

DAY 1 (week starting 6th August 2018)**Read - Luke 19:1-10**

For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. v10

*Zaccheus was a very little man
And a very little man was he
He climbed up into a sycamore tree
For the Saviour he wanted to see
And when the Saviour passed that way
He looked up into the tree
And said, "Now Zaccheus you come down
For I'm coming to your house for tea!"*

A nice little children's song, and very British and all that! –*"I'm coming to your house for tea!"* But it hardly does justice to one of the most dramatic conversions in scripture. Zaccheus's life was radically changed in this encounter with Jesus.

Certainly children can identify with Zaccheus. They often find themselves at the back of the crowd and can't see what's going on. But this story deals with much deeper things. For one thing it brings out three major themes in Luke's gospel:

1. The problem of riches and what to do about it.
2. The fact that Jesus spent time with 'sinners' and people Jewish society regarded as undesirable.
3. The fact that when people recognized Jesus as Lord and put their faith in him, they discovered new life as a result.

The change in Zaccheus's life went very deep, as we shall see. Greek has two words for time: "*chronos*" (normal time) and "*kairos*" (a divinely appointed time/ a moment of destiny). This was a "*kairos*" moment in Zaccheus's life. A moment that changed his life forever.

Think back. Has there ever been a life-changing moment in your life? A moment of destiny?

DAY 2**Read – Luke 19:1-10**

When Jesus reached that spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today. v5

Zaccheus was a tax-collector, and not just that, he was the chief tax-collector in Jericho. As a tax-collector he worked for the occupying Roman government. Many Jewish people would have hated him for that alone. The system of tax-collection in those days was that the tax-collector was given a certain amount to collect and pay over to the Romans, and once they had done that, they were allowed collect more than that amount, and that was theirs to live on.

Now whenever money is involved, corruption is not far away. We are told that Zaccheus was wealthy, so people would have resented the fact that his nice house, his nice furniture, and his many servants came out of their money, money taken from them. And there was nothing they could do about it. Many would have looked at him, as the poor in our own country must look at fat-cat politicians, who line their pockets through corruption and only think of themselves. They don't do anything positive for the country or the people.

Zaccheus could not have been popular! People in Jericho would have been horrified that today, two thousand years later, the only person that lived in Jericho at that time that we know by name, would be Zaccheus.

But Jesus looked up into that tree that day and saw the need in Zaccheus's soul, and he deliberately made time to spend with him.

If you could spend spend quality time with Jesus today, what would you need to talk about? Won't you do that prayerfully?

DAY 3**Read - Luke 19:1-10**

But Zaccheus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now... if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount". v8

We don't know what happened at Zaccheus's home that day; what they spoke about; how the conversation went. We only know that Zaccheus was a very different person at the end of that day. But more specifically we see a number of things that happened Zaccheus's life.

In the first place we see a deep repentance. This was not just a repentance that said "I'm sorry for what I did", and left it at that. This was a repentance that sought to do something positive to make up for all the harm and the bad things he had done.

To repent is to say sorry! To God - and sometimes to other people. But repentance also means facing the truth about ourselves and our lives. It means turning around and beginning to walk in a new direction. Repentance for Zaccheus was more than just a change of heart. He didn't just say sorry to God and leave it at that. His repentance involved restoration; making amends to people.

And Zaccheus was determined to do it lavishly. He didn't offer to sell his property, nor did Jesus demand it. But by making a fourfold restitution to people he had harmed (*Jewish Law only required a twofold restitution*) we can only imagine that his circumstances would have been drastically reduced.

***Just as I am, without one plea
But that thy blood was shed for me
And that thou bid'st me come to thee
O Lamb of God, I come***

DAY 4

Read - Luke 19:1-10

But Zaccheus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now... if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount". v8

Continuing with our theme of repentance, true and deep repentance is more than just saying sorry, it is also trying to do whatever we can to put right the wrong we have done.

It may mean going to people we have hurt or harmed and asking them to forgive us, or maybe writing a letter to them. It may mean returning something we have stolen. It may mean owning up to something we have done wrong. Certainly it will mean asking God's forgiveness for wrong and sinful things we have done. One of the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous says: *To make a list of all the people I have hurt and seek to make restitution to them, unless to do so will cause more harm than I have already done.* There are occasions where for us to make a public confession of our sin might actually cause hurt or embarrassment to someone else. So we need to be sensitive.

Catherine Marshall, in her book on prayer, says she once felt a huge blockage in her prayer-life. God led her to make a list of all the people she had hurt in some way in her life. And she either spoke or wrote personal letters to each one that she had hurt, saying sorry, and asking their forgiveness. And then she experienced this tremendous sense of release in her prayer-life and her Christian life again.

Can I invite you to sit quietly in God's presence and reflect, and make a list of these things and the people involved. And then prayerfully to decide what action would be appropriate in each instance.

DAY 5

Read - Psalm 139:1-16

But Zaccheus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now... I give half of my possessions to the poor. Lk19:8

When we come to Jesus our life changes from being self-centred to being outward looking. As Jesus takes centre-stage in our life, it is no longer the great "I" that is at the centre. The love God has for us will begin to flow through us to others.

Zaccheus says, "*Lord, here and now I am going to give half my possessions to the poor*". Could you do that? Give half your possessions to the poor? Perhaps that would be a bit radical for most of us, but the real question is, do you care in any practical way for the needy, or the poor, or those less fortunate than you are.

Something very radical had happened in Zaccheus' life. He was a different person. He now cared about the poor. Only God can do that in someone's life.

When I think about such things, I often think of St Francis of Assisi, son of a wealthy cloth merchant in the town of Assisi in Italy. He was a privileged young man and led a rather wild life. But Jesus touched his life and he changed totally. He gave all that up and lived a simple life of devotion to God. He committed his life to reaching out to the poor, the outcast, the down-trodden and the broken.

One way to make amends for the wrong we have done, and the hurt we may have caused, is to devote our lives to serving others in whatever way God leads us to get involved.

Would you think prayerfully about this question – is your heart inward or outward looking? Do you care? Is there some way God is calling you to get involved in the work of his Kingdom?

DAY 6

Read – Romans 5:1-8

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. v8

Jesus often spent time with people that Jewish people regarded as outcasts, undesirable or unclean – prostitutes, lepers, tax-collectors. When Jesus invited himself to Zaccheus's home the people muttered, "*He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner'*". Jesus reply, on another occasion, was. "*It is not those who are well who need the doctor, but those who are sick*". Jesus still loves to bring the lost into his Kingdom, no matter what their background or previous way of life. Through faith, the lost can be forgiven and be made new. Jesus' reply on this occasion was, "*Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost*".

From now on Zaccheus was going to live his life very differently. He had changed. But please note, Zaccheus wasn't going to follow Jesus on the road. He was going to continue to live his life in Jericho. Following Jesus on the road would be nice but it would be a kind of running away. Zaccheus was going to face the realities of his life in Jericho. He would continue to be a tax-collector, but from now on he would be an honest tax-collector. And he would see to it that to people who worked under him worked honestly. He would continue to live with and face the people he had hurt and wronged and show them that he was a different person. That would be more difficult. It would take more courage, but that is what he had to do.

***Just as I am, thy love unknown
Has broken every barrier down
Now to be thine, yea thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come.***