

Zacchaeus' Tree

"Ordinary Object, Extraordinary Meanings"

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

Ephesians 2:8-9

The story of Zacchaeus is many times considered a kid's story and is written off by adults as a story about a short guy who ran ahead and climbed up in a tree like kids would do to see a parade. But it has a much deeper meaning for adults.

Zacchaeus was not well liked. As a tax collector for the Romans, he took advantage of people for his own selfish interest. He was obligated to collect enough to satisfy the Roman officials, but there was no limit to what he could charge as long as Rome was satisfied, so he evidently had been greedy in his collection of monies from the people and was very rich at their expense. The tax collectors were benefitting financially and sympathetic to the Roman rulers. They were not nice people!

Earlier in this same book of Luke, Christ talked about different people who were taking advantage of those less fortunate. He told about the poor widow, the blind man, the Pharisee,



(See Luke 19:1-10) 02-03-2014
I CAN'T GET HIM DOWN ... I TRIED
'ZACCHAEUS YOU COME DOWN' LIKE FIVE
TIMES AND NO LUCK

and even how people had rebuked children and didn't want them to bother Christ. Now Christ is being friendly to a tax collector!

When Christ called Zacchaeus and told him He was going to his house for supper Zacchaeus was accepting an invitation that would lead to his forgiveness and eternal life. That is a nice reward for giving someone dinner. Think about whether or not you have ever been invited to have supper with the Lord.

Zacchaeus was eager to see this guy that everyone was talking about. I believe that in his heart he was seeking to know Christ, but he didn't know how to go about it. Christ didn't just say "Hi!" He invited himself for dinner. This was not usual. Christ was a Jew and Jews did not go into the homes of people like Zacchaeus, let alone have dinner with them.

The people standing around were really

upset. They were stunned and began to grumble. Why was Christ going to have dinner with this man who had taken their money and was leading the good life? Why him? He was the worst of the worst. He was a criminal. But Christ didn't call him a criminal. In fact, Christ didn't even call him a sinner. He just invited Himself to the home of Zacchaeus. The people saw a sinner who had taken advantage of them; Christ saw a friend and a sinner who was lost, but now was found.

Sometimes I just look up,
smile and say,
"I know that was you **GOD!**
Thanks!"



Immediately Zacchaeus responded *"Master, I give away half my income to the poor—and if I'm caught cheating, I pay four times the damages."* Luke 19:8 Zacchaeus thought he was doing good work, by giving away half of his income. He was trying to do things by good works, not love of God. That is the real story behind Zacchaeus. We can't earn our way into Heaven by giving away money. That won't cut it!

Christ responded and told him that he would have salvation that day. That was quite a change. Zacchaeus was in God's hands, and he was safe.

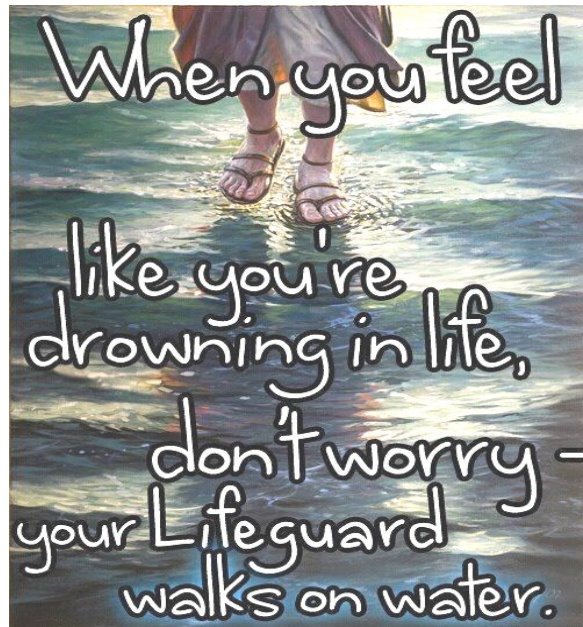
Does Christ invite Himself to our home? I think the answer is "Yes, every day." I'm not sure that Zacchaeus had the opportunity to refuse Him. Christ does not push His way into our lives, but the invitation is there. We have the opportunity to accept or reject the dinner invitation to partake of the Lord's Table.

I wonder how the people received Zacchaeus after that. Are we eager to forgive and forget someone who has taken advantage of us? Evidently Zacchaeus had been very good at collecting money and leading the good life. Now everything was going to change for him. Are we ever in the tree? We want to see, but we don't want to get involved. In other words, "That's a great idea – for someone else to do."

The life of that little man was totally changed that day. He put himself out on a limb, both figuratively and actually. The door must be opened from the inside. He opened the door and accepted Christ into his home.

I am not going to Heaven because I have preached to great crowds or read the Bible many times. I'm going to Heaven just like the thief on the cross who said in that last moment: 'Lord, remember me.'
Billy Graham

"God didn't promise days without pain, laughter without sorrow, or sun without rain, but He did promise strength for the day, comfort for the tears, and light for the way. If God brings you to it, He will bring you through it."
Unknown



Prayer: Spirit of the Living God, please come into my heart. Save me from myself because I am often my own worst enemy. Give me the courage to start today and let You come into my heart, and then lead my life as a changed person who knows Your love and salvation. Amen

1. For Zacchaeus, was it a no-brainer to welcome Christ into his home?
2. Is the choice as clear to you? Do we sometimes think we can earn our way to Heaven?
3. Is there something keeping us from giving up our old way of life?
4. Many times we are comfortable with our life, but we need to improve it by showing how God has given us that assurance that He is always with us. How can we do that for others?
5. Does following Christ sometimes put us "out on a limb"?

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Jesus is not your accuser. He's not your prosecutor. He's not your judge. He's your friend and your rescuer. Like Zacchaeus, just spend time with Jesus. Don't hide from him in shame or reject him in self-righteousness. Don't allow the opinions of other people to shape your concept of him. Get to know him for yourself, and let the goodness of God change you from the inside out.

— Judah Smith —