

Zacchaeus the Tax Collector (Luke 19:1-10)

A Tree, A Tax Collector, and a Change of Heart – Sunday School Lesson on Zacchaeus and the Grace of Jesus

The tale of Zacchaeus is an important one to share with children as we emphasize the love of Jesus and the constant availability of grace. We see through this classic story that meeting Christ changes lives, and we also communicate to kids that we want to love other people as well, whoever they might be.

Lesson focus: Jesus loved all kinds of people, and often associated with those that others did not like so much. He changed lives by this love, and transformed how people felt and behaved. Jesus offered mercy and forgiveness, and because of that we should demonstrate unconditional love to one another.

Open Activity: **“Simon Says” -- Climbing, watching, walking, or dining...** this directional game is a bit like “Simon says.” Demonstrate for children several mimed activities. Call off directions and have them act out what is happening. For example, if you say “climbing”, children act as though they are climbing a tree. “Watching” could be covering eyes to look out for something. Pick up the pace as you go. With older kids, or to add challenge, try to mix up the directions or add more directions, and let students who miss one sit out. Explain that all of these elements are parts of the story today.

Bible Reading: Luke 19:1-10

19 Jesus was going through the city of Jericho. ² In Jericho there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a wealthy, very important tax collector. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but he was too short to see above the crowd. ⁴ He ran ahead to a place where he knew Jesus would come. He climbed a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus. ⁵ When Jesus came to that place, he looked up and saw Zacchaeus in the tree. He said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down! I must stay at your house today.”

⁶ Zacchaeus came down quickly. He was pleased to have Jesus in his house. ⁷ All the people saw this and began to complain, “Look at the kind of man Jesus stays with. Zacchaeus is a sinner!”⁸ But Zacchaeus said to the Lord, “I will give half of my money to the poor. If I have cheated anyone, I will pay that person back four times more!”⁹ Jesus said, “Salvation has come to this house today. This man truly belongs to the family of Abraham.”¹⁰ The Son of Man came to find lost people and save them.”

Discussion:

- Who was Zacchaeus? Sure, he was short, but that was not his only problem. Zacchaeus was a tax collector. Explain that tax collectors were pretty unpopular in the days of Jesus.
- Basically, they robbed people. The tax collectors could come around and make people pay more money than they actually should have owed, and then the collector would pocket the remaining money. So, they were deceitful and greedy, but there wasn't much that could be done about it.
- Zacchaeus was one of those guys. As a result, the Jews were not big fans of his. But, somehow he had heard about Jesus, and he must have been curious to learn more about the miracle worker...

He (Jesus) entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. –[Luke 19:1-2](#)

- So not only was he a swindling tax collector, he was one of the bosses, and had accumulated a lot of money from his dealings. Have students come up with some equivalents for jobs or positions today that might not be so appreciated or well-reputed... (Lawyers, IRS agents, traffic officers perhaps...)
- Now, Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but he was short! Have students share if they have encountered any sort of difficulty with being short...sometimes you have to improvise, and that is what this man did:

And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. ⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." ⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. –[Luke 19:3-6](#)

- Consider the amazing details that are taking place here...there's Zacchaeus, short guy climbing up a tree to see the Jewish teacher he's heard about. He probably thought he was hidden away anonymously. But Jesus knew better. He looked straight up at the guy and called him out by name. Not only that, but he invited himself over for dinner!

- Encourage kids to consider how they might have felt in this position...what was going through Zacchaeus's head? Whatever it was, he was excited, because the verse tells us he hurried down and received Jesus joyfully.
- Now, remember that Zacchaeus was kind of a "bad guy" in the eyes of the Jews...they weren't too pleased that Jesus would associate with such a person, and they complained about it. Fortunately, Jesus was not after public opinion boosts, but individual heart healing...and in this case, it worked.

And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold."⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham."¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." –[Luke 19:7-10](#)

- Jesus was not worried about how others viewed Him. He knew that His mission came from God, and that it involved loving all people. **He also knew change was possible for all, and that He would grant forgiveness to all who asked.** Zacchaeus was transformed by his encounter with Jesus. He got up and promised that if he had done any dishonest dealing, he would repay it with extra!
- That probably amounted to quite a bit of money, but he realized he had found something more important. Zacchaeus became a new man and received the love and mercy of Jesus. And Jesus emphasized that He did not come just for good people, but for those who were truly lost and in need of healing. This is good news for us, because of course we sure are lost, too!
- This story has another important element: Jesus loved everyone. What does that mean for us? It should mean we demonstrate love and forgiveness, too. Now, some people still do wrong things and need consequences, sure. But we know that love and mercy are possible for all. If God thinks so, shouldn't we?

Close the lesson with prayer and thank God for loving us and knowing us by name. Ask for help in sharing the love of Christ with one another, especially those who struggle or are less popular.

Coloring Pages:

- Coloring pages: Zacchaeus in a Tree
- Color by numbers sheet

Teaching Helps:

- Video of the Zacchaeus Story:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BjtbJFz2ug>

Feel free to take a picture of the children's art work or share how your activity went! Post it on our Facebook page or share it on GroupMe.

Have a Blessed Day & Week!

Until we can meet again ~

Teacher Chrissy

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Jesus wants to
be my friend
forever.

Zacchaeus
Luke 19:1-8

"Love each other
as I have loved you."

John 15:12





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SEEK

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SAVE

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KEY:

1 = Brown

2 = Tan

3 = Green

4 = Light Green

5 = Blue

6 = Purple

7 = Yellow

8 = Orange