

## Jesus and Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10

### Prepare to Hear the Word:

- This is a parable – a teaching story with a twist.
- Find Jericho on a map, about 20 km from Jerusalem.
- Zacchaeus may have been a short man but more than likely “short of stature” refers to the fact that he is not important in the community.
- Zacchaeus is ‘chief tax collector’ which means that he was probably very rich, as he would have been in charge of those who collected the taxes.

### You will need:

- Sand coloured felt background - the area between Jericho and Jerusalem desert
- Felt road
- Puppets for Jesus, Zacchaeus, crowd
- Tree
- Jericho and Jerusalem (optional)

*When children are seated in a semi-circle ready to listen to the story, place the gold box/bag, containing the materials you will need, carefully beside you.*

*Place Jerusalem at the furthest end of the road and Jericho closest to you.*  
**Every year the people of Israel travelled to the great city of Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Passover. Many passed through the city of Jericho on their way to Jerusalem.**

*Place tree on one side of the road part-way down, close to Jericho.*

*Place Zacchaeus in front of Jericho.*

**Zacchaeus lived in Jericho. His job was to collect money for taxes for the Romans. He was very rich.**

*Place crowd in between Jericho and Zacchaeus.*

**People did not like Zacchaeus.**

*Move Jesus through Jericho. Move Zacchaeus backwards and forwards trying to see Jesus over the crowd.*

**One day Jesus was going through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus. But he couldn't see over the crowd.**

*Move Zacchaeus up the tree.*

**So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree.**

*Move people in front of tree. Move Jesus along the road to the tree.*

**When Jesus got to the sycamore tree, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry down! I want to stay with you today."**

*Move Jesus and Zacchaeus together on the road back towards Jericho.*

**Zacchaeus hurried down. He gladly welcomed Jesus and took him to his home. The people of Jericho did not like Zacchaeus, but Jesus did.**

*Turn crowd to face each other.*

**Everyone who saw this started grumbling, "This man is a sinner! And Jesus is going home to eat with him."**

**People did not like Zacchaeus, but Jesus did.**

*Place Jesus and Zacchaeus facing each other in front of Jericho.*

**At the end of the day Zacchaeus stood up and said to Jesus in a strong voice, "I will give half of my property to the poor."**

**Zacchaeus was changing.**

*Turn people to face Jesus and Zacchaeus.*

**He continued firmly, "And I will now pay back four times the amount to everyone I have ever cheated."**

**Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "Today you have been saved."**

## **The Gospel of the Lord**

**Response: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ**

*Pause quietly for a moment, and then begin to wonder together.*

### **I wonder:**

- I wonder why Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus?
- I wonder how Zacchaeus felt when Jesus stopped and asked to have dinner with him?
- I wonder what Jesus and Zacchaeus talked about?
- I wonder why Zacchaeus changed?
- I wonder how he felt as he gave half of what he had to the poor?
- I wonder if you have ever felt small?
- I wonder if Zacchaeus remained a changed person?

## **Zacchaeus**

### **Luke 19:1-10**

Jesus was going through Jericho, where a man named Zacchaeus lived. He was in charge of collecting taxes and was very rich. Jesus was heading his way, and Zacchaeus wanted to see what he was like. But Zacchaeus was a short man and could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree. When Jesus got there, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry down! I want to stay with you today." Zacchaeus hurried down and gladly welcomed Jesus.

Everyone who saw this started grumbling, "This man Zacchaeus is a sinner! And Jesus is going home to eat with him."

Later that day Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "I will give half of my property to the poor. And I will now pay back four times as much to everyone I have ever cheated." Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "Today you and your family have been saved, because you are a true son of Abraham. The Son of Man came to look for and to save people who are lost."

## Prepare to Hear the Word: Teacher

Luke's parables of the lost and found become reality in the encounter between Jesus and Zacchaeus. The narrator begins the account by reporting on Jesus' position en route to Jerusalem. He has reached the ancient oasis city of Jericho and is about to begin the climb up from Jericho to Jerusalem. Only twenty or so kilometres stand between Jesus and his destination. While Jesus is described only in terms of his journey, the description of Zacchaeus is quite vivid.

Zacchaeus is one of but a handful of people, other than the Twelve, to be named in the Gospels. He is chief tax collector, he is a rich man and the narrator implies that his wealth has been gained through cheating and extortion as a tax collector. He has heard about Jesus and wants to see him but he is small in stature, ie he has no standing in the community and no ready access to Jesus. He is crowded out by those more religiously and socially acceptable, but he is resourceful and determined, and climbs a sycamore tree to see Jesus. The stage is set for an encounter and call. Jesus stops on his journey to speak to Zacchaeus and to invite himself to be a guest in Zacchaeus' house. Zacchaeus responds immediately to Jesus and receives him into his house with great joy.

Luke 19:1-10 illustrates that salvation is possible for everyone and that to welcome Jesus to one's home is to welcome salvation. However, those who welcome Jesus to their home and share table with him must also share his thirst for justice and love of the poor. Sharing table with Jesus demands repentance. Zacchaeus' life can never be the same after his encounter with Jesus at the sycamore tree and as guest in his home.

The narrative closes with an answer to the nameless people who murmur against Jesus. Jesus is simply fulfilling his mission; he is son of man who came to seek and to save the lost. He is the shepherd who goes in search of the lost sheep, the woman who lights the lamp, sweeps the house and searches diligently until it is found. And when Jesus finds, he rejoices.

*A Time of Jubilee Barbara Stead 1994*

