

FBC Devotion Tuesday January 12 2021 Luke 19:1-10 I'm Not the Man I Was

“Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him.”

One of my favourite Christmas movies is “**A Christmas Carol**” with Scrooge, after his life altering experiences with the ghosts of Christmas Past Present and Future, standing on his head and crying out “**I’m not the man I was, I’m not the man I was.**”

Our devotion today outlines how a hated tax collector was able to say the same thing.

In our text Jesus was passing through Jericho. There a detested tax collector called Zacchaeus, a man of diminutive stature who can’t see through the crowds thronging Jesus, climbs the sycamore tree to be able to catch a glimpse of him.

Jesus looks up and spots him: “Come down from the tree. I’m going to eat in your house today.” We’re told that Zacchaeus welcomed Jesus gladly. Those details are very touching, because this man wasn’t overlooked by Jesus and left feeling ignored inferior or inconsequential.

Imagine Jesus engaging you eye to eye, mind to mind, heart to heart. As he does so, he doesn’t shun you or shove you into the background. In Christ you are significant, accepted and secure, loved with an everlasting love!

However, that’s not how the crowds saw Zacchaeus. When Jesus went into his house, they nudge, mutter and gossip that he’s eating in the home of a sinner. **As if they weren’t sinners themselves!** Remember the old adage for every finger you point at someone else, there will always be three fingers pointing back at you.

They saw Zacchaeus as a tax collector and a lackey of the Roman occupying powers, who exploited the poor as he feathered his own nest. **Could we be guilty by sometimes labelling people by class and creed, to name but two categories?**

After dining with Jesus, its evident Zacchaeus is not the man he was. He promises to give half of his possessions to the poor and if he has cheated anybody out of anything, he will give back four times the amount.

Jesus declared that his new found generosity was a mark of his changed life and outlook. This truth runs like a scarlet thread throughout the New Testament – *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!”* (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV)

I read the story this past week of kids hearing the story of Good Friday. There was an improvised cross at the centre of the room. Heavy suitcases were carried symbolising the sad and bad things in one’s life – burdens that were able to be left at the foot of the cross and then walk away free.

That’s exactly what salvation does as it reminds us that when our sins are forgiven at the foot of the Cross, we can genuinely say, “**I’m not the man/woman I was.**” **How glad I am that I’m part of a fellowship that holds firmly to this foundational truth.**