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**My Sermon from "All Hallows Sunday" October 30, 2022 ~ "Run To Jesus!"**

*O Lord, uphold me that I may uplift you, and may the words of my mouth  
and the meditation of our hearts be always acceptable in your sight,  
O Lord, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.*

I remember learning this song as a child in Sunday School:

*Zacchaeus was a wee little man, a wee little man was he.  
He climbed up in a sycamore tree, for the Lord he wanted to see.  
And as the Saviour passed that way he looked up in the tree.  
And he said, "Zacchaeus, you come down,  
For I'm going to your house today! For I'm going to your house today."*

Jesus is on his way south to Jerusalem. He passes through the ancient city of Jericho and sees this man in a tree and as the song lyrics state, Jesus tells Zacchaeus to come down because Jesus is going to his home.

This episode in the life of Jesus is not a parable but a true episode. Zacchaeus would have been hated by the Jewish people as even though he was Jewish, he worked for the Romans collecting taxes. Tax collectors were frequently unscrupulous because they could keep anything they collected beyond what the Romans expected.



Here is what we know about the historical Zacchaeus. He lived in Jericho. He had a home. He was rich. He was a chief tax collector. He was very short.

Zacchaeus was eager to meet Jesus. He must have heard about him. Zacchaeus knew that he would never be able to get in front of the crowd lining the streets of Jericho so the Bible tells us that he *"ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree."* (Luke 19:4)

Here is an ancient sycamore tree on the outskirts of Jericho. I have seen this tree and although it is not 2000 years old, it is still very old. Notice the smooth trunk and that would have made it relatively easy for Zacchaeus to climb. I find it interesting that Luke names the type of tree. It must have been a significant marker for people entering Jericho. Maybe it was used for directions. *"I live just beyond the sycamore tree,"* or *"I'll meet you under the sycamore tree."*

**Zacchaeus runs to the tree.** He is that eager to see Jesus. When my grandchildren arrive in Thunder Bay at the airport, a great pleasure I have is when they run as fast as they can into my arms. I kneel down and open my arms in anticipation and that joy of holding them again is wonderful. That was one of the trials of the pandemic when we couldn't do that.

At a wedding, the groom is so eager to be with his bride that he can barely contain himself and all

he wants to do is to run to her and to get lost in her arms.

What happens next in our gospel story? Jesus calls Zacchaeus out of the tree and Zacchaeus immediately hurries down. It is not unexpected that the crowd complains loudly and bitterly, as they can't imagine why Jesus would want to spend time with such a sinner, a man who has wronged them time and time again over many years. A man who has taken their money with greedy hands in order to better only himself. A man loved by Rome and hated by the Jewish people.



Here's what a modern interpretation of the Bible, called *The Message* by Eugene Peterson, and what it says about the crowd's reaction:

*"Everyone who saw the incident was indignant and grumped, 'What business does he have getting cozy with this crook?'"*

Jesus goes to the home of Zacchaeus and ignores the grumbling of the crowd. What happens next? Zacchaeus has a change of heart. He states out loud that he will give 50% of his possessions to the poor and he will give back 4 times to anyone he has cheated. What generous actions of redemption and of grace. Jesus says that *"Salvation has truly come to this home."* And that he came to *"save the lost."* (Luke 19:10)

When the apostle Paul writes to the Thessalonians, he begins this second letter by saying that *"your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing."* (2 Thessalonians 1:3)

These Christians in Thessalonika are living out the call of Zacchaeus. And isn't this just what you and I are called to do? To run with enthusiasm the race that is set before us, to thank God for our abundant faith, and to love each other.

Thomas Merton, a 20<sup>th</sup> century priest, monk, and author wrote extensively about love:

*"Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy. That is not our business and, in fact, it is nobody's business. What we are asked to do is to love, and this love itself will render both ourselves and our neighbours worthy."*

Merton also wrote that *"God is good, salvation is not hard; God's love has made it easy!"*

In the 2022 edition of *Disciplines*, United Methodist Church Pastor, Lisa Schubert Nowling, writes this about the transformation of Zacchaeus:

*"An old Christian adage says that every Christian needs to experience 3 conversions ~ a conversion of the heart, the head, and finally the pocketbook. Zacchaeus has all three. He slips out of the grip of his own greed."*

This is Jesus' dream for the whole world. That we learn to live in kindness and in justice. Our

Cantor for this morning, Barbara Towell, put these words last week on her Facebook page:

*Three things in human life are important: the first is to be kind, the second is to be kind, and the third is to be kind. (I love that Barbara's Mom Patsy responded "What's the first thing again?")*

Thank you Barbara for your words. You are so right. I am privileged to watch the many kindnesses that are extended so freely by parishioners. You visit, you serve, you help, you drive, you shop, you cook, you repair. All done in the name of our Saviour in kindness.

Jesus was kind to Zacchaeus and Zacchaeus passed it forward to everyone else in the community of Jericho.

Let's help actualize that dream and grow in faith and grow in knowledge and readjust our spending and our giving. Let us show our enthusiasm for Jesus and get to know him and thank him for the gift of our salvation.

*Let us always love in truth and in action,  
and not in talk and in words . . .*

(from 1 John 3:18).

Run to Jesus. Why not?

Amen.

*Archdeacon Deborah+*

The Venerable Deborah H. Kraft  
Rector, *St. Paul's*  
Archdeacon, *Thunder Bay – North Shore*

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