**Good Shepherd Lutheran Church**

**Watertown, WI**

**“Zacchaeus”**

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**Jesus and Zacchaeus**

***1****[c](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/luke/19" \l "footnote1)He entered Jericho and was passing through.*

***2****And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich.*

***3****And [d](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/luke/19" \l "footnote2)he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature.*

***4****So he ran on ahead and climbed up into [e](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/luke/19" \l "footnote3)a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way.*

***5****And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for*[*f*](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/luke/19#footnote4)*I must stay at your house today.”*

***6****So he hurried and came down and [g](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/luke/19" \l "footnote5)received him joyfully.*

***7****And when they saw it, they all [h](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/luke/19" \l "footnote6)grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.”*

***8****And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods [i](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/luke/19" \l "footnote7)I give to the poor. And if I have*[*j*](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/luke/19#footnote8)*defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it [k](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/luke/19" \l "footnote9)fourfold.”*

***9****And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since*[*l*](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/luke/19#footnote10)*he also is a son of Abraham.*

***10****For [m](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/luke/19" \l "footnote11)the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*

The last few weeks, I have talked about stories in children’s books which I don’t think are very children friendly. This week, however, we have the story of Zacchaeus. This story I think is a great story for children. I’m also a fan of the well-known song, which most of you could probably sing from memory.

It’s a simple story that you know well. Zacchaeus is vertically challenged. He is also a tax collector which makes him a traitor and an outcast in society. He resides in Jericho and hears that Jesus is coming through. He wants to see the spectacle, but the crowd blocks his way. So, he climbs a tree to get a glimpse of Jesus. Jesus sees him as he walks by and tells him to come down because Jesus is going to eat with him. The crowds are mad, but Zacchaeus is happy—so happy that he offers to give away half his wealth and to refund times four anyone that he has defrauded.

If I had one criticism with the children’s story, it’s that they end with Zacchaeus and his response. But it’s not just children’s versions of this story that end there. Plenty of Christians end the story there as well. The story doesn’t end with Zacchaeus’ amazing decision. The story ends with Christ’s response to it. Today, Salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.

If we focus the story on Zacchaeus and not on Christ, we do something called moralizing the story. Most bad theology operates this way. It takes a story from the Bible and turns it into a moral lesson. Certainly, the Bible does teach us how to live a Christian life, but first and foremost, the Bible is not about you and me. This story isn’t about Zacchaeus and what he can teach us, it isn’t teaching us to give up all we have. First and foremost, the Bible is about Christ.

So, what can we learn about Christ from this story? If you look at the story closely, you will see that Christ initiates all the action. Yes, Zacchaeus climbs the tree, but he doesn’t yell out for Christ like the lepers. It’s Christ who calls him to come down from the tree, and it’s Christ who announced that He was going to Zacchaeus’ House.

So too it is with us, it is always Christ who initiates. It is Christ who calls us, either as a baby or a child, or as an adult. Christ always takes the first step, and in the waters of Holy Baptism, He calls us out of our sin and our darkness, and tells us that He is coming into our lives. It’s only in response to His unexpected and generous call that we are able to offer Him anything. Only in response to His call are we able to produce good fruit, good works, like Zacchaeus.

Jesus comes into the home of Zacchaeus, and He says something interesting. He declares Zacchaeus to be a son of Abraham. Of course genetically, he was a son of Abraham, but Zacchaeus had long since wandered away from the covenant relationship God had made with the children of Abraham. Yet, Jesus sees his faith, and He restores him to the covenant.

This is the heart and the focus of Jesus’ ministry. It is Jesus’ mission on earth to seek and save the lost.

Jesus came to call all people to Himself. Both the self-righteous pharisee and the dishonest tax-collector. He came to restore them to His covenant of love to inspire faith in their hearts and to offer them salvation on account of it.

Wherever Jesus goes, He brings salvation with Him because there is no salvation apart from Him. He was there the day you were baptized, He is here today in His Word, and He will be here Sunday in His Holy Supper. Jesus is not done bringing salvation; He is not done seeking and saving the lost.

There are many who are lost in our community today. Many who have either forgotten or never heard the voice of Jesus. Having been brought into Jesus, we have been brought into His mission as well. He uses us to accomplish His mission, as well as to seek and save the lost. How can we better call the lost, how can we better find the lost?

We must not sit on our hands and be satisfied with what we have. Let us be like Jesus and look in the trees for those who are looking for Jesus, even if they don’t know that’s what they are doing.

Many people in our world are looking for purpose and meaning. Many people are looking for answers. In Jesus and in Jesus alone do we find all those things. In Jesus, we are brought into something amazing, we are given eternal life. Let us go out and share that truth with those around us because we too were once lost sheep wandering around before Jesus called us and told us He was going to our home.

In the name of Jesus, Amen.