

The Heights Baptist Church

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS • JESUS AND THE DISCONTENT • LUKE 19:1-10 • 1/31/2021

MAIN POINT

Zacchaeus's encounter with Jesus teaches us that apart from Jesus, we will always be discontent.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Share a story about a time you went to ridiculous lengths to get something new, such as a Black Friday experience, camping out for concert tickets, or something similar. Was it worth it?

Thinking strictly in the physical, earthly realm, name one thing you want right now. Now think about the same question spiritually. What one thing do you want the most?

In your experience, which has been more fulfilling: having your physical or spiritual wants fulfilled? Explain.

The reason that so many of the things we seek in life never satisfy us is because we were made for something bigger, deeper, and more glorious. We were made by Christ and for Christ (Col. 1:16). God made us for His glory. All the things in life we think will bring us contentment are incomplete joys if we do not look to the One who made them. This is the realization Zacchaeus came to as he encountered Jesus.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 19:1-4.

These verses introduce us to Zacchaeus, head of the large office of tax collectors in Jericho. As a chief tax collector, Zacchaeus likely purchased from Rome the right to collect the taxes due for the area. He imposed heavy—probably exorbitant—taxes on the people and caravans to reimburse himself and also to make a huge profit. The people likely resented Zacchaeus for working as a tax collector for a foreign power, for being a traitor to their country, and for exploiting them. The people judged tax collectors to be chief sinners.

The most well-known aspect of Zacchaeus’s story happens in these first few verses—he climbed a tree “for the Lord he wanted to see.” What attitude did Zacchaeus—a wealthy tax collector—demonstrate in climbing the tree?

Read Luke 18:15-17. What are the characteristics of childlike faith? How did Zacchaeus model this attitude?

Zacchaeus had likely heard stories about how Jesus stepped across social and religious barriers to share God’s love with all people, even those who were hated by others. Zacchaeus wanted to see this One who befriended tax collectors and sinners. He could not see easily because he was short, so up he climbed into the tree. This was undignified behavior for a man of his day, especially for a wealthy government official. But Zacchaeus knew there was something different about Jesus. Zacchaeus was willing to do what a child would to see Jesus; with this action, Zacchaeus showed the childlike faith Jesus praised in Luke 18:15-17. Faith is the awareness of our spiritual helplessness that leads to humility before God, trust in Him, and obedience to Him.

What evidence do we see that Zacchaeus was discontent in life?

Zacchaeus was a tax collector, a job that brought him wealth and power. However, he still showed up this day seeking something from Jesus. In an earlier parable in Luke, Jesus said, “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted” (cf. Lk. 14:11). We see these words play out in the story of Zacchaeus. His discontentment led him to humble himself before Jesus. In the next verses, we see Jesus’ response to him.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 19:5-10.

Jesus saw Zacchaeus, asked him to come down, and requested attendance at his home. Jesus ignored social and religious protocol, sending shock waves through the crowd. The people were outraged; eating with a sinner, particularly one so despised and notorious as Zacchaeus, made one ceremonially unclean and socially unpopular. Despite almost certain alienation, Jesus went to Zacchaeus’s home.

Why would Jesus have wanted to spend time with a man like Zacchaeus? Explain.

Given the prevailing attitudes about tax collectors and their track record of illicit activity, are you surprised that Jesus sought Zacchaeus out? What does this tell us about Jesus’ ministry? How should Jesus’ actions inform and shape our approach to ministry?

Jesus could have won a following from the prejudiced crowd by belittling Zacchaeus. Instead, Jesus exposed Himself to their anger by choosing to stay at Zacchaeus's house. Jesus explained His staying with Zacchaeus as one of the Father's "musts" for Him. Jesus befriended Zacchaeus to show God's love for people whom others hated the most. As evidenced throughout Luke, Jesus always recognized humility and gave grace to the humble.

Why do you think those around them "grumbled" based on Jesus' actions (v. 7)?

What did this reveal about their own view of Jesus and His kingdom?

Looking at this scene, how do we keep from becoming the muttering crowd in verse 7, looking down on Jesus' work in other people's lives and even their spiritual limitations?

Jesus sought to open doors to reach sinners, to make Himself known to those who desired to see Him, and to fulfill His mission of love. Following Jesus' determination to meet with Zacchaeus, we must not judge by human appearance or cultural standards when we seek to share the gospel. We must seek to share the good news about Christ with everyone in our sphere of influence—no matter their differences from us.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 18:9-14.

What point was Jesus making with this parable?

What characteristics dominated the Pharisee's heart (vv. 11-12)? On the other hand, what characteristics dominated the tax collector's heart (v. 13)?

What comparisons do you see between the parable Jesus told in Luke 18 and the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19?

The Pharisee prayed about himself. He did not praise God. He thanked God for making him better than other people—especially better than the tax collector. The Pharisee in Luke 18 and the grumbling crowd in Luke 19 had a lot in common. Zacchaeus, on the other hand, understood himself to be like the praying tax collector in Luke 18—discontent in life and humbly, desperately, in need of God's mercy.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Can you pinpoint any sources of discontentment in your life? What do those reveal about your relationship with Jesus?

How can you be more like Zacchaeus and less like the grumbling crowd (Luke 19:1-10)?

What active steps can we, as the body of Christ, take to model Jesus' compassion and care for people who are different from us?

PRAYER

Take time to thank God for sending Jesus to seek and save the lost, and for declaring us His righteous children. Pray that group members would trust God's promises this week and invest in sharing the gospel with others. Also pray that the Holy Spirit would convict you of any areas of discontentment.

COMMENTARY

| LUKE 19:1-10

19:1-4. Reaching Jericho, Jesus continued His journey up the dangerous hills toward Jerusalem. Interruption came before He could leave the city. A short, clever tax collector was determined to see Jesus. As an administrator for the Roman government's tax office, Zacchaeus had amassed great wealth, overcharging the Jewish people and taking a cut from the taxes gathered by other tax collectors whose work he administered. His wealth could not provide the one thing he wanted more than anything else. Unable to see over or get through the massive crowd swarming around Jesus, Zacchaeus noted the direction Jesus was taking, ran ahead, found a tree, and climbed up into its branches.

19:5. The clever tax collector did get a view of Jesus, and Jesus spotted him up in the tree. Jesus even invited Himself to dinner at Zacchaeus's house. Jesus said it was necessary for him to visit Zacchaeus—apparently a necessity initiated by God to show one more time Jesus' central mission on earth.

19:6-7. Overjoyed at this unexpected privilege, the short man scurried down the tree. This time he had no trouble getting through the crowd to Jesus. But as they let the tax collector through, the crowd must have complained. How can this be? They grumbled. We thought Jesus was Messiah, and He is going to eat with a sinful man, a man who represents the enemy government and takes our money to give to them. How can Jesus eat and fellowship with such a traitor? Jesus showed He was an "equal opportunity" diner with traitors. Earlier He had eaten at the home of Pharisees and showed how they were traitors to God's intentions for the Jews. Now He ate with a person whom the Jews considered a political and economic traitor.

19:8. After meeting Jesus, the tax collector/traitor was no longer the same man. He would enter the kingdom of God, but not as a wealthy man (see 18:25). He would take half of what he owned and give it to the poor. He would find the people he had overcharged on their tax bill and refund four times as much as he had cheated them. Thus, he took the Law of Moses seriously. Leviticus 5:16 and Numbers 5:7 demanded restitution plus twenty percent. Exodus 22:1 called for rustlers to repay four sheep for one (see 2 Sam. 12:6). The Dead Sea Scrolls and Roman law also contain incidents of fourfold restitution. Zacchaeus seems to have accepted the harshest penalty of the law and applied it to himself. Acceptance by Jesus made money insignificant (see 12:33). Repentance came in the form of action (see 3:12-13). He had a new lifestyle because he had a new Lord.

19:9. Jesus showed ultimate acceptance of the tax collector/traitor turned repentant sinner. Salvation had come to Zacchaeus and to his house. Jesus' mission had basically been a mission to the Jews, and this man was a Jew, participating in the covenant with Abraham, even if he acted the part of the traitor in Jewish eyes. For Jesus a repentant Jew from such a sordid background was better than a self-righteous Jew with no sense of the need for repentance (see 5:31-32).

19:10. Son of Man was both a messianic title for Jesus and a reflection of His full humanity. His mission was to seek and to save those who were lost.