

Sermon 22.11.13

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Luke 19: 1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.' Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

SERMON - given by Zaccheus.

As scripture reading ends - Z runs in carrying shoes and a staff at end of children's time

Conversation with kids:

Thank you for telling that story. Pretty amazing that people all over the world know that story.

I was climbing a tree - even though I'm old now, I love climbing trees; helps me see the world in a different way.

Who likes to climb trees?

I came in here today because I want you to know a couple of things about me -

But wait - I haven't even introduced myself. I'm Zacchaeus. I'm the person you just heard the story about - the one who liked to climb trees...

That story you just heard - it's just a piece of my story - and sometimes misunderstood. What did you learn about me in that story?

(Rich, tax collector, short, really wanted to see this guy Jesus, happy to have him to my house...)

Did you know I'm really generous too? I'm rich and I'm generous.

My name - Zaccaeus - it means something. In my language of Hebrew, it means pure and innocent¹.

Do your names mean anything? Lily... Timothy... Hope... Faith... - some names are clear in what they mean.

In my time, calling me Z. was like saying 'Hey, Innocent, come play hide and go seek!' Can you imagine being called 'innocent' all the time? I tried hard, really hard, to live up to my name...

Kids - you can stay up here and listen, or go back to your parents, but before you go, there's one thing I want to make sure you know -

Jesus saw me that day. He really saw me. Not just as a tax collector. Not just as a short guy who climbed the tree to see him better.

No, Jesus saw me and knew me - the good parts of me, and the parts of me that I'm not so proud of. Jesus stopped and saw me, and told me I belonged - he said it this way: 'He too is a son of Abraham'. I belong. I'm part of the family of faith. God welcomes me as a child. Loves me as a son. Loves you as a son; loves you as a daughter.

So you can stay here, or go back to your seats - but remember that. Jesus sees everyone - and loves us all - welcomes us all as children of the God who made us all.

¹ *Zakkhaïos*; [Hebrew](#): זָכַי, "pure, innocent"

Transition to talking to adults -

That's a lesson we all need to learn, isn't it?
Jesus did so much for me that day - changed my life
But not in ways you might expect.

You see, your translation of the text- this story that Luke wrote down many years later, in Greek - the way your people translate this story - it makes me look like I'm not innocent, not pure, not living up to my name.

But Jesus - he knew. You see, he told us that day that "salvation has come to this house".

Salvation² - divine safety. God's safety. Holy Safety came to my house.
How?

Jesus knew what I was like - knew that even as a tax collector, a chief tax collector, that I did my best to lead an upright life. Yeah, yeah, you know how my fellow Jews felt about tax collectors - we were the scum. It was a rough job. A tough way to make a living.

But you know what Jesus knew?

Did you hear what I said when those folks standing around started to grumble, calling me a sinner?

I told Jesus - I give half my possessions to the poor, and if I falsely accuse anyone - I repay them 4 times.

PRESENT TENSE!!! Not - as so many of your translations say - not I WILL give...

No, I do it. I'm already doing it, quietly, without anyone really knowing. They see me as a tax collector. But Jesus knows how I do my best to be generous, to take care of the poor - because there are a lot who are hungry around here.

Jesus knew, and in allowing me to be seen by those grumblers - and heard - he brought safety to my house. He was telling those who cast me out as no-good that I belonged.

² <https://biblehub.com/greek/4982.htm>

It's so easy to think we know other people, isn't it? To look at them and judge? To cast them aside and not love them as a brother, a sister, a sibling?

That pastor of yours - I know she struggles with it.

Just last night she met a friend at the movie theatre...

(dark skinned friend was closely followed, by car, through a quiet suburban neighborhood - she was angry, afraid, discouraged... seen, but not seen for who she really is. She did not feel that sense of divine safety - of salvation - here in our community.)

Z: Jesus brought safety - divine safety - to my house, by restoring me to my community. Reminding everyone that I, a chief tax collector, am a son of Abraham.

Jesus, the Risen One, came to seek out the lost; to save them; to restore them to community.

The Risen One seeks - looks, calls, welcomes the lost - not the perfect, not the ones who have it all together -

The Risen One is seeking you - just as he saw me, and called me by name, so you, too, are welcomed home.

Climb a tree - look at the world in a different way - the way Jesus might see it - recognizing all as ones who belong.