

Zaccheus

Luke 19:1-10 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

*Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich.³ Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and he was **unable due to the crowd**, because he was short in stature. ⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree in order to see Him, because He was about to pass through that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I **must stay at your house.**” ⁶ And he hurried and came down, and received Him joyfully. ⁷ When the people saw this, they all began to complain, saying, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner!” ⁸ But Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I am giving to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone, I am giving back four times as much.” ⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”*

Introduction

Our walk with Jesus continues today. This morning, we are back in Jericho. Remember this was the town where Jesus opened the eyes of Bartimaeus the beggar. It was also a center of commerce: “... the lucrative production and export of balsam was centered in Jericho...” (Wikipedia, [balsam](#)). Keep this in mind, because this has something to do with our main character Zaccheus’s wealth. Once again, we are following Jesus, passing through the town.

Content

v. 1-2: *Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich.*

Background info on tax collector: In Jesus’ time, tax collectors worked for the Roman Empire, the enemy of Israel. They were often corrupt and “*amassed personal wealth by demanding tax payments in excess of what Rome levied and keeping the difference*” in their pocket (Wikipedia, [tax collector](#)). Accordingly, they were hated and despised by their own people. People shunned them as sinners. Zaccheus was not only one of them, but also the head of such traitors! He was rich, however, mainly by the flourishing balsam business in town that generated a lot of wealth, which, in turn, contributed much tax money to his own

pocket. Unlike his name, (Zaccheus means ‘pure, innocent,’), he too was corrupt to extort people. By the way, Matthew, one of Jesus’ 12 disciples, was also a former tax collector.

v. 3: *Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and he was **unable due to the crowd**, because he was short in stature.* --- He is height-challenged! He can’t see Jesus because he is short. He is (repeatedly) trying to squeeze in and push himself through the crowd to the front line to no avail.

was unable due to the crowd. Hmmm. It seems more than just his short stature that kept him from seeing Jesus. I suspect that perhaps the crowd doesn’t want him to go through. They might have intentionally blocked him, the sinner, away from Jesus.

v. 4: *So he ran on ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree in order to see Him, because He was about to pass through that way.* --- Zaccheus isn’t a quitter. Plan A doesn’t work. So, it’s time for Plan B. Looking around at the route Jesus was taking, he sees a tree, a sycamore tree—actually, a sycamore fig tree. So, he runs on ahead and climbs up into the tree and waiting for Jesus. Where there’s a will, there’s a way.

v. 5: *And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I **must stay at your house.**”* ---Zaccheus is really impressed with Jesus. *How does He know my name? He wonders. Recognizing me in public? Staying at my house?! By the way, He is recognizing me not as a sinner but as a friend! Hey, that’s huge.* He is thrilled.

v. 6: *And he hurried and came down, and received Him joyfully.* ---Zaccheus receives Jesus with great joy, because he is entertaining not just anybody but Jesus! In his own house. To entertain a stranger is considered a blessing. To receive Jesus into his home is an extra blessing.

v. 7: *When the people saw this, **they all** began to complain, saying, “He has gone in **to be the guest** of a man who is a sinner!”* ---By the way, who are “they” in this verse? The people in town, right? The crowd. The spectators. **They all**, everyone, begin to grumble (original Greek). Grumble is a very strong word. More than ‘to complain (translation here).’ Grumble means to complain in a bad-tempered way, with ‘disapproval and dissatisfaction.’

Understandably. They knew about Zaccheus, the chief tax collector. The collaborator for the occupiers. The traitor. The chief of all traitors. The sinner. *Look, they grumbled, how can Jesus, the righteous Man of God, enter such sinner’s house?* A blessed man never sits at the seat of sinners (Psalm 1:1).

To be the guest: Being the guest means having a meal together. Having a meal together means mutual fellowship and acceptance. That's why the crowd was upset with Jesus, because He went into a sinner's house. They themselves didn't invite Jesus into their homes, yet, when somebody else did, they got jealous and grumbled about it. They wanted Jesus to be on their side, but Jesus chose to be on the sinner's side.

v. 8: *But Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I am giving to the poor, and if I have **extorted** anything from anyone, I am giving back four times as much ---*

Zaccheus volunteers to give away half of his possessions to the poor and to give back four times to those whom he might have extorted. Without being asked by anyone. Without being forced by the authorities. All voluntarily. All willingly. That pleases Jesus. A true sign of repentance. Make things right. From your heart. Give and give back.

v. 9: *And Jesus said to him, "**Today salvation has come to this house**, because he, too, is **a son of Abraham**. He too is a son of Abraham!* Jesus declares. This declaration is huge! A genuine acknowledgment from Jesus. Zaccheus is no longer a sinner with no hope of salvation. But a son of Abraham whom God loves. The rightful heir of salvation. That's what Jesus does for us. He turns us the sinners into the children of God and heirs of salvation when we invite Him into our hearts.

v. 10: *For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."* Salvation has come to Zaccheus's (corrupt and rich person) house on the day when Jesus entered his household. Jesus has come to 'seek and to save' those who are lost. Amen.

Three Lessons:

Salvation Is a Must. It is not an option. *When Jesus came to the place (where Zaccheus was waiting in the tree), He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I **must stay** at your house" (v. 5).*

Jesus says to you now: *I **must stay** in your heart.* The same Jesus says to everyone now, *Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me (Revelation 3:20).* Do you hear His voice? Would you let Him in? Here's why.

Everyone needs salvation (v. 5---must). Everyone needs the Lord. You must have salvation. So must I. So must everyone. Salvation is not just for the upright, but for all

sinners. Tax collectors, ex-convicts, hypocrites, the outcast, and you and me. Jesus came to *seek and to save that which was lost* (v. 10). Everyone needs salvation in Christ. Salvation is a must.

Salvation Right Now. Today (v. 5, 9). Some people put it off to accept Jesus into their hearts until their death bed. Folks, if you do, you may regret, for it may be too late. What makes you so sure that you are going to die peacefully on your bed? E.g., D. L. Moody's crusade in Chicago. The crusade usually lasted three or four nights. Each night, thousands of people came to listen to God's Word. One night, there was a fire in the auditorium. Some perished without having a chance to accept Christ. Mr. Moody was going to preach a sermon of invitation the night after the fire. He lost the opportunity. He learned a lesson that night: Don't put it off. Jesus says, *Hurry and come down* (v. 5). He must come into your heart today. Right now. Don't wait. Do it now. Right now.

Salvation Means a New Life. Repentance is a sign of true conversion. Zaccheus starts a new life in Christ by making up his wrongs. He finds eternal life by dispossessing of his plenty amassed by extortion. By the way, there's inverse relation between eternal life and possessions. *"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God"* (Mark 10:25). Unlike the rich young ruler in Luke 18, Zaccheus finds salvation by giving away half of his possessions to the poor. He also repents of what he has done; the practice of extortion. By paying back four times. Almost three times more than what the Law required: *"he shall make restitution for it in full and add to it one-fifth more"* (Leviticus 6:5). If anyone is in Christ, s/he is a new creation. Behold, the old has gone and the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17). Salvation means a new life in Christ that bears the fruit of repentance.

Conclusion

If I had to choose one song for Zaccheus, it would be this: *Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of His Spirit, washed in His blood. This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long, this is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.*

Salvation is a must. It is urgent. Accept Jesus today and start living a new life in Christ.

Amen.