

Connecting with Others Like Jesus Did

Session 6

July 12, 2026

Extending Grace

The Point: We should be conduits of God's grace to others

Session Passages: Luke 19:1-10

Luke 19:1-4

Connection to the Point: Zacchaeus sought simply to see Jesus.

Entered Jericho . . . was passing through (v. 1). This event, exclusive to the Gospel of Luke, occurred during Jesus's final trip from Galilee to Jerusalem to face His impending crucifixion. Starting with Luke 9:51, the bulk of Luke's narrative of Jesus's teaching and healing ministry unfolds as He made His way toward Jerusalem. The typical route for Jewish people traveling from Galilee to Jerusalem would have led them across the Jordan River below the Sea of Galilee, where they would have crossed into the area of the Decapolis and Perea on the eastern side of the Jordan River. When this route reached the area opposite the city of Jericho, it crossed back over the Jordan River and moved southwest toward Jerusalem. First-century Jericho was situated south of the ancient city of Jericho, one of the oldest cities in ancient civilization.

Zacchaeus (v. 2). The name means "innocent" or "righteous one." Beyond this story, we know little about Zacchaeus except for his city of residence, occupation, and Jewish heritage. He was of short stature (v. 3). From this story, we also learn that he was corrupt in his practices as the chief tax collector.

Chief tax collector (v. 2). As the chief tax collector, Zacchaeus would have overseen several tax collectors under his supervision. He likely had bid on a contract with Rome to collect the taxes in the Jericho region. As the chief tax collector, Zacchaeus would have reaped a substantial profit. While there was a stated amount that he had to pass on to Rome, there was no limit on overcharging and pocketing the extra. Because the system was elaborate, Zacchaeus would have hired other workers to collect the actual taxes. Rome levied numerous taxes on everyone, including slaves: an income tax, a land or property tax, and a commercial tax on all goods transported on the roads. A significant trade route ran through Jericho, which was the passage between Jerusalem and the area of Perea on the east side of the Jordan River.

He was rich (v. 2). Zacchaeus had overcharged those he was taxing and had become quite rich. Such ill-gotten wealth produced deep-seated hatred for tax collectors in Israel. Tax collectors were Jews who had joined in with the archenemy, Rome. They cheated the people with their unscrupulous approach to collecting taxes. They manipulated the system by overcharging taxes and pocketing the profits. As a result, tax collectors were forbidden from participating in the synagogue and were considered unclean. They were social outcasts of the day and could only associate with fellow tax collectors and others whom the rest of the Jews considered sinners.

Trying to see . . . Jesus (v. 3). Zacchaeus might have had several motives for trying to see Jesus. Like most in the crowd, he might have been curious. Jesus's reputation had spread throughout the first-century Roman province of Judea. While many had never seen Jesus, the news about Him had spread. Zacchaeus and others wanted to see Jesus, hear Jesus, and observe Jesus as He performed miracles and taught with authority, not like the scribes (Matt. 7:29). Zacchaeus may have been even more curious because he had heard stories that Jesus often associated with outcasts like him—tax collectors and sinners. He probably wanted to know why this famed teacher would be in the presence of those considered unclean. Zacchaeus felt alienated from fellow Jews and also felt separated from God. It is possible that Zacchaeus's empty heart craved what Jesus was offering.

Crowd (v. 3). Many travelers were passing through Jericho on their way to the Feast of Passover in Jerusalem. Jesus and His disciples would have been among those traveling. When Jesus stopped to speak to Zacchaeus, many in the crowd, as well as those from the city, likely would have paused to observe what was happening. Some in the crowd may have wondered if Jesus understood that He was associating with local outcasts.

Sycamore tree (v. 4). Zacchaeus ran and climbed a tree to see Jesus. Adult Jewish men never ran in public, especially representatives of the Roman government. It was unusual and dishonorable for men to run in their culture. Nor was climbing trees a part of the normal behavior of Jewish men. The sycamore tree was a type of fig tree akin to a mulberry tree. It produces fruit several times a year, but the fruit is not of the quality of an actual fig tree. While edible, it was primarily eaten by the poor in the land. The prophet Amos spoke of being one who took care of sycamore figs (Amos 7:14).¹

Luke 19:5-6

Connection to the Point: Jesus sought out Zacchaeus and extended an invitation to eat together.

When Jesus came to the place (v. 5). This was on the route that Jesus was traveling to Jerusalem, but it was not a chance encounter. Zacchaeus was looking for Jesus, but Jesus was also looking for Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was looking out of curiosity and perhaps a seeking heart. Jesus was looking to change the direction of Zacchaeus's life. For Zacchaeus, this was an unplanned encounter, but for Jesus, it was a divine appointment.

He looked up (v. 5). Arriving at the tree, Jesus stopped and looked up at a man whose life would soon change. Luke does not tell us how Jesus knew Zacchaeus's name. Perhaps Matthew, a former tax collector, may have known Zacchaeus and told Zacchaeus about Jesus. Possibly, Matthew identified Zacchaeus to Jesus.

Hurry and come down (v. 5). In Greek, both verbs are imperatives. They constitute commands to Zacchaeus. Jesus commanded Zacchaeus to come down from the tree quickly.

It is necessary for me to stay at your house (v. 5). Two keywords emerge in this phrase. First, "necessary" is a translation of a Greek word (*dei*) meaning "must and great necessity." This word is frequently used in the Gospel of Luke to describe a divine necessity. The use of this word by Luke may have pointed to Luke's evident understanding that God is sovereignly in control of history. Zacchaeus being up a tree was part of God's orchestrated plan for his salvation.

The second keyword is the Greek word (*meno*) translated "stay" and points to "remain" and "stay." This same Greek word is an integral part of John's discussion of abiding in Christ in John 15:4-7. Here, the word indicates that Jesus took the initiative to invite Himself to a night at Zacchaeus's house. This dinner would give Jesus the time necessary for a deep conversation with Zacchaeus. "Stay" and "abide" are also terms used in the Old and New Testaments to describe God's unchanging and everlasting nature. He will always be, and He will always abide. For Zacchaeus, this meeting with Jesus would produce lasting results.

Welcomed Him joyfully (v. 6). Zacchaeus joyfully and eagerly brought Jesus to his house for the meal. Curiosity began to turn toward respect and even love. Remember, everywhere Zacchaeus went, he was shunned and berated. Now, a respected teacher desired fellowship with him. Suddenly, Zacchaeus's heart changed, and he placed his trust in Jesus as Savior. We will see the confession of sin and the declaration of Jesus as Lord in the following verses.

¹ Irene Jacob and Walter Jacob, "Flora," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 808.

Luke 19:7-10

Connection to the Point: Zacchaeus responded to Jesus's acceptance and grace with repentance.

All who saw . . . began to complain (v. 7). The crowd that had been such a hindrance to Zacchaeus before because of his short stature now sought to become a hindrance to the work that Jesus was doing in Zacchaeus's heart. They griped and complained with a familiar theme: Jesus was dining with a sinful man. Jewish leaders often accused Jesus of table fellowship with sinners. This claim was front and center following His call of Matthew to be His disciple (Luke 5:27-32). It happened when the woman, who was a sinner, bathed His feet with her tears (7:36-50). Jesus even told the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son in Luke 15 in response to this very same type of criticism: "And the Pharisees and scribes were complaining, 'This man welcomes sinners and eats with them'" (15:2).

Gone to stay with a sinful man (v. 7). The phrase "to stay" (*kataluo*) is from a Greek word that means "to rest," "to halt on a journey," or "a place of lodging." It seems that Jesus shared a meal and then may have spent the night at Zacchaeus's house. The crowd could not discern that Jesus was on a divine mission to bring salvation to Zacchaeus.

Stood there (v. 8). There is no timeline for when Zacchaeus made this declaration, but at some point in the time spent with Jesus, God changed Zacchaeus's heart. The Greek word (*histémi*) translated "stood" means to take a stand or establish, which seems to indicate a firm conviction by Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus's decision was a declaration that he would stand on.

Look . . . Lord (v. 8). Zacchaeus's declaration begins with the word "look" which means "pay attention to what follows" or "I assure you." It is a strong declarative word that Jesus Himself used frequently (Matt. 28:20; Mark 14:41; Luke 10:19). The declaration concludes with "Lord." The use of this term implies that Zacchaeus is addressing Jesus as Lord, a term of great respect. For Luke, however, the term carried the full weight of the New Testament meaning, referring to the Risen Lord, the Son of God. Perhaps Luke was showing his audience that Zacchaeus accepted Jesus Christ as Master and Lord; verse 9 suggests this is the case.

Half of my possessions (v. 8). We see proof of Zacchaeus's transformation because of this statement. It was considered extremely generous to give one-fifth of one's possessions to the poor, but Zacchaeus promised to give half of his possessions to the poor. Zacchaeus was not promising to give half of his profits but half of his belongings. As a wealthy tax collector, he would have possessed many valuable items. Zacchaeus would donate his possessions to the needy as a thank offering to God for the new gift that he had received—eternal life.

Extorted anything from anyone (v. 8) in Greek indicates an intention to defraud or cheat. The meaning is that Zacchaeus falsely took money from those he collected taxes from. Overcharging was how tax collectors made their profit. This practice is similar to that of some loan companies today, which charge extraordinarily high interest rates.

Pay back four times (v. 8). The Mosaic law stipulated repayment of twenty percent on items fraudulently received (Lev. 6:5; Num. 5:6-7). In exceptional cases, a fourfold or fivefold payment (Ex. 22:1) was the penalty. Clearly, Zacchaeus was trying to go above and beyond what the law required to demonstrate his sincerity.

Salvation (v. 9). In ancient Greek usage, the word referred to the gods or men rescuing others from dire circumstances. Hence, the term "rescue" could also be a part of the definition of this word. Interestingly, the

word also carries with it the idea of pardoning and keeping someone safe after the pardon.² Salvation for Zacchaeus included both rescue from eternal damnation but also salvation from the destructive life of fraud and materialism. His salvation was secure through his new relationship with Jesus Christ.

Son of Abraham (v. 9). As a Jew, Zacchaeus was a “son of Abraham” in terms of ethnicity. Jesus was not calling him a son by ethnicity but rather a true son, which came from a relationship established with God through faith alone. Paul spoke of this in his letter to the Galatians: “You know, then, that those who have faith, these are Abraham’s sons” (Gal. 3:7).

Son of Man (v. 10). This title, derived from Daniel 7:13-14, referred to the coming Messiah as the son of man. In the context of Daniel, the son of man came on clouds to receive dominion over all the earth and its people from the Ancient of Days (representing God the Father), who was seated on the throne. Jesus readily adopted this title to speak of Himself as the coming Messiah. It embodies the Christological (meaning “doctrine of Christ”) truth that Jesus was both fully God and fully man.

Seek and to save the lost (v. 10). Seeking and saving the lost was Jesus’s purpose for coming to earth, but also for dining with Zacchaeus. Jesus stated this purpose when He spoke of dining with Matthew (Luke 5:32). Jesus had come for the sick, not the righteous, so now He declared that His purpose was to seek those who were lost. To seek refers to a deliberate effort to search for, to strive to find, and to keep trying to obtain those who are lost. “Save” means to rescue from danger. The word lost indicates “headed for destruction,” or “being completely ruined,” or “destroyed.” Because of our inherent sinful nature, all of humanity is headed for destruction (John 3:18). Jesus came to rescue believers from that destruction. Redemption through Jesus was God’s plan from the beginning of time (Eph. 1:4).

² Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974) 965-966.