



**The man
in the tree**

Colour me!



Luke 19:1-10

Jesus was going through Jericho, where a man named Zacchaeus lived. He was in charge of collecting taxes and was very rich. Jesus was heading his way, and Zacchaeus wanted to see what he was like. But Zacchaeus was a short man and could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree.

When Jesus got there, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry down! I want to stay with you today." Zacchaeus hurried down and gladly welcomed Jesus. Everyone who saw this started grumbling, "This man Zacchaeus is a sinner! And Jesus is going home to eat with him."

Later that day Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "I will give half of my property to the poor. And I will now pay back four times as much to everyone I have ever cheated." Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "Today you and your family have been saved, because you are a true son of Abraham. The Son of Man came to look for and to save people who are lost."

Commentary

After about three years on the move around the villages of Galilee, as well as regular journeys south for festivals, Jesus is now in Jericho, from where he will set out to Jerusalem for the last time. The story of his meeting with Zacchaeus is just like the encounters that have gone before. Jesus notices the ones who others don't see – in this case, Zacchaeus hiding in the tree. Jesus cares about the ones whom others think aren't worthy of God's love and rescue: tax collector Zacchaeus belongs to the group who have betrayed their country by working for the Romans. And Jesus turns lives around for the better – just as rich Zacchaeus becomes a blessing to Jericho, repaying his debts many times over and providing money for the poor of the city.

Zacchaeus turns from being public enemy number one to public benefactor. Only an encounter with Jesus can produce such a miracle. We have no record of what they said to each other at the meal in Zacchaeus' home, but, whatever it was, everyone is astounded by the change that comes over this little man. What happened to Zacchaeus is a picture of what happens to all who come close to God through Jesus.

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Questions

- ▶ Why do you think Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus?
- ▶ What do you think of the crowd's reaction when they heard that Jesus had invited himself to Zacchaeus' home?
- ▶ What do you think happened at the meal to bring about such a transformation in Zacchaeus' attitude to money?
- ▶ What do you think Zacchaeus and his family did next?



Visual aid

Collect together half a dozen leaves. Put them in a pile as a focus for the leaves that might well have been knocked off by Zacchaeus as he climbed the sycamore tree.



Activity idea

This story is full of emotions: the excitement of the crowd because Jesus was in town; their anger because Zacchaeus wanted to see him too; their curiosity and bewilderment that Jesus was bothering with Zacchaeus; and their shock about what Zacchaeus said he would do with his money. Have a go at making the facial expressions and sound effects that go with these feelings. What other feelings can you find and re-enact from the story?



Prayer idea

Zacchaeus turned over a new leaf because of his meeting with Jesus. Cut out some leaf shapes from paper. On one side, write words or draw pictures to represent those things that you are sorry about. Zacchaeus might have written greed, hurting others, betrayal or pride. Now turn over the leaves and write new words or draw new pictures that express how you want to be different with God's help – for example, more generous, more caring, more faithful or more humble. Make these leaves your prayers to God.

Key verse

The Son of Man came to look for and to save people who are lost (Luke 19:10).

Note: 'Son of Man' was the way Jesus often described himself.

Old Testament story link

Ezekiel 36:25-31: Ezekiel looks forward to the day when God will forgive the wrong things we do and will give everyone a new heart that wants to love and serve him instead.



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