

"Zacchaeus"

Two businessmen were having lunch and they started talking about world problems, high taxes, the cost of living, their families. One of them said proudly, "I have six boys." So the other guy said, "That's a nice family. I wish to heaven I had six children." And the proud father said with a touch of sympathy in his voice, "Don't you have any children?" And the other guy said, "Yeah, ten!"

We all have things in life which appear to either be a blessing or a burden. And for us grown ups paying tax maybe something we see as a burden. And most of us see the **Inland Revenue** as a bunch of people who take no more please out of life than taking our money. And so because we see the tax people who don't do nothing for us but rather than just take from us, a lot of people don't view very highly of them.

But burden or not Jesus reminds us in **Luke 20:25** "Pay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and pay to God what belongs to God." And that's what we're going to look at today in our lesson. We're going to look at a Tax Collector who was facing the same problems as many tax collectors face today. We're going to look at a little man who became big in the Kingdom of God.

Luke 19:1 "One day, Jesus went to visit the city of Jericho". The people of Jericho were a very sad people. **Why were they sad?** They were sad because they had to pay taxes and their taxes were very high. The reason their taxes were so high was that there was a dishonest tax collector in the city.

The tax collector's name was Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus would always collect more tax than people owed. He would give part of the money to the Roman government and keep the rest for himself. No wonder he was disliked among the people, in fact as someone once said, 'there is only one thing worse than a tax collector and that's a dishonest tax collector.'

But tax collector or not, dishonest or not Zacchaeus decided he wanted to see this man called Jesus for himself. But as we're about to see in this lesson today, what a person wants and what a person gets can be two completely different things.

Luke 19:3 "Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was coming to Jericho. He wanted to see Jesus, but he was so short that he could not see above the heads of the people who crowded around Jesus."
Luke 19:4 "He saw a Sycamore tree nearby and decided to climb the tree so that he could see Jesus."

He climbed... And climbed... And climbed... And climbed... And climbed... And climbed... And climbed... And climbed... Until finally, he was perched high in the top of the tree! You see he was determined to see Jesus no matter what and I'm wondering how far you're willing to climb to see Jesus.

For example would you climb **Mount Everest** to see Jesus? Would you climb the **Eiffel Tower** to see Jesus? Would you climb to the top of the **Forth Road Bridge** to see Jesus? You see its one thing saying I want to know Jesus and another thing actually doing something about.

Zacchaeus climbed and climb until he could see Jesus, **how far are you willing to climb?** **Luke 19:5** "When Jesus passed by, he looked up in the Sycamore tree and saw Zacchaeus." **Luke 19:5** "Zacchaeus, you come down," Jesus said. "I am going to your house today."

You see loved ones Jesus is calling today and has been for a while. And He's calling you to come down from your sin; I want to come into your house today. In other words, Jesus says I want to enter your house today; I want to enter your heart today.

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But again the question is **will you allow Him to enter? Luke 19:6 "Zacchaeus climbed down from the tree as fast as he could"**. Jesus went with Zacchaeus to his house and had dinner with him.

When you invite special guests to your home, do you warm up the leftovers in the refrigerator and serve them on paper plates in front of the television? Of course not. Most of us prepare a special meal, use our best dishes and arrange our schedules so that we can spend quality time with our guests. In other words, we offer them our very best.

How many of us invite the Lord Jesus into our life and then serve Him "leftovers"? We give Him time "leftover" from our work, our families or our recreation. We give Him talents "leftover" from our social organizations, our sports activities or our hobbies. We give Him money "leftover" after we pay our bills and our taxes and put some money aside for our holiday.

Numbers 18:29 "Out of all the gifts to you, you shall present every contribution due to the Lord; from each its best part is to be dedicated." As Christians we need to ask ourselves regularly, **have I given to the Lord who died for me the best, or have I given Him "leftovers"?** And for those who aren't Christians need to ask this question, **am you willing to give the Lord who died for you the best you've got to offer or are you just going to give Him the "leftovers"?**

Because let me tell what will happen, what will happen is the same thing which happened to Zacchaeus. **Luke 19:7 "Some of the people were very angry with Jesus because he went to the home of Zacchaeus"**.

Now notice they weren't angry with Zacchaeus at this point they were angry with Jesus. And loved ones when a person becomes a Christians you need to be aware that **yes**, people will get angry with you, **yes** they might leave you and want nothing to do with you. **Yes** they might treat you like a tax collector but you need to know that they aren't really angry with you, they are actually angry at Jesus.

John 15:18+19 "If the world hates you, just remember that it has hated me first. If you belonged to the world, then the world would love you as its own. But I chose you from this world, and you do not belong to it; that is why the world hates you".

Let me tell you something loved ones, the reason some people don't like their friends become Christians is because the light that you give off as a Christian frightens them. It frightens them because they are reminded that God is real. It frightens them their your exposing their darkness. Oh they will say things like, oh look at you, goody two shoes, you think you're so righteous and you think you're so right about everything. You think your life is so perfect.

Listen any true Christian knows that none of those things are true. We're as much a sinner as they are, the only difference is we've admitted that we are sinners and we've realised that we need help to live a life which pleases God because we know that death is not the end.

And we see our need for Jesus with those eyes; we know just how much we need to change. And its not until you come face to face with Jesus will know just how much of a sinner you are. Just ask Isaiah what that feels like, he says in **Isaiah 6:5 "There is no hope for me! I am doomed because every word that passes my lips is sinful, and I live among a people whose every word is sinful."**

When you come face to face with pure righteousness, you not only aware of how much of a sinner you are but you also realise that you need help, and help sometimes comes with change.

This is exactly what happened next in our story. But once Jesus was in his home, Zacchaeus changed.

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Luke 19:8 "He told Jesus that he would give half of his money to the poor -- and if he had cheated anyone -- he would pay them back. He promised to repay them four times the amount he had stolen".

You see Zacchaeus changed when he allowed Jesus in. He changed when he realised the way he was living was not right. But not only did Jesus change his life, he also changed the lives of those living in Jericho. That day a lot of people in Jericho were much richer and much, much happier.

Luke 19:9 "Zacchaeus was happy too! Jesus had changed his life!" The Good News Translation says, Luke 19:9 "Salvation has come to this house today, for this man, also, is a descendant of Abraham".

And let me tell you loved ones the Great Barr community needs people with changed lives. The Great Barr community needs people to expose their darkness because there are people in this community who need saved. There are people within this room, this very morning that need saved.

Are you willing to trust Jesus like Zacchaeus did? Are you willing to climb into the Bible and study with someone who can share with you about how Jesus can change your life? Are you willing to step out in faith like Zacchaeus did despite everyone around you possibly hating you? Are you willing to simply trust Jesus with your life so that He can give you real happiness? Are you willing to turn your back against the world and follow God, confess Jesus as Lord of your life, be baptized for the forgiveness of every single sin you've ever committed in your life and try your best to live faithfully for the rest of your life trying to please God?

You've probably heard the story of **Jack and the beanstalk**. As **Jack** slept, after planting some seeds, the beans germinated in the soil, and a gigantic beanstalk grew in their place by morning. When **Jack** saw the huge beanstalk, he immediately decided to climb it. He arrived in a land high up in the clouds that happened to be the home of a giant. When he broke into the giant's castle, the giant quickly sensed a human was near: **Fee-fi-fo-fum! I smell the blood of an Englishman. Be he 'live, or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to make my bread.**

However, **Jack** was saved by the **giant's wife** and as he escaped from the palace, he took a **bag of gold coins** with him. **Jack** desired to seek out more treasures from the castle in the clouds and climbed once more up the beanstalk. This time he stole a **hen which laid golden eggs**. Again he was saved from harm by the giant's wife.

Jack disregarded being nearly discovered by the giant twice and decided to go up the beanstalk a third time. This time, he stole a **magical harp** that played by itself. The instrument did not appreciate being stolen and called out to the giant for help. The giant chased **Jack** down the beanstalk, but **Jack** managed to get to the ground before the giant did. **Jack**, seeing an axe on the ground beside him, immediately chopped the beanstalk down.

The giant fell to earth, hitting the ground so hard that it split, pulling the beanstalk down with him. That was the end of the giant and the beanstalk.

You see loved ones, every time a sinner decides to climb closer to God, the devil says, **"Fee-fi-fo-fum! I smell the blood of a sinner. Be he 'live, or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to make my bread."** But just as the devil says this, God says, **"Fee-fi-fo-fum! I smell someone who's in need of my Son's blood. Be he 'live, or be near dead, I'll grind his heart to help them become like My Son, the Living Bread"**.

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You see Jack realised that he couldn't save himself, he needed the help of the giant's wife. And in much the same way, anyone who decides to become a Christian needs to know that you can't save yourself, you need the help of our Giant's Son, whose name is Jesus Christ.

You see loved ones; Jack got many treasures when he climbed the beanstalk, but those treasures were treasures which won't last forever. And you need to know that there are many riches in heaven which will last eternally. And God has them on offer for you today but you need to be willing to climb and trust His Son Jesus to receive them.

[Are you willing to allow salvation to come into your house today?](#)