



# The Story of Zacchaeus

## Luke 19:1-10

---

### The Story

---

Luke 19:1-10 (From The Message Bible)

**19** <sup>1-4</sup> Then Jesus entered and walked through Jericho. There was a man there, his name Zacchaeus, the head tax man and quite rich. He wanted desperately to see Jesus, but the crowd was in his way—he was a short man and couldn't see over the crowd. So he ran on ahead and climbed up in a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus when he came by.

<sup>5-7</sup> When Jesus got to the tree, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry down. Today is my day to be a guest in your home." Zacchaeus scrambled out of the tree, hardly believing his good luck, delighted to take Jesus home with him. Everyone who saw the incident was indignant and grumped, "What business does he have getting cozy with this crook?"

<sup>8</sup> Zacchaeus just stood there, a little stunned. He stammered apologetically, "Master, I give away half my income to the poor—and if I'm caught cheating, I pay four times the damages."

<sup>9-10</sup> Jesus said, "Today is salvation day in this home! Here he is: Zacchaeus, son of Abraham! For the Son of Man came to find and restore the lost."

**Prayer:** Dear God, thank You for sending us Jesus. He looks at who we really are, not simply how others see us. And He never wants to make us feel small, rather He is always willing to help us grow to become more than we were before. Please help us to stand up in defense of Jesus, as He defends us. In Jesus' name we pray these things. Amen.

### Suggested Activities

- Read the Bible story and historical background. Complete the activity pages.
- Watch YouTube videos:
- "The Story of Zacchaeus: Kids of the Move" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBvc2wimT6M>
- "Skit Guys - Little Billy: Zacchaeus" [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hB7kev\\_n4SU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hB7kev_n4SU)

### Service Ideas

- Help your grownups cook dinner and help with clean up too.
- Share a funny joke with someone that could use a laugh.

### Share Your Work

- Email or Facebook message pictures or videos of you at work on your activities or pictures of the completed items.



## Historical Background - When taxes came due in Jesus' time (Patricia Kasten, The Compass)

There were plenty of taxes in ancient Judea. For faithful Jews, there was the voluntary temple tax, decreed by Moses, to pay for the sacrifices and incense. The amount was half of a shekel (about half an ounce of silver). Under the kings of Israel, there were also taxes collected to run the government — these weren't voluntary. When Roman rulers took over the region of Palestine, they also imposed taxes. In the time of Jesus, Judea was part of the Roman province of Syria. Roman taxes totaled one percent of a man's income. Doesn't seem like much, does it? But there were other taxes: customs taxes, import and export taxes, toll bridges, crop taxes, sales tax, property taxes, and other special taxes.

Technically, Romans collected the taxes — rich Romans, who didn't live in Syria, technically ran the tax service. However, what really happened was that these Romans hired local men to collect the taxes for them. But those rich Romans in Rome didn't pay their tax collectors. Instead, the local tax collectors made their livings off how much extra money they were able to charge people — over and above the legal taxes. And with the above list of different taxes, how could the average person keep track of what they really owed? We might call it “skimming off the top.” Most of the time, though, what really happened wasn't “skimming,” but out and out extortion. Tax collectors, already hated by their countrymen, would take as much as they could get — and often from the poor, who had no recourse. These bully tactics, paired with the fact that many “faithful Jews” of the time believed paying taxes to Romans was a sin, tax collectors were considered unsavory at best and all but excommunicated at worst. Even Jesus noted their unpopularity. However, Jesus did not exclude tax collectors as a group. Jesus even called one tax collector, named Levi, to be an apostle.



Zacchaeus was described in Luke as “a chief tax collector” who lived and worked in Jericho. So Zacchaeus had people like Matthew (regular tax collectors) working under him; he was like a district manager. This meant that he also “skimmed from the top” of all those who worked for him. Jericho was a plum job; since it was the center of the profitable balsam production (balsam was used in oils and perfumes). Yet Jesus chose to go to Zacchaeus' house and eat with him. In fact, it was Jesus' idea, not Zacchaeus'. Why? First, so Jesus could acknowledge that every person is valuable to God. Second, He could offer salvation to Zacchaeus, who seems to have had an immediate change of heart — even before Jesus sits down to table.

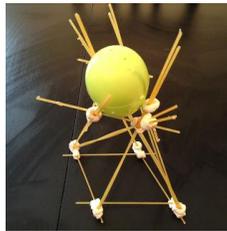
## Zacchaeus: Marshmallow and Spaghetti Tree building Challenge

If you want an absorbing and challenging way to explore the story of Zacchaeus, then look no further. This is a great way to think about the determination of Zacchaeus to see Jesus, because it will take some determination to complete the task!

**You will need:** Dried spaghetti, mini marshmallows and a plastic Easter egg.



**Challenge:** Build a 'tree' with the spaghetti and marshmallows that will support and hold a plastic Easter egg (real eggs are way too heavy for what you are likely to build!).



**Questions to think about (and talk about with a grown up):**

- How easy was it to build the tree?
- What difficulties did you encounter?
- What difficulties do you think Zacchaeus encountered in the story?
- Think of someone you consider as one of your heroes. What lengths would you go through to see him or her?
- What lengths do others go to in order to be Christians?
- In what situations do you have to have determination?
- Do you ever have to use your determination in order to live as a Christian and to get to know Jesus better?

## **Humor: The Good, the Bad and the Sometimes Ugly**

As we know, Zacchaeus received a lot of disrespect as a tax collector. We know that even today this kind of attitude exists toward people who work with taxes, or perhaps as lawyers, or in government. A lot of times the people who are outsiders for one reason or another also are the ones who get mocked behind their backs, made fun of to their faces, and have jokes told about them. Let's look at what we find funny, and if we believe that we have chosen wisely. In particular, think about how you can avoid getting your pleasure from someone else's pain.

Probably pretty much everyone can recall feeling upset at some point about remarks made about them and it may be that the person who made the remarks did not mean them to be harmful. A tricky thing about some humor is that it can easily be claimed not to have been meant with a serious effect. Yet many people have felt pain from joking. In such situations people might not be comfortable with admitting how they feel, since people even risk being mocked for having "allowed themselves" to feel hurt. People declare that sticks and stones break bones but words are harmless. In reality words can break hearts.

Humor can get us thinking as well as laughing. But a lot of jokes are based on cruelty, vulgarity, and rudeness. Among some, it is not unusual to make fun of others for their differences – particularly people we don't actually know. Ephesians 5:4 warns us against "obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking." But too often humor has been viewed as opposed to the Christian life. Jesus was not opposed to laughter, He went to parties and He said funny things. Many of Jesus' parables seem to have humor along with their teachings. Jesus' disciple Paul said that we are to rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn.

- What kind of jokes do you like (knock knock; chicken crossed the road; etc.)?
- Have you ever found yourself embarrassed to have laughed at something (or someone)? What did you do?
- Have you ever been the subject of a joke that hurt your feelings? What did you do?
- Why did George Washington wear red, white and blue suspenders? (*To hold up his pants!*)
- Why did the golfer wear two pairs of pants? (*In case he got a hole-in-one!*)
- Challenges:
  - o Think about what makes you laugh this week. Is the humor hurting someone's feelings? Is this something Jesus would laugh at too?
  - o Have a grown up help you share your best joke with us on Stone UMC's Facebook page!
- Prayer: Lord, we sometimes say or hear that words can never hurt us, but in reality they do. Please help us to deal with the pain we have felt in the past and forgive all those through whom pain came into our hearts. Please help us also to be careful about causing pain to others. Help us to see and appreciate joy, and to be able to laugh with light hearts. Guide our hearts and our words, Lord. Amen.