

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church  
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Who's Your One? Series

**MORE THAN A WEE LITTLE MAN**

Luke 19:1-10

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Today, as part of the Who's Your One? Series, we are going to study the story of Zacchaeus. Here are the points to today's message:

- Zacchaeus was searching.
- Zacchaeus was ready to listen.
- Zacchaeus repented.

**1-ZACCHAEUS WAS SEARCHING**

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 19:1-4

*Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup> A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. <sup>3</sup> He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. <sup>4</sup> So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.*

**EXPLANATION:** After Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead, he and the disciples retreated to a town called Ephraim about 13 miles northeast of Jerusalem. Jesus continued teaching the disciples and tried to warn them about what was going to take place in the following days. Unfortunately, they could not grasp what he was saying. When it neared the time for Passover, they set out on the journey to Jerusalem. They traveled first towards Jericho.

Jericho is thought to be one of the oldest cities in the world. During the time of Jesus, it was an affluent city that also had many beggars. As they drew close to Jericho, Jesus encountered and healed blind beggars, one by the name of Bartimaeus. The continued healings and the popularity of Jesus since Lazarus's

resurrection prompted interest among the masses. Word spread that Jesus and his followers were headed towards town, and people began to gather in anticipation. Among those was a man named Zacchaeus, but Zacchaeus was not just any man. Zacchaeus was a tax collector.

Tax collectors worked for the Roman government. The Jews generally despised them. Tax collectors were typically wealthy because in addition to collecting the required taxes, they had the authority to increase the amounts due in order to line their own pockets. So, if the Roman government required a \$5 tax from the average citizen, the tax collector could up the rate to \$7 or \$10 and keep the extra for himself. The Bible says that Zacchaeus was very rich as a result of his occupation and that among the residents of Jericho, he was known as a notorious sinner. We also learn from this account that Zacchaeus was a short man.

**ILLUSTRATION:** I can tell you, human nature has not changed much, and I know what he endured growing up. Whatever the Hebrew words were, I am sure the nicknames given him were something like these: shorty, pee-wee, squirt, stump. And since human nature doesn't change, I'm sure he heard things like:

- “How's the weather down there?”
- “Appreciate the little things; give short people a hug.”
- “Keep looking up!”
- “The water in the shower must evaporate before it reaches you.”
- “You'll never play on the Jerusalem Jews basketball team.”
- He was probably asked by tall people if he'd ever reach his goals.
- “Zacchaeus, stand for the picture – oh he is.”
- “It's fun to make fun of Zacchaeus because the jokes go over his head.”

There was probably a song or two then about short people. Probably one about how short people have no reason to live. Oh wait, there is a short person song – and a song about Zacchaeus. He's been immortalized in the song about him being a wee little man.

I'll fictionalize here, but I can see that a guy made fun of like that deciding, “I'll get them back, I'll become a tax collector for the Roman government!”

**EXPLANATION:** You know, people in the same profession know a lot of people in the same profession. I know pastors all over the nation and even in foreign countries. It's likely Zacchaeus knew other tax collectors. He probably knew a fellow tax collector named Matthew and saw that his life had radically changed.

The important thing to note is that these verses tell us Zacchaeus was a man who was searching for something. He was searching for Jesus. Perhaps he realized that even though he was rich, there was more to life.

**APPLICATION:** Like Zacchaeus, there are people all around us who are searching.

- They are searching for answers to their problems.
- They are searching for ways to feel better about themselves.
- They are searching for someone to love, and to love them.
- Although many do not recognize it, they are actually searching for Jesus.

**EXPLANATION:** Zacchaeus went to a lot of trouble to get a glimpse of Jesus. He left his home. He ditched work for a while. He fought the crowds, and he climbed a tree. That was an unconventional way to find Jesus. Think about it:

- The blind men sat on the side of the street and yelled until someone paid attention.
- People elbowed their way to Jesus all the time.
- Even Gentiles and mothers and little kids were able to get an audience, but Zacchaeus climbed a tree.

**APPLICATION:** In the same way, the people around us are not likely to look for Jesus in the way we expect. They probably are not sitting in the church pews or reading the Bible in the hotel nightstand. Instead, they are consulting horoscopes. They are delving into drugs and alcohol. They are experimenting with Ouija boards and reading about New Age philosophies. They have religious questions, and they are searching for a way to fill that God-shaped hole in their heart. They want to believe in something, but too often they are looking in all the wrong places. Are we ready to point them towards Jesus?

So, Zacchaeus was searching...

## 2-ZACCHAEUS WAS READY TO LISTEN

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 19:5-7

*When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.”<sup>6</sup> So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.<sup>7</sup> All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”*

**EXPLANATION:** In Luke 18 before leaving for Jerusalem, the Bible says, “*Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, “We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled.<sup>32</sup> He will be delivered over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him and spit on him;<sup>33</sup> they will flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.”*

The crucifixion was only days away, and Jesus knew it. He knew exactly what was going to happen. He knew that he would be welcomed into Jerusalem like a king, and less than a week later, he would be brutally flogged and nailed to a tree. Jesus knew all this, and yet, he took time for Zacchaeus. Now if this had been you or me, we might have said hello, signed an autograph, let him take a picture and gone on our way. But that’s not what Jesus did. Jesus invited himself to lunch at Zacchaeus’s house. He went and waited while it was prepared. He talked with Zacchaeus and got to know him.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Author Max Lucado wrote in his book, *Outlive Your Life*, “Something holy happens around a dinner table that will never happen in a sanctuary. In a church auditorium, you see the backs of heads. Around the table, you see the expressions on faces. In the auditorium, one person speaks; around the table, everyone has a voice. Church services are on the clock. Around the table, there is time to talk.”

Think about how often the stories of Jesus involve food.

- His first miracle took place at a wedding feast.
- He fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes.
- He dined with Matthew and Zacchaeus.

- He sat around the table with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.
- He celebrated a Passover meal with the disciples before his crucifixion.
- He ate fish with his friends after his resurrection.

**APPLICATION:** In our busy lives, it's easy to not take the time to be with people.

During our Who's Your One campaign, I'm asking you to consider having a meal with someone who needs Jesus and before you do it, review the meals that Jesus had with others.

There are people who are searching, and there are people who will listen, but we have to be willing to spend time with them, to talk to them, and develop relationships. It's true that "People don't care what you know until they know that you care."

Would Zacchaeus have listened if Jesus stood under the tree and yelled a sermon at him? We do not know, but we can be confident that he listened when they sat together in his house and shared a meal.

Sometimes we have to make the opportunity to share the gospel story. This is called "intentional evangelism". We've grown too accustomed to passive evangelism. We have to get to know people so that we can earn the right to be heard. We have to create special times and places where we can share what Jesus has done in our lives.

Zacchaeus did not protest the interruption of plans because:

- He was searching, and
- He was ready to listen.

### **3-ZACCHAEUS REPENTED**

**SCRIPTURE:** Luke 19:8-10

*But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of*

*Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*

**EXPLANATION:** Under Mosaic law, if a thief confessed his crime, he had to restore what he took and add one-fifth to it, and then bring a trespass offering to the Lord. (Lev 6). If he stole something he could not restore, he had to repay it four-fold. This means under Mosaic law, Zacchaeus would have been obligated to pay them back plus 20%. Instead, he agreed up front to pay the highest penalty, returning 400%. He offered to pay the highest price because his heart had been changed.

We are not given the privilege of knowing all of the conversation that occurred between Jesus and Zacchaeus. Preparing and eating a meal takes time; so we can be confident that there were a lot more words spoken than Luke recorded. We also do not have supernatural insight to see into Zacchaeus’s heart. The Bible does not record a sinner’s prayer, per se. So, how do we know that Zacchaeus repented?

He was not saved because of what he pledged to do, he was saved because he responded by faith to the Lord’s word to him. We also know he was saved because Jesus declared him a son of Abraham, not because he was a physical descendant of Abraham, but because he was declared a man of faith like Abraham.

Zacchaeus became a guest in his own home because his home now belonged to Jesus.

**APPLICATION:** It’s our human nature to put degrees on sin and to maintain a civil order, we must do that. A child hitting another child comes with a different penalty than an adult murdering an adult.

Like the Pharisees, we think some people are beyond hope. The people remarked that Jesus was going to the home of a known sinner! The story of Zacchaeus is a good reminder that no one is beyond the reach of Christ. It’s easy to become jaded and to think that people cannot change, but God can work in anyone’s heart and life.

- Zacchaeus was searching.
- Zacchaeus was ready to listen.

- Zacchaeus repented.

**ILLUSTRATION:** Nabeel Qureshi (nah-BEEL kuh-RESH-i) was a devout American Muslim. He had been raised by loving parents to be a passionate follower of Allah. He was happy with his faith and his community of Islamic believers. In many respects, he had no desire to change anything. However, Nabeel was also a seeker of truth. Apologetics is the study of how to defend religious doctrines through systematic debate. In the same way that many Christians engage people of other faiths in order to convert them, Nabeel studied Islamic apologetics and wanted to convert Christians to Islam. Because of this, he intentionally discussed his faith with non-believers. In 2001, as a student at Old Dominion University in Virginia, Nabeel met and began a discussion with a Christian man named David Wood. Rather than dismiss Nabeel as a lost cause because of his strong Islamic faith, Wood talked with Nabeel, and, surprisingly, the two became friends. Wood encouraged Nabeel to objectively research Christianity as well as Islam. Over the span of several years, the friends often debated the two religions until Nabeel finally came to believe in Jesus as the Son of God. Although he lost many relationships as a result, Nabeel surrendered his life to Christ and went on to become a prominent Christian author, teacher, and minister.

**APPLICATION:** On the road to Jerusalem, in the hours before his triumphant entry, in the days before his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus spent time with a notorious, hated townsman who was searching, a greedy tax collector ready to listen, a repentant sinner who turned to Jesus. On that day, Zacchaeus was Jesus's one.

On a college campus, David Wood encountered a devout Muslim who was certain that Allah was the one true God, a man who wanted to debate the inaccuracies of the Christian faith, a man who seemingly had no desire to turn to Jesus. On that day, Nabeel Qureshi (nah-BEEL kuh-RESH-i) was David Wood's one.

All around us, there are people who are seeking truth. There are people who are ready to listen. There are people who need the Lord and are waiting for somebody to take the time to answer their questions, be a friend, and point them in the right direction. Are you willing to be that person? In a recent report, as in the last few

weeks, surveys conducted among the 18-25 year old group revealed that they are the most spiritually open of all generations right now.

Who is your one? Who is the one person you will pray for, the one person you'll cultivate a relationship with, the one person you'll share a meal with, the one person you are asking God to allow you the opportunity to share Jesus with? Listen carefully, don't wear the person out. But I want to challenge you to look for your Zacchaeus...the one who is interested. The one who is most open.

**INVITATION:** The altar is open if you want to come pray. Maybe you need to pray that you will see the opportunities in your life. Maybe you need courage to speak to the people God has already placed there.

In Matthew 9:37 Jesus said, *“Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.”* Come and pray that you will be a faithful worker for the kingdom of Christ. Today, if you are the one seeking truth, if you are the one who's ready to listen, come forward. Let me tell you about the One you are searching for.

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I use the NIV translation of scripture because of its conversational nature. Feel free to go to Bible Gateway and copy and paste whichever translation you want to use. This transcript has been edited to an outline format that improves readability and therefore may not exactly follow the video edition.

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