



Week 8 – February 24, 2013

Who is This Man? – Accepting

Luke 19:1-10

¹ Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. ² There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. ³ He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.

⁵ When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. “Zacchaeus!” he said. “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.”

⁶ Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. ⁷ But the people were displeased. “He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” they grumbled.

⁸ Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, “I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!”

⁹ Jesus responded, “Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”

Acceptance

Zacchaeus was one of the richest and most powerful men in Jericho. He was also one of the most unpopular men and perhaps the shortest. He is a sawed-off little social disaster with a big bank account and a crooked job. He was lonely and definitely missing something. That something was acceptance. People didn’t accept him for a number of reasons. Some of those reasons he had no control over – like his height. Some were his own doing – like being a bully.

So Jesus was on his way to Jericho. It is a wealthy and important town. It lay in the Jordan valley and was a crossroads to Jerusalem and the lands to the east. It produced dates and balsam that were world famous. The tax base in Jericho was one of the largest in Palestine, which meant Zaccheus was at the top of his profession.

Zaccheus was despised and hated by people so he reached for the love of God. He had heard about a man who accepted tax collectors and sinners. Zaccheus was determined to see Jesus. He knew standing in the crowd might be a dangerous thing for him and he wouldn’t be able to see anyway besides the back of people’s heads, so he climbed a sycamore tree.

Jesus sought out and saved Zaccheus. Without prompting, Jesus invited Zaccheus down from the tree. Jesus invited himself into Zaccheus’ home. Jesus offered him acceptance and salvation.

Many of us are like Zaccheus. Flawed and hurting. Lost and lonely. Missing something and looking for more. Unaccepted by others. Unaccepted by self. And feeling unaccepted by God. Jesus invites us down from our tree, accepts us as we are, and moves us to a place of healing and salvation.

Questions for Reflection

1. Zaccheus was unacceptable to others and unacceptable to himself. Do you ever feel you are not accepted by others? Do you feel unacceptable to yourself? Do you ever feel unacceptable to God?

2. What is the primary source of your unacceptability? Is it something you can’t change – like being short, being a certain gender, or being too young or too old? Is it something you can change – like being a bully, mistakes from the past, or self-destructive habits you can’t seem to break?

3. Jesus not only accepts us as we are. Jesus seeks us out to make us aware of his acceptance (verse 5). Does knowing that God accepts you as you are change the way you accept yourself? Does knowing that God accepts you as you are change the way you feel about others not accepting you?

4. Zaccheus changed after experiencing Jesus’ acceptance. He became very generous (verse 8). What changes can be made in your life after experiencing and embracing Jesus’ acceptance?

5. Jesus came to seek and save (verse 10). We are created to be like Jesus. What does this verse mean to you? Jesus took a few bumps when people found out he was accepting people that they didn’t think were acceptable (verse 7). What barriers, including negative reactions from others, stand in the way of you being more accepting?

This Week's Prayer Focus - Accepted. Accepting.

Pray this prayer daily during the week. Spend additional time focusing on a short section of the prayer. Spend a few moments in silence listening to God and being attentive to the ways God is speaking to you.

Dear God,

I search for acceptance.

Acceptance from others.

Acceptance from You.

Acceptance from myself.

During the daylight I feel unaccepted for who I am.

My appearance. My age.

My beliefs. My body.

My color. My creed.

My disabilities. My dysfunction.

My education. My employment.

During the nighttime I feel unaccepted for what I have done.

My failures. My flaws.

My guilt. My guile.

My hurts. My hopelessness.

My iniquities. My indignation.

My jealousy. My juvenileness.

Let me not consume myself with earning the acceptance of others.

I want to strive to please you.

When others don't accept me for one reason or another,

Remind me that my worth doesn't come from an imperfect person.

Remind me that my value comes from You.

Accept me for who I am. Accept me for who I am not.

Seek me out and invite me to hold close Your acceptance.

Save me from not accepting Your grace.

Help me accept myself for who I am and who I am not.

Despite my past. Despite my shortcomings.

Despite my mistakes. Despite my faults.

Give me the grace to accept myself and the wisdom and strength to

change the things about myself that I cannot accept.

As I have been accepted by You, make me accepting of others.

Not to judge, but to welcome.

Not to exclude, but to embrace.

Not to reject, but to support.

Not to ignore, but to notice.

Not to disregard, but to value.

Not to hurt, but to help.

You have accepted me during the moments of my life I have been least acceptable.

That is Your grace.

May I give others the same grace You have given me.

May I give others the same acceptance You have given me.

Amen.

This Week's Bible Memory Verse

For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost. —Luke 19:10

This Week's Resources

Books we have available this week at The Water's Edge:

Who is This Man? The Unpredictable Impact of the Inescapable Jesus by John Ortberg

A Thousand Screaming Mules by Ty Schenzel

A book you may want to consider ordering:

To Love as God Loves by Roberta Bondi

This Week's Challenge

Give love and unconditional acceptance to those you encounter. Keep giving love and acceptance. Notice over the next few weeks how people start treating you.

Next Week – Who is this Man? - Humble