

Zacchaeus

There once was a man named Zacchaeus who lived in the town of Jericho. Zacchaeus was a very short man who didn't have many friends. In fact, most people didn't like Zacchaeus at all. He was a tax collector. Everyone had to give part of their money to the to the government and it was Zacchaeus's job to make them do it. Sometimes Zacchaeus would take too much money from the people and keep the extra for himself. He had made himself a very rich man by cheating other people out of their money. That was a very selfish thing to do and because of that many people hated Zacchaeus.

One day Jesus was passing through Jericho. Everyone had heard of the wonderful things Jesus had done so they gathered around him. Lots of people wanted to see Jesus, hear Jesus, and talk to Jesus so there were people everywhere. Zacchaeus had also heard about Jesus so he was in the crowd with all the other people but because Zacchaeus was such a short man, he couldn't see Jesus at all. Zacchaeus had an idea. He ran in front of the crowd in the direction Jesus was going and he climbed up in a sycamore tree. If he was up in the tree when Jesus came by, he would at least get to see him. He was right, he could see Jesus as he walked by, but Jesus didn't pass the tree. Jesus stopped at the tree. Jesus looked up in the tree and saw Zacchaeus. Jesus called him by name. He said, "Zacchaeus, you come down because I'm going to your house today." Zacchaeus was so excited to hear the news that he hurried down the tree and led Jesus to his house.

When the other people in the crowd heard Jesus say that he was going to Zacchaeus's house, it made them very upset. Zacchaeus was a bad guy in their minds, he was a sinner. Why would Jesus want to go hang out with such a very bad man. The people began to talk bad about Zacchaeus and grumble and complain about what Jesus was doing. They didn't think someone like Zacchaeus deserved to get to spend time with someone like Jesus. They didn't understand what was going on, but they didn't like it.

While Jesus was at Zacchaeus's house, something very wonderful happened. Jesus was talking to Zacchaeus about God's love and Jesus was treating Zacchaeus with love even though Zacchaeus had done a lot of very wrong things. Zacchaeus wasn't used to being loved; he was used to people hating him. When Zacchaeus started to feel and understand the love of Jesus, it changed him. He didn't want to be a bad guy anymore. He wanted to change the way he was living and start living in a way that would please God. Zacchaeus told Jesus he was going to take half of everything he had and give it to the poor. Zacchaeus had lots of money and lots of stuff and he wanted to share his stuff with others who needed it. Zacchaeus also said that he was going go to all the people he had cheated and pay them back. He told Jesus that for every coin he took from someone, he was going to give them four coins to pay them back. Zacchaeus knew what he had being doing was wrong and now he wanted to do what was right. God's love changed Zacchaeus's heart that day and changing his heart changed his whole life.