

November 3, 2013

Today we are reading the familiar story of Zaccheus. His name, in Hebrew, means "clean" which is about the most unlikely one for a man as despised as he was. Zaccheus was in charge of tax collection for the Romans in the region of Jericho. We are to understand that he was extremely rich as a result of corruption. Yet it is this man who is so desperate to see Jesus. Swallowing his pride and tossing off his dignity, he climbed a tree to catch a glimpse of the one who would change his life. Do we look that hard for Jesus in our lives?

Luke 19: 1-10

¹Then Jesus entered and walked through Jericho. ²There was a man there, his name Zacchaeus, the head tax man and quite rich. ³He wanted desperately to see Jesus, but the crowd was in his way—he was a short man and couldn't see over the crowd. ⁴So he ran on ahead and climbed up in a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus when he came by.

⁵When Jesus got to the tree, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry down. Today is my day to be a guest in your home."

⁶Zacchaeus scrambled out of the tree, hardly believing his good luck, delighted to take Jesus home with him. ⁷Everyone who saw the incident was indignant and grumped, "What business does he have getting cozy with this crook?"

⁸Zacchaeus just stood there, a little stunned. He stammered apologetically, "Master, I give away half my income to the poor—and if I'm caught cheating, I pay four times the damages."

⁹Jesus said, "Today is salvation day in this home! Here he is: Zacchaeus, son of Abraham! ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to find and restore the lost."

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church!
THANKS BE TO GOD!

Sermon – "Let me see!"

I attended the PGA golf tournament near Chicago a few years ago – what an education! Watching grown men run, shove, push and climb trees to get a glimpse of Tiger Woods.

When my granddaughter comes over and sees me in the kitchen she grabs a chair and pulls it up to the counter to get high enough to 'SEE' what's going on.

Preachers have a field day with this passage usually focusing on how Zacchaeus is an evil man who turns his life around because of his encounter with Jesus.

This may work well for drama and demands to change BUT it may not be the most faithful reading of the text.

What Luke says (and he is the only gospel writer to include this story) =>

“He wanted desperately to see Jesus” v. 3

At the heart of the story is Zacchaeus and his unstoppable determination to see Jesus.

Like those golf fans rushing to see Tiger or Isabelle leaping on a chair to see what’s in the mixing bowl.

There is already something prompting the desire to see.

Something already moved Zacchaeus to swallow his dignity and climb the tree.

Preaching professor at Lutheran Seminary, David Lose.

Or perhaps Zacchaeus simply represents the chief attribute of all disciples: a desire to see Jesus and a corresponding joy in his presence. Zacchaeus cannot see Jesus because he is too short, both physically and morally, and so the crowds impede his sight. Yet this rich chief tax collector is so desperate to see that he will not be deterred and humiliates himself by climbing a tree like a child in order to glimpse over the crowd and see Jesus. Read this way, this story is not about formulas regarding repentance and forgiveness – indeed, as in other places in Luke, it calls into question any attempts to reduce the miracle of salvation to a formula (see Luke 7: 36-50). Rather, it embodies the promise that anyone – anyone! – who desires to see Jesus will. More than that, anyone who desires to see Jesus will, in turn, be seen by Jesus and in this way have their joy made complete.

Buechner – Peculiar Treasures

He’s a sawed-off little social disaster with a big bank account and a crooked job, but Jesus welcomes him aboard anyway. P. 204

From Alyce McKenzie www.patheos.com

This encounter between a popular healer and the least popular member of the Jericho Rotary Club seems coincidental, almost casual on first reading. But there are a couple of not-so-casual details. Jesus seems to know just the right spot under just the right tree. Standing here, he can look up and see somebody not tall enough to see him through the crowd on the ground. Add to that the odd words of Jesus “I must stay at your house today” vs 5. We sense an air of urgency to this seemingly coincidental encounter. Luke believes that Jesus saw this encounter as a reproduction in miniature of his whole mission. Jesus is obeying the command of God in the Hebrew Scriptures that the nation reach out to the poor, the isolated, and the outcast. Zacchaeus is two out of three of those categories. This incident foreshadows the coming of salvation to the House of Israel.

Zacchaeus was determined to see Jesus -> Jesus blessed him, not because of what he did but because it was his gift to give.

Living with the assurance of Christ's grace can change even the most unlikely.

Maybe even you and me!!