



**CHRISTIAN
ENDEAVOUR**
for Christ and the Church



An Unexpected Choice

A little man has a big change of heart

Zacchaeus the tax collector

Luke 19: 1 - 9

Teaching Aim

To show that people who feel unwanted and unloved are changed into caring, loving people with Jesus.

Setting the scene

Jesus was coming to the end of His ministry, His fame had spread throughout the land, people were talking about the many wonderful miracles He had performed. Then the words he had spoken influenced so many people who felt that there was something fresh in what He said, so unlike the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees.

News reached Jericho that Jesus was approaching the city, very soon the crowds had gathered. As usual people were finding vantage points to see Jesus.

Jericho was a beautiful and rich city. The tax collectors did very well for themselves there. For some reason the chief tax collector, Zacchaeus, wanted to see Jesus. He had probably heard from his tax collector colleagues in other places that Jesus was prepared to meet with them and, indeed, have a meal with them. Zacchaeus was a hated man, with very few friends. When he heard that Jesus was coming, he tried to find a place where he could see him. There was no way the crowd were going to let this hated man get to the front, and he needed to get to the front to have a view for he was very short. He knew the route Jesus was taking, so he ran on ahead and climbed into a sycamore-fig tree. He knew that he would see Jesus, and yet not be seen by Him, hoping the leaves of the tree would hide him.

Jesus and Zacchaeus saw each other

To Zacchaeus' horror Jesus stopped by the tree, looked up and spoke to him by name, "Zacchaeus." We all must remember that the Lord knows us, and all about us. There is nothing we can hide from Him. He knows us all by name.

Ordering him to come down, Jesus invited Himself to Zacchaeus' home. The Lord must have known the desire Zacchaeus had for Jesus to eat with him as He had done with other tax collectors. There was a reaction from the crowd, criticizing Jesus for eating with sinners. They just did not understand that Jesus came for everyone, even hated people.

Jesus and Zacchaeus were together for a while

After being in the company of Jesus for a short while, Zacchaeus was a changed man. Look what happened! He called Jesus “Lord”. He recognized who He really was, not just a famous wandering preacher but the Messiah. By using the word “Lord” , he was declaring his faith. He was a believer.

Next he put his faith in to positive actions. This he did immediately, he did not put it off, for he said, “Here and now”. Remember this was a tax collector who had cheated many, and become very rich. He could have been described as a lover of money. Now, after meeting Jesus, he gave half of all he had to the poor. And what was more to those whom he had cheated he pledged to repay them four times the amount he had taken from them. His actions showed the genuineness of his conversion.

Jesus made a comment about Zacchaeus

Jesus recognized that he was a man of faith, that is the salvation which He talked about. Zacchaeus had rejoined the company of the men and women who believed in God, stretching back to the time of Abraham. Jesus then proceeded to talk about Himself using the words “Son of Man’ which means the Messiah. He declared the task of the Messiah to seek and save what was lost. A thing is lost when it is in the wrong place. Zacchaeus was lost for he was hated and despised. He had strayed away from the family of God. But Jesus had found him and rescued him. Now with his faith and actions he came back into the family of God.

Summing up

This story tells us what Jesus can do with a person. He can change their thinking and their living. Zacchaeus found a faith and a way to live. He had changed completely.

Resources

Discussion points

- How important is it for people who speak to you to use your Christian name?
- What do you think Christian Endeavour can do to approach people who are on the fringe of society?
- It is important to have faith, but how important is it to have actions as well?

Prayer points

- Pray for people who are lonely.
- Pray for those who have just become Christians, and are making big adjustments to their lives.
- Pray for newcomers to the church that they may feel really welcome.