

# Sinners?

Acceptance awaits those who seek Jesus in repentance.

LUKE 19:1-10



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 that on or  
 ight the pe  
 ed the gospel.  
 scribes came u

him, saying, Tell us,  
 est thou these things;  
 ave thee this authority;  
 wner and said unto the  
 you one thing; and answer  
 ptism of John, was it from h  
 men?

they reasoned with themselves,  
 f we shall say, From heaven; he  
 , Why then believed ye him not?

6 But and if we say, Of men; all the pe  
 will stone us: 7 for they be persuaded  
 John was a prophet.

7 And they answered, that they could  
 tell whence *it was*.

8 And Jesus said unto them, Neither  
 I you by what authority I do these thin

## THE LORD OF THE VINEYARD

9 Then began he to speak to the people  
 parable; 10 A certain man planted a viney

thought of His rejection by the city of  
 usalem. Genuine, lasting peace with  
 od comes through faith in Jesus Christ  
 (Rom. 5:1). The Jews enjoyed a temporal  
 though imperfect peace under Roman rule,

19:47-48 The religious leaders of J  
 were increasingly desperate to get r  
 Jesus, but they were hesitant to ac  
 cause Jesus had gained considerable  
 ularity among the masses.

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**Name someone you want to meet. What is it that draws you to that person?**

Many of us have a list of people we would like to meet—perhaps a celebrity or an athlete. We think that if we can get close to them they might respond kindly to our request for a selfie or an autograph. We certainly wouldn't expect them to invite us to lunch or to visit our home. Yet that is what happened to a tax collector when he climbed a tree just to get a glimpse of Jesus. That tax collector found acceptance and forgiveness, which is what Jesus offers us as well.

## UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

As Jesus neared Jerusalem, He remained focused on His mission to seek and to save the lost. On this journey, we are introduced to a tax collector named Zacchaeus. As we have seen before in the Gospel of Luke, tax collectors were loathed because of their perceived greed and relationship to Rome. For this reason, they occupied a low place in Jewish society. The Jews viewed the Romans, who invaded their land, as the enemy. Paying Roman taxes was a painful reminder of the enemies' occupation. Since tax collectors worked for Rome, in the eyes of the Jewish people, they were God's enemies.

One of the recurring themes of Luke's account is that Jesus brings salvation to outcasts. Jesus welcomed outcasts into the kingdom of God. Even before the account of Zacchaeus, we saw Jesus' welcoming posture toward a leper (Luke 5:12-16), a paralytic

(5:17-26), Levi the tax collector (5:27-32), a sinful woman (7:36-50), the demoniac (8:26-39), and the lost son (15:11-32). The grace Jesus extended toward outsiders was not received well by the Jewish religious leaders. Even the crowds had difficulty with Jesus' posture toward Zacchaeus the tax collector. For Jesus, the mission was more important than social conventions. Moreover, Jesus' attitude toward outsiders gives comfort to anyone who might doubt whether God could accept them on account of their past.

# LUKE 19:1-10

**1** He entered Jericho and was passing through. **2** There was a man named **Zacchaeus**<sup>A</sup> who was a **chief tax collector**<sup>B</sup>, and he was rich. **3** He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was not able because of the crowd, since he was a short man. **4** So running ahead, he climbed up a sycamore tree to see Jesus, since he was about to pass that way. **5** When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because today it is necessary for me to stay at your house.” **6** So he quickly came down and welcomed him joyfully. **7** All who saw it began to complain, “He’s gone to stay with a sinful man.” **8** But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, I’ll give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord. And if I have **extorted**<sup>C</sup> anything from anyone, I’ll pay back four times as much.” **9** “Today salvation has come to this house,” Jesus told him, “because he too is **a son of Abraham**<sup>D</sup>. **10** For the **Son of Man**<sup>E</sup> has come **to seek and to save the lost**<sup>F</sup>.”

## Passage Outline

Desperate (Luke 19:1-4)

Friended (Luke 19:5-7)

Repentant (Luke 19:8-10)

## Key Words

A. The Hebrew name means “pure” and shows him to be Jewish. Jesus called Zacchaeus by name. Jesus knows who we are! As in the case of Nathaniel (John 4:17-18), Jesus knows all about us.

B. Zacchaeus was “one of the most influential Jews in the Roman tax-collecting business” (TLB), supervising other tax collectors for the Romans.

C. A change of heart due to the man’s encounter with Jesus

D. Jesus declared him a spiritual “descendant of Abraham” (GNT), making him part of the family of God.

E. Jesus’ favorite term for Himself comes from Daniel 7:13. Of the Trinity, He alone became incarnate.

F. Jesus reinforced His earthly purpose: “to find and restore the lost” (The Message).

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

As Jesus passed through Jericho, Zacchaeus tried to see Him but was unable because a large *crowd* had gathered. To see Jesus, Zacchaeus ran ahead and found a sycamore tree that would enable him to see Jesus when He passed through.

**DID YOU KNOW?** Sycamore trees (Luke 19:4), also called the fig-mulberries or sycamore figs (*ficus sycomorus*), were a type of fig tree and have no relation to the American sycamore tree. They have short trunks and wide branches that spread out in all directions with a diameter of 60-80 feet, making them easy to climb.

**What brings people to a place where they become desperate in looking for fulfillment, peace, meaning? How do our longings drive us to seek God?**

Zacchaeus was seeking to learn who Jesus was, and perhaps catch a glimpse of Him. It's very clear that Jesus knew who Zacchaeus was. He looked past the crowd and gave this man His singular attention.

**How does the conversation between Jesus and Zacchaeus relate to Jesus' mission? How did Jesus demonstrate that He came to provide salvation for all who trust Him in the way He approached Zacchaeus?**

The crowd began to grumble as they observed this exchange between Jesus and Zacchaeus, just as the religious leaders previously had done at Jesus' association with tax collectors and sinners (5:30; 15:2).

**What barriers and perceptions did Jesus face when talking to Zacchaeus? How might those same barriers and perceptions be faced by people today who are seeking Jesus?**

**BIBLE SKILL:** Review multiple Scripture passages to understand a key word. Use a Bible concordance to identify ways Luke used the word "Lord" in his Gospel. Along with "Son of Man," the title "Lord" is one of Luke's favorite references for Jesus. Lord translates the Greek word *kyrios*. In what different ways did Luke employ the use of the word Lord? What does Jesus' lordship mean to you?

Zacchaeus's immediate resolve to give to others in response to Jesus' kindness is heartening. True repentance begins with sincere regret, leads to verbal confession, and requires that guilty behavior stop (a change of direction).

**How does generosity to the poor demonstrate a heart that has been changed by God? What other actions might demonstrate repentance and faith in Jesus?**

Jesus announced that *salvation* had come to Zacchaeus that day, indicating once again the dramatic change that had taken place.

**How does the encounter with Zacchaeus demonstrate Jesus' mission and purpose? How should this encounter shape how we approach others about Jesus?**

# APPLY THE TEXT

- Some people are rightly desperate to see Jesus.
- Jesus is available to all people regardless of their past.
- Salvation is available to all who come to Jesus in repentance and faith.

**As a group, discuss the types of inner turmoil or external circumstances that might provoke someone to seek Jesus. How can you help people with this inner turmoil to see Jesus?**

**Who in your life do you consider to be least likely to come to faith in Jesus Christ? How can you begin to pray and take action to introduce them to Jesus?**

**Reflect on your salvation and how you first encountered Jesus. How does your encounter with Jesus compare to Zacchaeus's encounter? Thank God for accepting you and for His forgiveness.**

## Prayer Requests

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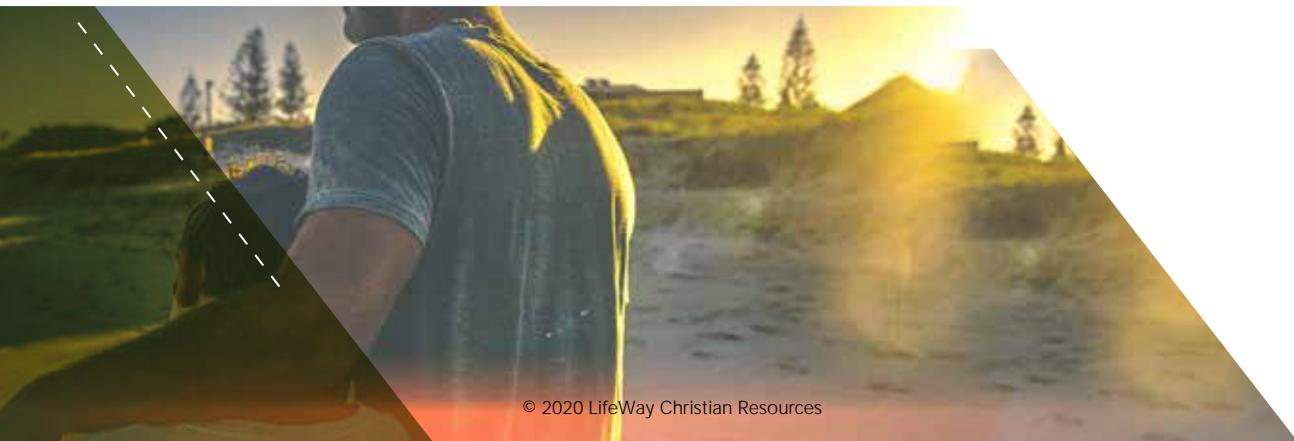
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# DAILY EXPLORATION

## Day 1: Desperation leads us to seek Jesus.

*Read Luke 19:1-4, noticing key details about Zacchaeus and his actions.*

Zacchaeus was a *chief tax collector* and was *rich*. The Roman government contracted with individuals in different regions to collect taxes. Because of the nature of the work, those who collected taxes charged interest and kept the profits for themselves. The title chief tax collector does not appear anywhere else in the New Testament. Zacchaeus probably employed others who went out on his behalf to collect taxes. Obviously, his business had done well since *Jericho* was a substantial import and export post. This wealthy business owner was curious about Jesus. Perhaps Zacchaeus was curious and wanted a glimpse of this newly-famed religious teacher. Maybe, he had heard that Jesus warmly welcomed the company of sinners and tax collectors (5:27-32; 15:1-2). Everyone, even tax collectors, desires to be welcomed and accepted by others. Regardless of Zacchaeus's reasons for wanting to see Jesus, many people in the Scriptures were rightly desperate to see Jesus. When we reflect on the ministry of Jesus in the Gospels, His presence always benefited those who were needy or ostracized. This should challenge our understanding of Christlike action, shouldn't it? More often than not, we seek to help people who are like us—or are just a few degrees “different” than us, but not too much. Not so with Jesus.

**What brings you to a place where you become desperate in looking for fulfillment, peace, meaning? How do your longings drive you to seek God?**

## Day 2: Jesus came to save the lost.

*Read Luke 19:5-6, contemplating how Jesus sought out Zacchaeus.*

Note the wording of Jesus' command. Jesus didn't ask permission but rather informed Zacchaeus that it was necessary (I must) for Him to stay in his home. Zacchaeus didn't invite Jesus; Jesus invited Himself. This may strike us as odd at first, but the purpose of Jesus' visit becomes explicit in verse 10, He came to seek and to save the lost. Zacchaeus was a recipient of Jesus' mission. Perhaps Zacchaeus wouldn't have even thought to invite Jesus to his house, assuming Jesus wouldn't stay with a man like him. Yet Jesus took the initiative and reached out to him. Zacchaeus responded to Jesus' command quickly and joyfully. Many Bible scholars note that the motif of rejoicing in this passage also is used elsewhere as the proper response of the lost being found (15:5-10). As readers, we celebrate this. However, the actual crowd was not as welcoming of these transpiring events.

**How did Jesus demonstrate that He came to provide salvation for all who trust Him—including you—in the way He approached Zacchaeus?**

### Day 3: All people are welcome in the family of God.

*Read Luke 19:7, identifying the crowd's response to Jesus.*

In ancient societies, entering into someone's home and sharing a meal was a ceremonial act of friendship and intimacy. Some have described homes as "boundary markers." That is, they provide boundaries for acceptance. When you enter into someone's home, friendship is nurtured. By being a guest, you are saying, "I value you as a person and desire to nurture a relationship with you, regardless of what others think." This text reminds us that Jesus is available to all people, regardless of their pasts. He provides us an example of spending time with sinners. Too often we separate from sinners rather than helping those far from Christ come near to Him. As Christians, spending time with "outcasts" could be one of our most powerful demonstrations of the gospel. The good news of the gospel is that all people—regardless of their social class, economic status, or heritage—are welcomed into the family of God through faith in Christ. When the church exhibits gospel diversity in its fellowship, the crowd looks like the crowd Jesus sought.

**What barriers and perceptions did Jesus face when talking to Zacchaeus?**

**What barriers did you face when seeking Jesus? What barriers do others face today when they seek Jesus?**

### Day 4: True repentance involves a change of heart.

*Read Luke 19:8, considering Zacchaeus's quick repentance.*

Zacchaeus seemed to be aware of the reason behind the crowd's complaints. The crowd's antagonism toward him was the result of his dishonest business practices, gouging them for tax money. In offering to give *half* of his *goods* to the *poor* and to *restore ... fourfold* to anyone he *defrauded*, he confessed his wrongdoing. Zacchaeus's response indicated a changed heart. His response exceeded the minimal demands of the Old Testament law. Giving away half of your possessions was a radical response. In Exodus 22:1, the penalty for the theft of an animal required a four- or five-fold repayment of the value of the animal. Zacchaeus accepted for himself the extent of the law imposed on thieves; he now viewed his wealth as ill-gotten gain. This marks a decisive change in direction in Zacchaeus's life. From here on out, he would be attending to the needs of the poor rather than stockpiling wealth for himself. One might ask: Why did Zacchaeus intend to keep half of his wealth? It stands to reason that by retaining half of his wealth, he could make good on his word to restore those he swindled.

**KEY DOCTRINE: Salvation.** Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (2 Cor. 5:17-20).

**How do you demonstrate repentance and faith in Jesus?**

## Day 5: Salvation comes through faith.

**Read Luke 19:9-10, underlining the word salvation.**

Zacchaeus's generosity and humility demonstrate that he was truly a *son of Abraham*, that is, he desired to be obedient to the law. It's important to note that Zacchaeus's actions were a response to Jesus' initiation of their relationship, not actions that were intended to earn a relationship with Him. His actions were a demonstration of his already changed heart. Thus, Zacchaeus qualified as a *son of Abraham* because he bore fruit befitting his repentance. First, Jesus opened up His heart to Zacchaeus, then Zacchaeus opened up his heart to the poor. We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone—true salvation is demonstrated in good works, which are the fruit of faith. Our salvation comes through faith in Jesus and not through works to earn God's favor. God comes to us when we are without hope and without ability to please Him.

**How should Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus shape how you approach others about Jesus?**

## TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Luke 19, sharing with other members of your Bible study group.

**What would cause a person to be desperate to see Jesus?**

**Why did the witnesses react negatively toward Jesus' interaction with Zacchaeus?**

**How did Jesus use this encounter with Zacchaeus as a teaching moment to all the crowd gathered?**

