

1. Sunday 30th October 2022 Luke 19.1-10 Jesus and Zacchaeus

In 2009 I had the opportunity to join a travel group to the Holy Land. We were quite a disparate group, living in all different parts of Australia, from different States and occupations. The only things we shared in common was our desire to travel to the Holy Land and some of us having been a Girl Guide in our past life. Some participants were married couples and a few of us were single. I asked some friends of mine if they would like to join us, which they did. The group was lead by a friend and her husband who was also a G.P. Very handy to have on a visit to another country. There was 21 of us altogether.

It wasn't too long before small groups developed with those who knew each other well, or had similar interests. The singles were a little disadvantaged in that there were so few of us and we did not know each other. We tried to mingle but there were a few who were quite solitary and not interested in mixing.

When we arrived in Jordan (which I loved for its unsophistication,) a day trip was arranged to visit Petra. Everyone exited the bus and I was the last to vacate. To my surprise, the tour leader had already gathered the group together and began giving instructions. Being small of stature, I found that not only was I unable to see, but found I could not hear one word. Everyone else was quite oblivious of my predicament.

With no one else to pair up with, (21 persons is an odd number) I decided that I would still enjoy myself and do a self guided tour. After having a memorable conversation with a Bedouin lady, I joined up with a group of young Aussies for the rest of the exploration of Petra. That was FUN.

It wasn't until I emerged from the entrance that one of the men of the group met me and said that they were really worried that I had gone missing.

No, I didn't feel bad. Apparently the group had arranged to meet at a certain time and I had been absent. The encounter with the Bedouin Lady was unforgettable and I have the fondest memory of our time together.

I share this incident with you today to help us to understand Zacchaeus a little better.

Once again St. Luke paints a word picture for us, describing a profound encounter between Zacchaeus and Jesus.

Zacchaeus was a citizen of Jerico. A chief tax collector:

If you wanted popularity in the country, you certainly would not choose this as an occupation. You were treated as an outcast, despised as a person and treated as a sinner.

The Tax collector collected taxes for the Roman occupiers, who cleverly used anyone who would collect taxes on their behalf. Most charged more than what was required and the extra money collected was creamed off the top and kept for themselves.

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Zacchaeus was also described as being rich, so he must have been very good at his profession.

He was also described as being short of stature and I suspect he knew how to overcome this handicap. He may have already heard that Jesus was passing through Jericho, the route that he would take and that he had had been called the friend of tax collectors and sinners.

In Matt. 9.9-13 Jesus calls Levi the Tax collector to "follow him" and the Pharisees scathingly criticised him for fraternizing with them. He even ate with them....without being contaminated.

Zacchaeus was very keen to see who and what this person looked like, so he "ran" to get in front of the crowd and climbed up the sycamore tree. (A type of fig with strong branches).

The encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus begins with Jesus looking up and sighting Zacchaeus. There is an element of time being precious here, as Jesus asks him to "Hurry and come down" and then he invites himself to stay at his house for the day. Zacchaeus was absolutely delighted and happy to oblige

I wonder what Zacchaeus felt at that moment. The unclean, unrighteous outcast was now in the presence of the perfect love and acceptance of the Son of God who was on his way to Jerusalem to be crucified for all mankind and yet had the time to spend with a little Tax Collector that needed salvation.

Jesus saw something redeemable in this little man and that he was worth fighting for. (John 15.16 You did not choose me but I chose you etc.)

When light meets darkness the light overcomes the darkness. Zacchaeus stood still and immediately repented of his moral failure. Half of his possessions he would give to the poor and he chose the ultimate return of giving four times back to anyone whom he had defrauded.

A repentant, restored human being now could take his place in the world as a son of Abraham.

Meantime the onlookers, instead of rejoicing were grumbling. Were they jealous? Why didn't Jesus invite himself to their homes? Was this the time when only the sick needed a physician.

We are reminded that God looks on the inside of a person, not the outward appearance. He ministers to our need of being made whole (Salvation) Nothing is too hard for God, nor circumstances too great that Jesus Christ cannot redeem us. The closing statement "For the Son of Man came to seek out and to

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save the lost" says it all. Nothing can separate us from that love, that amazing grace, which seeks us out and is the only true satisfaction that our inmost being craves and desires until we find peace and rest for our soul.

Remember this when you find yourself up a tree or "out on a limb".

Zacchaeus:- Had heard about Jesus.

He had many things in his life that alienated him from society.e.g. Short of stature, cheated people of their money, belonged to a much despised profession.

He wanted to see Jesus and took the most obvious way to make this possible. He took action

He was ready....

Jesus:-

Looked up. Called Zacchaeus by name! (Isaiah 43 v.1)Ps.139

God speaks to Jacob and Israel "I have called you by name, you are Mine".

Encourages him to Hurry. Now is the time, not tomorrow but NOW "for I must stay at your home to-day. Jesus active invitation.

Just as a hose cannot produce water without a connection to a tap, Zacchaeus' obedience to the command not only produced repentance but much joy and happiness. Salvation (wholeness) came to his house, his heart.

"Those who love me will keep my word and my Father will love them and we will come to them and make our home with them. (John 14.v21)

Nothing is too small, too big, too difficult or out of our control, that can prevent us also from letting go, hurrying to Jesus (our Saviour) to ask his forgiveness and receive his love and understanding. This is the point of exchange,..... our imperfection, our helpless humanity for the saving power of Jesus Christ to change, redeem and set us free. We can be like Zaccheous and respond with happiness and deep joy in spite of our circumstances.

Read Isaiah 43....The whole chapter is worth the time to digest.

"Be not afraid, I go before you always. Come follow me and I will give you rest".