return every penny he ever stole, plus three times more.



When we spend time with Jesus, we will see our thoughts and deeds as God sees them. Pray for God's grace to help you live in a way that pleases Him (Titus 2:11-12).

*At one time you were in the dark. But now you are in the light because of what the Lord has done. Live like children of the light. The light produces what is completely good, right and true. Find out what pleases the Lord.* - Ephesians 5:8-10

## Day #4: Son of Abraham

After Zacchaeus called Jesus, "Lord," and showed the fruit of his faith in Jesus by giving away over half of his fortune, Jesus made a beautiful statement about Zacchaeus.



*Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."* - Luke 19:9-10 (NIV)

It is true that Zacchaeus was from the actual family line of Abraham, because he was a Jew. But Jesus was not describing Zacchaeus' physical heritage. Jesus had warned that not all of the Jews would inherit eternal life (Matthew 3:8-10). Jesus was saying that Zacchaeus' **faith** made him a child of Abraham.

*Think about Abraham. Scripture says, "Abraham believed God. God accepted Abraham because he believed. So his faith made him right with God." - (Genesis 15:6) So you see, those who have faith are children of Abraham.* - Galatians 3:6-7

Remember, God sees the heart of every person (Luke 16:15). There is ONE thing God is looking for. There is ONE thing that sets apart the saved from the unsaved. That thing is FAITH. Hebrews 11:6 tells us, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." It was Abraham's FAITH that made him right with God. It was Zacchaeus' FAITH in Jesus that saved him from his sin.

*God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation*

### Day #4 continued:

*doesn't come from anything you do. It is God's gift. It is not based on anything you have done. No one can brag about earning it.* - Ephesians 2:8-9

Zacchaeus had made a lifestyle out of stealing. If someone steals just one time, he is a thief. Zacchaeus was a thief. He was a sinner, and he was HELPLESS to wipe away his own sin. When Zacchaeus placed his faith in Jesus, Zacchaeus became a new creation. Zacchaeus gladly gave back what he had taken, and much more, trusting that God would provide for him from that point on.

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!* - 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)



There is nothing you can do to earn forgiveness for your sins. God is only pleased with faith in Him. If you are not a believer, ask God for the faith to believe that Jesus is God and that His sacrifice takes away your sin. Then, you, too, will be a child of Abraham (Galatians 3:29). If you are a believer, ask God for the faith to trust Him daily.

## Day #5: Two Men

Take a moment to compare Zacchaeus to the rich young ruler in last week's story (Luke 18:18-27). In what ways were they alike? In what ways were they different? Both men were very wealthy. The rich young ruler was respected; Zacchaeus was not. The young ruler followed many of God's laws. Zacchaeus openly broke the law. Both men came to Jesus. Jesus invited both men to follow Him, but their responses were completely different.

Often, the things that make sense to us are not correct according to God (Isaiah 55:9). That is why we cannot depend upon our own understanding of things (Proverbs 3:4-6). If Jesus had stood the rich young ruler right next to Zacchaeus, and asked the people to judge which one was closer to God's standard, whom do you think the people would have chosen? They most certainly would have chosen the young ruler. After all, the ruler appeared to be a good, upstanding leader. As far as anyone could see, he even kept most of the law. Zacchaeus, on the other hand, was a known crook. He took money from his Jewish brothers and sisters and gave it to their enemy, Rome. And to top it off, he kept plenty of the money for himself! Surely, as far as human eyes could see, Zacchaeus wasn't nearly as "good" as the young ruler was.

Now, let's look at these two men through the eyes of Scripture. In truth, there is no one person who is "better" than another is. God does not compare one person to another! We ALL fall short. None of us can reach God's standard of perfection.



*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* - Romans 3:23 (NIV)

Scripture also tells us that we are only made right with God when we place our faith in Him.

*But things are different with God. He makes evil people right with Himself. If people trust in Him, their faith is accepted even though they do not work. Their faith makes them right with God.* - Romans 4:5

The rich young ruler chose to place his faith in his belongings. Zacchaeus chose to place his faith in Jesus. The rich young ruler went away sad. Zacchaeus was filled with joy. The ruler would spend the rest of his life struggling to provide for himself, and sadly, would one day face eternal punishment. Zacchaeus would experience God's daily provision of abundant life and would one day inherit ETERNAL LIFE.



Be careful not to see others through your own eyes. Instead, see through the eyes of God as He teaches you through the Bible and reveals truth to you through prayer and by the Holy Spirit.