

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.

Sunday March 31, 2019. "Encounters: Zaccheus".

A. Intro.

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work thru from the message this past Sunday. Whether you were able to attend the worship service or not, this devotional is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper in your own spiritual walk.

Take as long as you need to dive into this material and feel free to share it.

B. Recap Series.

We're in our fourth week of the "**Encounter**" series. A look at people who had a significant, life-changing "**Encounter**" with the person of Jesus, and how that "**Encounter**" impacted and changed the direction of their lives. We all know the influence that certain people who come into our lives, pour wisdom and life truths into us, and our life isn't, cannot be, the same after we have those experiences. And we're using the life of Jesus, and the people who "**Encountered**" him, to draw out those powerful truths, and examining how we can apply them to our everyday life also.

C. Sunday.

Tami brought us another "**Encounter**" with the person of Jesus and this one is so familiar. It's the story of Zacchaeus and his desire to "**Encounter**" this traveling teacher who he apparently had heard so much about. Tami gave us a ton of history and background to help us get a better and more relevant understanding of what it meant for a man of such stature to do what Zacchaeus did to get a glimpse of Jesus. He was a very wealthy, tax collector, who basically was a traitor to the Jewish people. Just imagine if our country was taken over by another nation, we were occupied, and then you find out your neighbor was working for them....against our country. This is what Zacchaeus was doing. So you know how his fellow people felt about him.

The passage used Sunday of the story of Zacchaeus is found in **Luke 19:1-10**. If you're familiar with the passage, read it slowly, trying to not jump ahead to what you already know is going to happen. This is difficult to do, but if you can be more mindful about taking in only what you are reading in the moment, you can catch the subtle nuanced details in this account.

As always to start unpacking this passage.

What jumped out at you about this story?

Did you notice anything different that spoke to you?

Tami basically just walked thru the passage, told the story of Zacchaeus, and created points for us to connect with this story. So we're going to do the same and hit points along the arc of the story.

What do you think Zacchaeus felt was missing from his life that moved him to do what he did?

It would be too easy to do the anti-materialism talk here, but just imagine why the pursuit of wealth felt so empty for Zacchaeus.

We ALL dream about winning the lottery. What is it deep within us that has some of that pre-Jesus Zacchaeus in us, that makes us think money will be the answer to our problems?

Jesus invited himself into Zacchaeus' home to stay. There was no call for repentance, to be saved, stop doing the bad, start doing good, or anything like that. Just to hang out.

How do you understand this statement by Jesus?

What does that have to say to us, or the church, today?

Zacchaeus came down from the tree, and the crowd was not happy, (the crowd always murmurs doesn't it?).

What causes people, especially church people to not want certain people included in God's family?

Why is this?

Now we don't know for sure if the rest of the story happened there at the tree, or actually in the home of Zacchaeus. There are scholars on both sides of the debate, and all of their evidence is circumstantial at best. But we do know Zacchaeus in that moment was moved to repentance, to changing his life, without Jesus asking anything of him. Now it would be dangerous and irresponsible to take this one account, and broaden out to some overarching truth. However, it is what it is, and we have to deal with this interesting fact.

What does this say to us about our beliefs of what a growing understanding of what living for Jesus looks like?

And then lastly, Jesus pronounced salvation not only to Zacchaeus but to his entire house. We never hear anyone else in the house actually make the same confession Zacchaeus made. And to be honest, Zacchaeus never really made what we consider a profession of faith. Now yes, a changed life is often a sign of a changed heart, and the results of a life dedicated towards God. But we know of stories of changed lives without God also. So we have to pull back a bit and wrestle with the concept of salvation. The greek word for salvation is '*soteria*', and has historically been translated as saved from destruction. And that is a partial understanding of that word. However, a more complete, fuller, understanding of salvation is wholeness, united, restored. So this means that something even greater happened to Zacchaeus that day than just getting into heaven.

How can our understanding of salvation mean something to how live our life now?

D. Challenge.

This story of Zacchaeus challenges us in so many ways to examine what we consider important and how we respond to our personal "**Encounter**" with Jesus. What will salvation look like for you!