

**19:1 He entered Jericho and was passing through.**

**19:2 And there was a man called by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich.**

**19:3 Zacchaeus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature.**

“The story of Zacchaeus stands in marked contrast to that of the rich young ruler. Coming so soon after the emphatic statement about the difficulty of the salvation of the rich (18:26), this incident must be seen as a striking manifestation of God's grace” (Morris, 297).

Apparently Jesus wasn't intending to stay in Jericho; verse 1 says that He was just passing through. But His brief visit gave Zacchaeus the opportunity to meet Jesus.

Zacchaeus is described as a chief tax collector. This title doesn't appear anywhere else in Greek literature until the fourth century (Edwards, 529); however, it apparently means that he was given the oversight of others who actually collected taxes. Jericho was on an important trade route that ran between Jerusalem and the East, so it would be a good place to collect taxes from people who were traveling. Luke makes it clear that he was rich (19:2), which in Luke's gospel is a threat to discipleship (18:18-30).

**19:4 So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way.**

**19:5 When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house."**

**19:6 And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly.**

**19:7 When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."**

Because of his small stature Zacchaeus could not see Jesus, so he ran ahead and climbed up a tree in order to see. When Jesus passed by He saw him and told him that He must stay at his house. This is a very strong expression and this is the only place we see Jesus invite Himself to someone's home; this was not the norm in Judaism. We are not told how Jesus knew his name.

Zacchaeus received Jesus gladly; the crowd who generally rejected Jesus, grumbled because Jesus had decided to associate with a sinner.

**19:8 Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."**

**19:9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham."**

**19:10 "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."**

Zacchaeus suddenly stopped and announced that he would give half of his goods to the poor and make fourfold restitution to anyone he had defrauded. The law only required that someone pay back the

original amount plus one fifth of that amount to those who were defrauded. Zacchaeus went beyond that and placed upon himself the greatest demands of the law (see below). The conditional sentence in Greek (“if I have defrauded anyone . . . (then) . . .”) is a first class condition implying that Zacchaeus was aware that he had indeed defrauded some.

Although Jesus had demanded that the rich young ruler give up everything and follow him, this was unnecessary with Zacchaeus for his actions demonstrated that his perspective of his wealth had changed. He demonstrated repentance and faith. Zacchaeus wasn’t acting to impress Jesus; rather, meeting Jesus had caused Zacchaeus to put life into perspective.

As a result, Zacchaeus became an example of God doing the impossible (Lk. 18:27). The rich have no power to save themselves from their love of wealth, but God can save them from it. Furthermore, he became an example of how to use wealth for the glory of God. Jesus declared that salvation had come to his house. He called him “a son of Abraham,” a true Jew, one who had *the same faith* as Abraham.

Verse 10 tells us why Jesus noticed Zacchaeus. It wasn’t simply because he was in a tree; it was because Jesus saw him as a sinner in need of salvation: “the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Most who read the gospels become conscious that Jesus is a friend to the poor and sinners; here we see that Jesus is a friend of rich sinners also. Grace has no limits. “Grace is forever scandalous because it is forever undeserved. It is scandalous because it insists on including those whom we wish to exclude” (Edwards, 533).

As Bock says,

The account makes several points, some of which repeat ideas fundamental to Luke. First, Jesus again reaches out to the unpopular tax collectors and sinners (19:7). The gospel is for the outcast. Second, Zacchaeus provides a model response to Jesus’ initiative: joy, generosity, and the righting of previous wrongs. He represents how a disciple reacts to Jesus in a way that is pleasing to God and reflects a true relationship with God (19:9). When Zacchaeus offers to pay back those he has wronged, he agrees to the most demanding penalty of the law: someone who stole an animal that subsequently died or was sold was to pay the owner four or five times the value of the animals. Zacchaeus carries out God’s will with a response from the heart. Third, the exchange between Jesus and the crowd shows that a relationship with God requires not only Jesus’ call but also a response to that call. Such a response is what leads Jesus to call Zacchaeus a son of Abraham. Despite popular impressions about him, Zacchaeus has the right to know God, and he emerges as a faithful son of Abraham, unlike others in the nation who claim to follow in the patriarch’s footsteps. Fourth, as he often does, Jesus affirms Zacchaeus’s place before God, despite the questioning of others. Zacchaeus’s personal response to God and the transformation of his perspective show that his vocation is not as important as his heart. Finally, Zacchaeus is an example of a rich person who gets through the eye of the needle. He stands in contrast to the rich ruler of 18:18–23. Since Zacchaeus handles his wealth with compassion after realizing his wrongs, Jesus commends him and accepts him (Bock, 1513–1514).