

GENEROSITY

Responding To God's Radical Grace In Community

LESSON 7 – GENEROSITY AND POWER

*"Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. ⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." ⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. ⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." ⁸ 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." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham." **Luke 19:1-9 (NIV)***

TAX COLLECTOR

Tax collectors like Zacchaeus were collaborators with the Roman occupying forces. Rome conquered Judea, and as a way of keeping their colonies weak and economically dependent, they levied crippling taxes. Tax collectors were despised as traitors and it was believed that they were selling their soul for money. They were, in effect, saying, "I want to be rich even if it alienates me from my people and community." (The traditional values of family and community were prized above all other cultural values at this point in Jewish history.)

Zacchaeus Before meeting Jesus

1. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector with a bad reputation.
2. Zacchaeus would have been considered a traitor and mercenary.
3. Tax collectors often dealt unscrupulously with taxpayers, collecting considerably more than was required and keeping the difference.
4. Zacchaeus, despite the outward animosity he would incur, was willing to be considered a traitor because of his love for money.

Zacchaeus After his encounter with Jesus

1. Zacchaeus immediately became a generous man.
2. Zacchaeus could not get rid of his money quickly enough – gave half of his possessions to the poor.
3. Repayment of all money he gained by cheating people.

Zacchaeus said, in vs 8 *“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.”*

In the Old Testament, the most severe penalty for fraudulent crimes was repayment of four times the stolen amount.

4. Zacchaeus **voluntarily** applied the most severe economic penalty to himself.

His encounter with Jesus had a powerful impact on the way he now lived his life.

*In **Luke 16:13**, “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”*

5. The change in Zacchaeus’ life, where he once loved money and despised God, was reversed after the **encounter** with Jesus.

The changes in Zacchaeus

1. His immediate changes were **joy** and a new **identity**.
Although Zacchaeus was labeled a “sinner” by everyone in his community, Jesus loved and accepted him.
2. This unconditional acceptance radically altered his identity from one society scorned to **security and acceptance**.

Salvation Has Come

“Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.”
Luke 19:9 (NIV)

Jesus is not saying that Zacchaeus was saved because of giving his wealth away.

1. What Jesus was saying is that **“I Am Salvation.”**
You are not saved by anything you do. You are saved by “What I do” and by “What I am going to do.”
2. It is only through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection that we can be **reconciled** to God.
Our best deeds – even the recompense shown by Zacchaeus and outlined in Moses’ Law – do not earn our salvation.

The only way a sinner like Zacchaeus could receive salvation was for Jesus to enter his life graciously and lovingly. Only after Jesus went to Zacchaeus’ house did Zacchaeus give away his wealth. His actions were a response to the good news of Jesus Christ.