

Luke 19:1-10 ¹ And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. ² And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. ³ And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. ⁴ And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. ⁶ And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. ⁸ And 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. ⁹ And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

- The story of Zacchaeus has been eternally embedded in our minds by a Sunday School chorus: *“Zacchaeus was a wee little man, and a wee little man was he, He climbed up into a sycamore tree, for the Lord he wanted to see, But as the Savior passed his way, He looked up in the tree, And He said, “Zacchaeus, you come down, for I’m going to your house today.”*
- Have you ever wondered what made a well-dressed, successful, self-made, wealthy, prominent tax-collector throw shame and ridicule to the wind and climb a tree, just to get a glimpse of Jesus?
- In order to answer that question, let’s take a semi-fictional journey to the backside of a sweltering, fly-infested land called Palestine, across the difficult terrain until we come to the city of Jericho.
- In Zacchaeus’ day, the Roman Senate has found it convenient to collect their huge sums of taxation through middle-men living in each of the provinces. They were encouraged by their superiors in harsh and even fraudulent assessments, and recourse to Rome was almost impossible. They overcharged (Luke 3:13) and brought false charges of smuggling in the hope of extorting hush money (Luke 19:8). The Jews, who hated paying tribute of any kind to an occupying foreign power, were doubly offended by such blatant robbery. They regarded “publicans” as apostates, defiled by their frequent contacts with the heathen and being willing tools of the oppressors.
- There were many taxes: ground tax, income tax, poll tax, tax and duty upon all imports and exports, tax on all that was bought and sold, bridge money, road money, harbor dues, town dues, etc. Clever collectors could think up many more taxes: axles, wheels, pack animals, pedestrians, roads, highways, ships, admission to markets, crossing rivers, licenses, etc. But even this was as nothing compared to the vexation of being constantly stopped on the journey, having to unload all one’s pack animals, and subject every package and private letter to the insolence of the tax gatherers.
- Zacchaeus was not popular or even respected, but he certainly was feared. His very appearance at one’s door was as the hand of fate. One stroke and life could be reduced to a debtor’s prison. People often begged for mercy, but even the poorest cases could only hope for a slight extension. Until one very peculiar day in the diary of a tax-collector!

FIRST STOP

- Unkempt little shanty in need of paint and repairs; all that mattered to him was “unpaid” on the bill
- On the other side of the door is a frail blind man who timidly explained his inability to pay
- “I have no family, no pension, no society for the blind – please give me thirty days”
- Zacchaeus is caught between money and mercy: “That’s not usually my style, but you can have thirty days. But if you don’t have the money then, you’ll be blind and homeless!”

SECOND STOP

- Woman who opens door is completely yellow, as if there is no blood in her veins, her hair is matted and her face is wet with tears, her speech is slurred from some debilitating condition
- “For twelve years, I’ve had a blood disorder, my insurance was cancelled, my husband divorced me, and my inheritance was spent on one doctor after another. I need thirty days.”
- Zacchaeus is caught between greed and grace: “For some reason, I’m feeling benevolent today. But when I get back, you’d better have my taxes.”

THIRD STOP

- A woman stands listlessly in front of the next house, staring off into space, she doesn’t hear him
- Suddenly a blood-curdling scream comes from the hillside, where a nude man who looks more like a wild animal is running among the tombs in a graveyard, cutting himself until he is blood-spattered

- “That used to be my husband, he was a good man, and I’m praying that one day he’ll come back home. I ought to move on with my life, but I love him, he’s the father of my children. I don’t know if it will ever happen, no man can tame him or bind him. He’s so possessed he calls himself ‘Legion.’”
- Not anxious to dialogue with demons, Zacchaeus begins to backpedal. “I’ll be back in thirty days!”

FOURTH STOP

- A wreath hangs on the door of the next house, suggesting that someone had died, a grieving woman veiled in black answers the door
- “I know who you are and why you’ve come, but my son died yesterday and I’m on my way to the funeral. I had to use my tax money to bury my only son.”
- Zacchaeus: “I’ve already given some of your neighbours thirty days. I’ll be back in one month!”

Thirty days later, Zacchaeus prepares to return to those four homes, those houses that represented the most nonproductive day in his career as a tax collector! He resolves that no “sob story” would dissuade him today; they will either pay or be thrown in prison!

FIRST STOP

- At the first house he notices a change, the grass has been cut and the house renovated
- A man with piercing eyes opens to his knock, “I’m sorry but I’m looking for the man of the house,” “I am the man of the house,” “No, I was here last month and the man I spoke with was blind”
- “I’m that man. I was blind. But Jesus came to town. As he passed by I heard all the commotion and cried out. Everyone around me told me to be quiet, but I knew it was my only chance.”
- “Jesus healed me. I’ve been able to work for the first time ever. I even sold my seeing eye dog! Here are my taxes.”
- It was like this: Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost, but now I’m found, was blind but now I see.
- Zacchaeus walks away thinking, I hope someday I get to meet Jesus. Sometimes my life seems darker than any blind man’s.

SECOND STOP

- A beautiful radiant woman answers the door with joy, “I’m looking for the woman of the house,” “I am the woman of the house – Zacchaeus, when I told you to come back in thirty days that was nothing but a ploy, I was sure I’d be dead. In fact, I was praying to die.”
- “But a friend told me that Jesus was coming to town. I elbowed my way through the crowd, I stretched out and was just able to touch the hem of his garment. And the moment I touched him, my body was made instantly whole!”
- “I haven’t had to pay those doctor bills anymore. Here’s the money for your taxes.”
- It was like this: Touching Jesus is all that really matters, then your life will never be the same, there is only one way to touch Him, just believe when you call on His name.
- Zacchaeus walks away thinking, A blind man who can see, a dying woman who’s full of life, I hope someday I get to meet Jesus. I’ve got some problems that have tormented me a long time too.

THIRD STOP

- He looks for the woman to be standing out in the yard, but she is not there; he looks nervously over his shoulder at the hillside, but there are no blood-curdling screams today
- The woman answers the door accompanied by a nice-looking man; Zacchaeus thinks, “I’m glad this woman got a new man – she should’ve kicked out that grave dweller a long time ago.”
- “Zacchaeus, I want you to meet my husband. You haven’t met this man, because when you were here thirty days ago, his home was in the graveyard. But look at him now – clothed and in his right mind! I told you no man could tame him, but that was before we met Jesus. And by the way, he’s been able to return to work, so here are your taxes.”
- The man cuts in – wait a minute, she can’t tell it like I can! When Jesus walked in, the demons walked out! It was like this: No one can touch you like Jesus can, no one can give you peace you cannot understand, no one can bind your wounds with nail-scarred hands, no one can touch you like Jesus can.
- Zacchaeus walks away thinking, A blind man who can see, a dying woman who’s full of life, and a demon-possessed man who has been delivered. I’ve got some demons hounding at my heels. Maybe this Jesus could deliver me too.

FOURTH STOP

- At the last house he thinks sarcastically, I wonder what surprise they have for me here?
- A cute little twelve-year-old boy opens the door, "I'm sorry, I'm at the wrong house, the house I'm looking for has no little boy anymore," "Are you Zacchaeus? My mother's been looking for you! She said you're never late collecting the taxes. I'm the little boy that died. Thirty days ago my mother's worst fear came true. My mother had saved money to pay you, but she had to use that money on my funeral."
- "As the mourners led the procession out of Nain, another procession was coming in. The procession of death collided with the procession of deity! You know, death and deity cannot occupy the same space!
- Jesus never attended a funeral, he never preached a funeral, every time he showed up, he transformed the funeral into a resurrection. That's what happened to me – Jesus brought me back to life.
- When I sat up, it scared the undertaker so bad, he pushed me out of the casket and gave my mother her money back. Here's your taxes!
- It was like this: I've found a new life, I've found a new life, if anybody asks you what's the matter with you my friend, tell them that you've been saved, sanctified, holy ghost filled, water baptized in Jesus' name, I've found a new life.

On his way home, shaking his head, somebody says, "Hey Zacchaeus, did you hear that Jesus was coming to town?" YOU BETTER BELIEVE HE RAN!

You know what drove him up that tree?

He finally realized there was a shortage in his relationship with God.

And he finally realized that God was no respecter of persons!

If Jesus ever did it for anyone else, He can do it for you!