**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 3-28-2021 (Palm Sunday)
Dinner at Zacch’s House**

A couple of weeks ago during our children’s time we talked about binoculars and how they can help us to see things more clearly that are further away. It would have been neat to have used binoculars to see some of the miracles found in the Bible. The parting of the Red Sea, the walls of Jericho falling down, Elijah being carried up to heaven.

And of course, any of the countless miracles of Jesus or His arrival to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday would have been great opportunities for using binoculars to better take in the scene. But, alas, the binoculars were not invited until at least the 1600’s.

In today’s story, we find a man that would have loved to have a set of binoculars. His name was Zaccheaus.

Let’s turn to God’s Word and discover a bit more about this man and why he would have loved to have binoculars. Our story is found in the Gospel of Luke 19:1-10.

**1Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.**

**5When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” 6So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.**

**7All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”**

**8But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”**

**9Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”**

Zacchaeus would have wanted binoculars because he wanted to see Jesus but to not be near others. You see, Zacchaeus was not a popular guy. If Matthew the tax collector was unpopular, Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector. That means that he was seen not only as a traitor to the Jewish people and a sell-out to the Roman oppressors, but he was a leader overseeing other traitors.

In the original Greek, it reads that he was a ruler among toll collectors. And like the rich, young ruler mentioned elsewhere in the gospels, Zacchaeus also wanted to see Jesus.

But since Zacch did not have binoculars and because he was shorter in stature, he did the best thing that he could think of.

First, he runs ahead of the crowds. While he wanted to see Jesus, he did not want to be seen by the crowds.

But he so wanted to see Jesus that he was willing to run in public, which was viewed as a shameful and fool-looking thing to do.

And second, he climbs up a sycamore tree. Fig trees were known for their rich foliage and low-lying branches. Zacchaeus was hoping to camouflage himself in this fig tree. Additionally, fig trees were not permitted in the heart of towns, as they were messy. Zacchaeus was hoping to stop Jesus on his way out of town and did not want to be seen by the people.

While it is true that it was respectful for people to allow those of shorter stature a clear line of vision to see something, with his poor reputation, he knew that he probably wouldn’t receive this gesture towards himself, but that his own safety would be in question, for it wouldn’t take much for someone to come up behind him and attack him.

So there he is trying to blend into this tree as Jesus is passing by.

But in the days before military camouflage, Zacchaeus was spotted. And the scene was not pretty.

As much fun as it may be for people today to climb trees, this was something that simply was not done by prominent people at that time, even in the privacy of their own gardens.

And so now the tables were being turned against this chief tax collector. The people whom he has cheated and taken advantage of appear to spot him and to shout very choice words in his direction.

It is at this point the story takes center stage in the scene. Verse 5 again reads like this. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, **“Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.”**

Now picture this stunned crowd who had earlier been his welcoming parade into town. And now Jesus is siding with the oppressor Zacchaeus.

Jesus was willingly taking all the negativity and all the anger that was being poured out onto Zacchaeus upon himself. He was voluntarily re-directing their anger towards Himself.

Twenty centuries after this scene took place, you can probably guess what the people were now whispering to one another after Jesus did this. Things like “Why in the world would Jesus invite himself to his house? To that jerk’s house? First he turns down our banquet, he just wants to pass through Jericho, and then he invites himself to the house of a traitor.”

In verse 6 we see Zacchaeus quickly come down from the tree and then welcome Jesus.

And so the crowds are left outside. Jesus was now the guest of Zacchaeus. In all likelihood, they would have eaten together, although we do not explicitly see this in the text.

But we do read that, **7All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”**

**(the people had turned against Jesus). But for Jesus it was worth it. Jesus knew that while Zacchaeus had money and authority, he was lost. He was dead in his sins.**

I would have loved to have been a fly on the wall, so to speak, of the conversation at Zacchaeus’ house between the two of them.

I believe the very act of Jesus choosing to not count Zacchaeus’ sins against him, choosing to not know him for his sin, but as someone loved by God and valued, as someone worth receiving ridicule for, I believe that Jesus’ actions of love towards Zacchaeus would have powerfully touched his heart.

We clearly see in this story the power of the transforming love of Jesus.

Zacchaeus was transformed and we see how the fruit of a repentant heart is beginning to grow in his life.

And unlike the rich, young ruler who failed to submit and surrender to Jesus, Zacchaeus chooses to submit to Christ.

And we see in verse eight, Zacchaeus standing up and declaring to Jesus **“Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”**

Zacchaeus left that meal with Jesus a far richer man than he had ever been. In surrendering to and submitting to Jesus as His Lord (He even calls Him Lord) and His savior, the salvation of the Lord comes to him that day.

After that meal with Jesus, Zacch left a changed man.

He had become a new creation. He had trusted in Jesus as His Lord and Savior and He would soon confirm his faith through his actions. I love how Jesus says,

**“Today, salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.”**

And I also love to picture how many lives in the town of Jericho were impacted by his interactions and his meal with Jesus. Picture person after person after person receiving a knock on their door and who is standing there but Zacchaeus. And he has gifts for them. Not only were people receiving back what he had cheated them out of, but four times the amount.

Think of the ripple effect. Think of the opportunities that he had to testify to his life being radically changed by Jesus Christ. Many other lives would be touch beyond Zacchaeus’.

Friends, I love this story for all of the reasons that we have spoke about. To see salvation come to Zacchaeus. To consider all the lives that would be touched and transformed by what Jesus did and how Zacchaeus responded.

But I would like to leave us with this. Today is Palm Sunday. Like Jesus was praised when he entered Jericho, he was praised when he entered Jerusalem.

But by the end of the week, Jesus would again be on the receiving end of insults. People shouting “Crucify Him!” His being betrayed. Peter denying knowing Him.

Jesus knew these things were coming. But like Jesus redirected the people’s anger from Zacchaeus to himself, in only weeks Jesus would again be taking upon Himself all of our sins.

Isaiah the prophet knows this about what Jesus was about to do. In Isaiah 53 he writes:

**Surely He took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered Him punished by God, stricken by Him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.**

Friends, truly Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. And that would be us, that would be everyone. But in Him, we are found. And may we, like Zacchaeus, live a life that shines to others that Christ has redeemed us and made us alive in Him.

**Let’s pray…**

Sources: Joel B. Green – Luke Commentary

BibleGateway.com