

THE TAX COLLECTOR

“Longing to be accepted”

“Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way. When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name.

“Zacchaeus!” he said. “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.” Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. But the people were displeased. “He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” they grumbled. Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, “I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!” Jesus responded, “Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.””

Luke 19:1-10 (NLT)

PERSPECTIVE #1: Zacchaeus

Zacchaeus is a Greek name which means **pure** or **innocent**.

We don't know how Zacchaeus became a notorious sinner, but we definitely know the decisions he made led him to his predicament.

“Take no bribes, for a bribe makes you ignore something that you clearly see. A bribe makes even a righteous person twist the truth.” Exodus 23:8 (NLT)

When we place our focus and desires on “things” rather than God, our hearts will **always** have a **price this world can afford**.

PERSPECTIVE #2: The crowd

*When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. “Zacchaeus!” he said. “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.” Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. **But the people were displeased. “He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” they grumbled.**”*

Luke 19:5-7 (NLT)

We find it easy to love the loveable. We find it easy to forgive the forgivable. We find it easy to accept the acceptable.

“But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? **Even corrupt tax collectors do that much.** If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Matthew 5:44-48 (NLT)

We are called to not have the same heart as the crowd but the **same heart as Christ.**

PERSPECTIVE #3: Jesus

*When Jesus came by, **he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name.** “Zacchaeus!” **he said. “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.**” Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy.*

Luke 19:5-6 (NLT)

*“So he **ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him,** since Jesus was coming that way.”*

Luke 19:4 (NLT)

Jesus saw someone who had a heart that chose to posture himself to have the greatest chance of getting close to Him.

Question: Have we lost that level of desire that would choose to overcome every hurdle in pursuit of knowing and coming closer to God?

*God decided in advance to **adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ.** This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.*

Ephesians 1:5 (NLT)

Jesus is always there with open arms of acceptance towards all people. Whether Samaritans, Gentiles, lame, poor or even a tax collector.

But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 1:12 (NLT)

It is **only those** who truly desire to engage with Jesus that can **receive** his acceptance.

“Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, “I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!”” - **Luke 19:8 (NLT)**

It was only when Jesus accepted Zacchaeus that all the good and beautiful things that Zacchaeus had become unlocked.

All of the good we can ever do in the world will stay hidden until we find ourselves in the loving and accepting arms of him who created us.

“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”

St Augustine Of Hippo

Those who claim to follow Christ, must see others with the eyes of Christ.

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Romans 5:8 (NLT)

I wonder what our heart is like today?.... Is there a limit at which our hearts are no longer willing to love and accept others or ourselves?.... Jesus shows us there is no one outside the reach of His love and acceptance.

We need only accept that He accepts us.