

Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1 ~ 10

+

NOVEMBER 3, 2019

The story of Zacchaeus is a story about what it means to be lost. Not simply a lost soul but truly lost. Ostracized by the crowds and by your very own people. A person is lost when he has wandered from God so far that you turn on everyone around you. You betray you're your very own.

Jesus and His disciples are heading toward the show-down in Jerusalem. As they pass through Jericho, a great crowd gathered to see Jesus. Zacchaeus was in the crowd. The scriptures tell us that Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector and rich... and that he was disliked and despised by his fellow townspeople. They resented paying taxes to Rome and they felt that Zacchaeus, a fellow Jew, had betrayed them, has sold out to Rome, and had gotten rich at their expense. So, they rejected him, shunned him, detested him.

In the "Wizard of Id" comic strip, the priest asks, "Of all the major sins, which do you consider to be number one?" "Well," came the reply, "They're all bad, but I think I like greed the best!" Zacchaeus could have identified with that. He had been greedy. He had cheated. He had taken advantage of others... but then Jesus came to him and reached out to him and included him and ate with him, Zacchaeus was changed, redeemed, converted. He was so grateful that Jesus had accepted him that he came down out of that Sycamore tree with love in his heart.

He had a new regard for others and said, *“Behold Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor and I will pay back four times over all those I have cheated.”* That’s what real gratitude does for you. It enables you to see people differently. It causes you to see other people lovingly.

There is the story about a young college student who was visited one weekend by his father... at a prestigious college in the East. The father had an old dilapidated car. When the dad drove away to go home, some of the boy’s friends began to laugh and tease and make fun of that car. The young man said, *“You can laugh if you want to, but let me tell you something. My father could have had a new car years ago if he had wanted one. He had the money to buy it, but he wanted me to have an education at this school... more than he wanted a new car for himself. The only reason I am here is because he chose to drive that old car. I am so grateful to him because in that one generous sacrificial act, he taught me so much about life and thoughtfulness and love. I love that old car and I love the man in it.”*

That’s just the way it works. The Zacchaeus story teaches us that real gratitude gives us a new relationship with God and a new regard for others. That’s how Zacchaeus felt about what Jesus did for him... and that is precisely how we as Christians gratefully feel because that is precisely what Jesus has done for us. He has saved our lives, so there is nothing we would not do for Him... because He is the One who has given us a new relationship with God, a new regard for others, and a new reason for living.