

Zaccheus: Diminished By Men, Honored by the Lord

Lk. 19:1-10

Introduction:

1. It is interesting how we evaluate people.
2. In God's selection of a king for Israel He told Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature . . . for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).
3. Yes, we evaluate people by what we see. We are attracted to beauty, to wealth, to power. Thus, we may give preferential treatment to those dressed in fine clothes, and diminish the one in dirty clothes. But James says, "God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom" (2:5).
4. Luke 19 describes an individual evaluated by men as "small," but recognized by the Lord as "a son of Abraham."
5. Reading of Lk. 19:1-10.

Discussion:

I. Zaccheus was "small" in a variety of ways.

A. If you saw Zaccheus one of the first observations you might make about him is, "He is small in stature."

1. You have probably noticed that being "short" is not preferred. We even sing a song about Zaccheus being a "wee little man."
2. Relate incident on elevator in Dayton, OH hospital. Nurse there only about 4 ft. 10 in. tall. Three of us were on the elevator, this nurse, myself (6' 2") and a young man about 5ft. 1 in. He was my new counselee. His first observation—"That nurse was certainly short." His presenting problem—getting into fights, a response to prove himself in a world that diminishes short people.
3. How other people see us affects the way that we see ourselves. This young man compensated by setting out to show how big he was by fighting most anyone that came along who said anything about his size. It is a good thing he was not named Zaccheus or Sue (as the man in the Johnny Cash song). I don't think he could have survived that. What we think about ourselves often affects the whole course of our life.
4. One of the disadvantages of being short—in a crowd you cannot see over all the tall people. Zaccheus compensated by climbing a tree in order to see Jesus.

B. Zaccheus was also diminished by being a "chief tax-collector," "rich," and thus "a sinner" (2, 7).

1. Tax-collectors ("telones") were usually Jews authorized by the Roman government to collect taxes for Rome. It was understood that they were to keep a "fraction" for themselves, but they were known as extortioners.
2. There were two classes.
 - a. Those who collected taxes on land, income taxes and poll taxes.

- b. Those who collected taxes on imports, exports, roads, harbors, bridges, axles, wheels, crossing rivers, dams, licenses, sales, etc. Zaccheus was probably of this second variety.
 3. As “chief tax collector” Zaccheus was probably a district tax officer who had purchased the Jericho tax franchise and farmed it out to agents who did the collecting. Jericho is known for its date palms and balsam trees (fragrant, soothing and highly regarded for its healing qualities) and is located on the main road to Jerusalem and the country E of Jordan. A lot of commercial traffic would come through Jericho.
 4. The fact that Zaccheus is identified as “rich” suggests that he was probably known as an extortioner.
 5. The Jewish people were outraged by such tax-collectors and regarded them as both traitors to the Jewish nation and apostates from Jewish religion.
 6. Whether Zaccheus was guilty of such crimes may be questionable (his name means “righteous one,” see also v. 8). Nevertheless, this is the way he was perceived.
 7. This is confirmed by the Jews of Jericho grumbling about Jesus’ going to the house of one they considered “a sinner,” i.e., apostate.
- C. We need to evaluate how we look at other people and ourselves.
1. You evaluate others through your prejudices. We usually do not see our own prejudices. The young man saw the nurse as “short.” He did not see her as a woman. He did not see her as a trained health care worker. He did not see her as attractive, well-dressed, etc.
 2. You evaluate yourself through your prejudices. The young man saw himself as “short,” and needing to prove himself by fighting.
 3. The people of Jericho evaluated Jesus on the basis of their evaluation of Zaccheus, thus they grumbled, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

II. Zaccheus was recognized by the Lord.

- A. Jesus calls him by name and says, “Today I must stay at your house.”
 1. A crowd is moving with Jesus.
 2. A man climbs up a tree to see Jesus. Zaccheus was probably reasonably well known in Jericho. You do not see this kind of thing often.
 3. Jesus stops and invites himself into Zaccheus’ house.
 4. What an incredible event!
- B. As the Jewish crowd is grumbling Zaccheus stops and says to the Lord, “Half of my possessions I will give to the poor.” Jewish custom said 1/5th should go to works of love. Maybe Zaccheus is giving half because he has extorted much from the poor, but 50% is a lot more than 1/5th.
- C. He said, “If I have defrauded any, I will pay back four times as much.” These two statements are reflective of the genuine repentance of Zaccheus. At least that is the way Jesus seems to interpret them.
 1. “Today salvation has come to this house.” Evidently Zaccheus needed this salvation. There is much we do not know here. What did Zaccheus know of Jesus? Why did he make this kind of change so quickly?
 2. These marks of repentance cause Jesus to identify him as “a son of Abraham.” Not

just a physical descendent, but a man of faith, an heir of the blessings of God (Gal. 3:9, 29).

- D. The Jews had excluded him; Jesus included him. Jesus seeks and saves the lost. Do you seek to save the lost? Do you discount known sinners like Zaccheus?

Conclusion:

1. Those that are diminished by men may be recognized by God.
2. Sinners need to repent. Sinners need to be saved.
3. Salvation comes to the house of those willing to come to faith in the promises of Abraham.
4. Will Jesus stay at your house? Will you receive Him gladly?