

Who's Coming to Dinner?  
Luke 19:1-10

If you invited someone over to your house for dinner, the preparation for the guests that are becomes evident according to who is invited.

If you invite someone to come to your house for lunch after worship this morning, the frantic pace at which you made it home to clean would be evident.

Occasionally (pre-Covid) we have teenagers over at our house. Sometimes the entire youth group. And it gets loud, and kinda crazy. Kids begin to swing from the light fixtures, and spray paint walls (not really). But if we know we have a bunch of teenagers coming over, we will clean the house. We will make sure all the laundry is put away, or at least put into the bedroom behind closed doors. We will pick up all the extra kids toys laying around. But typically we don't do a DEEP clean. At some point we say, it's good enough, they are teenagers that we treat like our own kids.

We also don't use breakable dishes. It is paper plates, plastic cups, plastic utensils. Whatever is easiest. Because we love teenagers, we want them at our house, but we are not too worried about the impression they will have on us by the cleanliness of our house.

Now let's say that someone really important is coming over. Because he has ties to ASU, and because he plays for the Saints, we will Demario Davis, starting linebacker for the saints is coming over with his family. Seems like a really cool down to earth guy. But I can assure you that we are going to deep clean the house. All of the kids toys will be put neatly away. We are going to make sure we put out all of our ASU and Saints gear. We will not be using paper plates and plastic cutlery. We will use the real stuff. We also are not going to be serving Little Caesars pizza. We will be eating good that night. It will be something like steak AND shrimp with a baked potato and all the toppings.

### **1. An Unexpected Seeker**

He was well known, and very disliked.

-A chief tax collector has secured the rites to tax his own people to collect money for the Roman Government.

-He was rich because he used the rites he had secured to become wealthy by up-charging the taxes that he would collect.

Zacchaeus had made a decision of what he wanted his priorities to be. He wanted to chase wealth and power, and he had both. Not only was he wealthy, not only was he a tax collector, but he was a chief tax collector. Looking at Zacchaeus people would have thought he was on top of the world. He had received everything he had wanted. He may not have been liked by the Jews, but he had already made that decision. He was on top of the world that he had created.

I am not sure what your heart longs for. But I know that it is easy to set our mind and heart after certain things, and that becomes our focus. If I can just make a certain amount of money. If I can just have this or that then my life will be in order. If I could only be more comfortable. If my family looked a certain way. If I were more popular. If I could have influence.

We long for a lot of things and some of us will even get the biggest dreams that we have.

But don't miss vs 3. **He was seeking Jesus (3)**

We are not sure why he was seeking Jesus, what series of events had led to this point in Zacchaeus' life but he wanted to see what was different about Jesus enough that this wealthy, influential, powerful man became like a child just to get a glimpse of Jesus. **You will not seek if you are satisfied!**

I can only imagine what the people around him were thinking when they saw Zacchaeus of all people in the tree.

But there are some people that you wish you could be just like, you wish you could live their lives, but deep down if they're following something other than Jesus, they are still seeking what only Christ can give. Maybe you have achieved all that you wanted to in life, but there is still something missing. I would tell you that you can learn from Zacchaeus, and seek Jesus.

The story does not end with Zacchaeus seeking Jesus, but instead we see an unexpected encounter.

## **2. An Unexpected Encounter**

Jesus was surrounded by people. He was incredibly popular by this time, and we see over and over again that the crowds surrounded him. Many of them desiring to have Jesus have a conversation with them, and if he did they would tell their friends, kids, grandkids about the time they met the great healer from Galilee.

And in all this hope for a Jewish rabbi to speak to someone from the crowd, the last person any person on that street would have wanted Jesus to talk to would have been Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus was not looking for this encounter, he was just trying to figure out what this Jesus guy was all about. Hiding so he could see Jesus, but not wanting to necessarily be seen by Jesus. The crowds tried to stop this encounter because they would not even allow Zacchaeus to even get close to Jesus which sends him to the tree to begin with.

This stop along the street was not in the itinerary. Jesus had a schedule to keep after all. We see the disciples in other places hurrying Jesus along and trying to restrict the crowds to make sure that Jesus could remain focused on his mission.

No one expected this encounter, except Jesus. We know Jesus did because he knew his name.

Just because we don't expected Jesus to work in someone else's life, doesn't mean that he is not speaking into their heart to have an encounter with him. When we think that someone has alienated themselves from God that they would never even hear the voice of God if he spoke to them, Jesus knows them by name.

We need to change our focus from assuming that everyone around us has everything they could want and they do not have a need for Christ, to seeing that Jesus is stopping to have an encounter with them, and maybe wants to use us as part of that encounter.

Maybe that is you this morning. You are listening not really expecting anything to happen other than be part of a church service, but even now Jesus is stopping to have an encounter with you.

The encounter is the starting point where everything changes. The change has not happened yet. There is no evidence that Zacchaeus really trusts in Jesus yet, but he listens, and he listens to an unexpected offer.

### **3. An Unexpected Offer (5-7)**

Jesus is not being rude when he tells Zacchaeus that he is going to his house. In fact in that culture it was a huge sign of respect to be asked to be host of someone that was influential.

But if you notice the response of the crowd, you see just how unexpected this offer is.

Have you ever had plans get dropped on you at the last minute?

Maybe someone knocks on your door and asks if they can come in for just a minute, and everything is out of place. You try to figure out how to play host and try to start arranging things. I can only imagine the frantic nature that Zacchaeus was in when Jesus announced the dinner plans. They also did not have refrigerators, so the preparation for any food that would have been served would have caused strain.

But notice that Zacchaeus, when announced that Jesus was coming to his house, responded with joy. His concern was not the appearance of his house. It was not the expectation that Jesus might have had for him. It was that Jesus had offered to be present with him.

How are you receiving Jesus, even if the offer is unexpected?

### **4. An Unexpected Result**

Zacchaeus was willing to give up what he had longed for, in order to experience transformation to follow Jesus.

His life, at least to a large extent, was wrapped up in becoming wealthy and powerful, and Zacchaeus forfeits his wealth to repent of his sins. Zacchaeus is willing to restore relationships at his own cost to be more like Jesus. Zacchaeus is giving away wealth to the benefit of the poor.

That is what transformation looks like. When we seek Jesus, have an encounter with him, understand his offer, and follow him it changes everything.

We see from Jesus response this is not Zacchaeus trying to impress Jesus and do something morally good to find grace with Jesus. Jesus knows his heart, and Jesus declares that salvation has come to his household. Because Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

Isn't it incredible that the very thing that Zacchaeus was doing at the beginning, seeking Jesus, is the same thing that Jesus was doing, seeking Zacchaeus.

### **Closing**

What if Jesus invited you to have dinner with him?

Often times we think of having dinner with Jesus like the hypothetical question of "If you could have dinner with anyone in the past who would it be?" This may sound good, but those questions are always shrouded in us trying to learn from that person, what they were like, what they thought about certain situations, what kind of wisdom we might could learn from their life.

That is probably what Zacchaeus was looking for. Just a chance to see Jesus. To find out more about him. But the unexpected encounter led to the unexpected result. It became more than just learning about Jesus, to it radically effecting every aspect of his life.

We often times set the table according to the company that we are entertaining. Paper plates for the kids, plastic cups for the friends, finest china for the guest of honor.

How do we set the table for when Jesus is coming? When you know that you are having an encounter with Christ, do you coming ready to experience transformation? Or do you come saying Jesus better not take this away from me?