

Message: Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?
By Senior Pastor Tom Harrison
Sermon Series: Helping Others Follow Jesus
Luke 19:1-10
March 22, 2020

This is another story of Jesus reaching out to embrace people who were considered “beyond” salvation. Like the Samaritan woman at the well, Zacchaeus had flown past cultural values. He lined his pockets by helping finance the Roman occupation of Israel. He collected taxes (profit gouging) from his fellow Jews to bankroll the despised Roman oppressors. These Jews had no recourse against Zacchaeus. He could tell you to shut up and pay Rome and if you didn't, he could turn you over to them for retribution. To say the Jews hated Zacchaeus and his fellow tax collectors is a classic understatement. Zacchaeus didn't respect them, so they didn't respect him, either.

Jesus loves ALL people. He gave prostitutes, tax collectors and murderers an invitation to a new life. He even offered forgiveness to a thief dying with Him on the cross. The undeserved favor of Jesus is called “grace.” NOBODY is perfect. We are ALL sinners. We all miss the mark. We must not deny grace to anyone. Jesus respects all people because all people are created in the image of God. Jesus chose to give respect to Zacchaeus. The chief tax collector didn't have to earn Jesus' respect, but he responded to it.

Zacchaeus was “up the tree” in more ways than one. He wanted something more from life than a successful business. It is amazing how Jesus could spot this guy who had come up so short in the community. It is so like Jesus. He always had an eye out for the outcast.

APPLICATION: It is one of the most difficult things in the Christian faith to “love the sinner while hating the sin.” Jesus did not condone Zacchaeus' behavior, but He did not condemn him as a person. Everyone needs a Zacchaeus in life, someone who challenges us to be like Jesus when it isn't easy. Do you have a Zacchaeus? Are you a Zacchaeus? Do you need to forgive? Do you need to be forgiven? Jesus wants to bring healing and salvation to all people – even the outcasts. Treating others with respect is one way we *Help Others Follow Jesus*.

Luke 19:1-10

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 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 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 I must stay at your house today." ⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all 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 give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." ⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Hello neighbor. Mr. Rogers is so glad to see you, especially in this day of social distancing – I certainly need to see my neighbors. This special thing I brought to show you is called a whiteboard. It will help me introduce you to some of my special friends. Let me introduce you to my one very special friend. Jesus was the most attractive person in the history of the world. One thing He taught was that we should **love our neighbors** as ourselves. Jesus had **confident humility, genuine kindness** and was a **committed team player**. In fact, He needed teammates. His movement would depend upon them.

One of Jesus' first teammates was **Simon**. Jesus later changed his name to "Peter," which meant "Rocky" or a chip of the big rock. Simon was a fisherman who one day was washing his nets after having fished all night and catching nothing. As he was washing his nets, Jesus told Simon to put out into the deep water and to cast His nets. Simon protested a bit but complied – after all, Jesus had healed Simon's mother-in-law of a fever. When he caught such a huge amount of fish, he was more than convinced: Rabbi Jesus was no ordinary human being. Astonished, Simon fell at Jesus' feet and exclaimed, "*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*" Jesus didn't come to help Peter catch more fish; He came to re-direct His life.

Paralyzed Man - a Lame man who was a beggar. He had been crippled for 38 years. That's a lifetime. Jesus asked: "*Do You Want To Be Well?*" Jesus was inviting this man to a new life – but the man had to exercise faith to rise up and walk. And he seized the moment.

Woman @ the Well was forced by her community to practicing social distancing. She was drawing water at noontime all by herself. She had a history of broken relationships that disconnected her from her community. Jesus, a Jewish man, spoke to her, an outcast with 3 strikes against her: a Samaritan, a woman, a

woman with a history of broken relationships. Yet, Jesus showed respect for her and invited her into a new relationship with Him.

Zacchaeus – The “Z Man.” “The little big man.” The kingpin of the Jericho tax cartel. Filthy rich. He was a **minion** of Rome – extorting taxes from his own countrymen to keep the Romans in power. He could rip people off – and did! No wonder he was so hated. Who would ever have guessed that Zacchaeus, of all people, would have wanted to see Jesus? Why?

1.) Maybe he was curious and had heard stories ab. Jesus’ preaching/teaching/healing. Maybe this was the Messiah.

2.) Maybe he’d heard that Jesus had another tax collector, Matthew, as a disciple in his company. Maybe Z had knew “Levi.” This is not a large country and it’s entirely possible.

3.) Maybe Z found that his wealth and lifestyle was not satisfying. Dissatisfaction can produce positive changes.

4.) Maybe Z was tired of everyone hating him.

Tired of his sad life, Z determined to see Jesus but couldn’t because he was a short man. He climbed a sycamore tree to get a better view. A “*ficus sycomorus*” is a sturdy tree about 40’ high. With a short trunk and wide branches, it was very easy to climb, but climbing a tree wasn’t something a “respectable” man would have done then. This picture of a tiny, rejected man sitting alone, hidden in order to get a glimpse of Jesus, is very touching. He certainly didn’t want others to know he was there. He would get a private view of Jesus. The crowd would pass, and he would remain unseen. Then Jesus reached the spot, and it’s incredible – he called Z by name. Jesus called “Despicable Z” something no one else (Romans or Jews) showed him: RESPECT. This is the same Jesus who had seen Nathanael when he was under a fig tree and discerned, he was a man w/o guile. Z was like the rich man who was about to go through “the eye of the needle.” Z found something or someone better than \$. Instead of having a passion to get, Z now had a passion to give.

GENEROSITY won’t save us but is a first indicators we HAVE been saved. His heart, formerly like Scrooge or Grinch, was now enlarged. J makes little men big.

Would’ve been easy to conclude Z was beyond redemption. Change? Impossible.

Generosity leads to **ABUNDANCE** (not scarcity) but it can also relate to people feeling lost ab our future, health, businesses, loved ones, jobs, finances. Much HAS been “lost” - semesters ending too soon, weddings, funerals, proms &

graduations being cancelled or scaled back or postponed - these are real losses of things that connect us to one another in community.

One of most important things Jesus said in His ministry is in v10 *For the Son of Man came to seek & to save the **lost**.*” Maybe you are feeling lost, too. Jesus always invited a response. For Simon – go out into the deep and cast your nets; for the lame man, rise up and walk; for the woman at the well, “give me a drink of water” for Z, “come down out of the tree. I’m coming to your house.”

There’s an invitation for **us**, too: *“Leave the safe and familiar routine and cast off, rise up, draw out, come down. Come down. I want to dine with you. I want your soul. I’ve sought you. Come to me. Will you come?”* Maybe you’re curious about following Jesus. Maybe you’ve seen others who are following Jesus and would like to be like them. Maybe you’re tired of trying to find your identity in the acquisition of stuff.

I remind you of who Jesus is. He respects all of us as children of God. He cares & is seeking each of us by name in whatever our situation. We will get thru this & we will gather again. “Social distancing” is what is asked of us now, but the church is about community, love and respect. HOFJ = why we’re here.

We not only have “Good” news – we have the BEST news. Our sin can be forgiven, we can find Xn community – the church, we can be given a script for life – scriptures, can find a mission to live + a witness to bring; & when this life finally ends we can say *“Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us & where He is, we shall be also.”* Ask Jesus into your heart today.