

## Change of Heart

A man in Poland climbed up a tree to avoid paying a cab driver. He jumped from branch to branch and hurled bananas at the crowd, which had gathered at the scene. Firefighters were called in. After a two-hour stand off, he agreed to come down. The city issued a \$4300 bill for the cost of the fire brigade. It's not often that we see a grown man up in a tree. The most famous example of such is found in our lesson today from Luke's Gospel.

### Luke 19:1-10

#### Chief tax collector

- Head of the local tax office
- Very wealthy
- Zacchaeus had all the pleasures and comforts which money could buy
- Tax collectors were ostracized and cut off from Jewish society and excommunicated from Jewish religion and privileges
- Tax collectors were usually cheats. They greedily abused their position to extort money from average citizens. They took bribes from the wealthy who wished to avoid taxes.

#### Little man

- Jesus noticed him and called him by name.
- Jesus knows our need and reaches out to meet that need.
- Zacchaeus repented of his sins and changed his whole life.  
Give half of possessions  
Pay back four times to anyone cheated
- 1940s Los Angeles gangster, Mickey Cohen, supposedly became a Christian through Billy Graham's ministry. But, Mickey didn't change his behavior or mob connections. When confronted about his lack of apparent repentance, Cohen responded, "You didn't tell me I had to give up my work! You didn't tell me I had to give up my friends!"  
The validity of repentance is a changed life.
- Salvation did not come to Zacchaeus because he gave away this money. Salvation was not the result of his giving; salvation was the **cause** of his giving.  
We don't change so God will save us.  
The power of the indwelling Holy Spirit changes us!

#### Why sin is such a big deal

- Makes us smaller  
Thief steals, kills and destroys...  
Reduces our options in life  
Steals our inheritance with God  
Loss of future opportunities
- Complicates our life (relationally, financially—stress and strain)
- Increases obstacles making life more difficult
- Drains us of spiritual vitality (loss of joy & peace)

#### Repentance

- "I did it!"
- "I accept full responsibility"
- "I believe this is killing me & others"
- **THEN, not one more word! 1 John 1:8-9**
- Repentance is a compass to help us get out of the woods.

## Altar Call

- Alcoholism had befuddled Billy most of his life. He knew he needed help, so he started attending Marble Collegiate Church on Fifth Avenue in New York City. He sat in church for six months listening intently to the pastor's every word. He gave his heart and life to following Christ. He was accepted as a church member and received communion for the first time.
- Immediately after without warning Billy disappeared never to be seen in that great church again. Two years later the pastor received a telephone call. The call came from the Hadley Rescue Hall in the Bowery. "Dr. Burrell, the head of the mission asked, "can you come down here and conduct a funeral? The man who is dead said he knew you very well." It was Billy. Dr. Burrell asked, "What's he been up to? Where did you find him? How did he come down here to the mission?"
- "We did not find him. He found us. Billy isn't one of those we picked up off the streets. The night after he became a member of your church he came here, and he's been here ever since. He patrolled the waterfront to find down-and-out men. And he found them."
- The greater part of Billy's funeral service consisted of the tributes of people whose paths had crossed his. The landlady in the boarding house where Billy lived stood up with tears in her eyes, "Billy taught God to me and to every person in the house. My house became full of Christians after he came to us." Nightly Billy, the landlady and the boarders hit the streets searching for broken men and women showing the love of Jesus to them and how they might be whole again.
- One after another people arose in the audience and told what Billy had done for them. Billy, the longshoreman, had worked beside them. All around him, as he worked, there was a circle of song, happiness and prayer. Countless lives were changed by one life that was changed because Jesus had come into his life.
- **We don't know what happened to Zacchaeus. There is a legend that he became the bishop of Caesarea.**
- Fred tells about an imaginary conversation with an old retired greyhound. "Do you miss the glitter and excitement of the track?" The old dog grunted, "No." "What's the matter?" Fred asked. "You get too old and stop winning?" The dog raised a paw and said, "I still got some race in me. I won over a million dollars for my owner. I was treated royally." "Then what happened?" He lay down and grunted, "I quit. It was mechanical rabbit! All that running and running and running and what I was chasing wasn't even real."
- Jesus said to Zacchaeus, **"Make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house."**

Zacchaeus had to act immediately. The moment of opportunity was then and there, that day. The next day was too late.

Zacchaeus came down at once and welcomed Jesus into his home.

Are you tired of chasing what is not even real? Are you ready to repent and to follow Jesus?

## Discussion Guide

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

- Why do you believe the text mentions Zacchaeus' profession and the fact that he was rich?
- What significance do you find in the fact the Jesus' knew Zacchaeus' name?
- What does it say about Jesus that he insisted on going to Zacchaeus' house?
- How do we know that Zacchaeus became a follower of Christ? What does this suggest to us?
- What does it mean to repent of our sins?

### **1 John 1:5-9**

- What does it mean to "walk in darkness?"
- What does it mean to "practice" the truth?
- What does it mean to "walk in the light?"
- What is required to receive forgiveness and cleansing from our sins?