

Luke 19: 1-10

This talk was given at our All Age service so is split into 2 parts – an introduction and exploration of the story.

Family Time 1:

Now a few weeks ago Chris and I were invited to go to Buckingham Palace for a garden party to meet the Queen. We were both excited – the Queen after all is a very special and important person and I couldn't wait to get to meet her.....

So, the special day arrived....

I've got a few photos here to show you....

- Here we are outside the palace gates waiting to be let in.... then here we are in the Queen's garden, it was very big and full of lots of people, about 7,500 guests!
- Then once we'd been there about half an hour, the Beefeaters started arriving and ushering the crowd, we knew this must be a sign that soon the Queen would come by....and so everyone started lining up....there were lots and lots of people, and it was hard to see what was going on, as we waited and waited we eventually saw Prince William as he walked by...which was great, but I really wanted to see the Queen... but we soon realised she had gone the other way, and we had missed her.....
- So instead we went to a great big marquee and got some royal cakes and sandwiches.... Which were really yummy!
- Then we saw a great big crowd forming on the other side of the garden...so we rushed over, but there were so many people, everyone was in the way....and I just couldn't get near enough.... I just wasn't tall enough to see over everyone else and see the Queen clearly... even though I had my high heels on... I just wasn't tall enough
- Thankfully Chris stretched up his hand high with his mobile and just kept taking photos.... And amazingly he got this one!

Now I wished that day that I was a bit taller...

Q - what might I have done to make myself a bit taller?

What could I have climbed up?

Answer – Use a step, chair, or stepladders....

((Get someone to trial standing on each....))

Now our story today is about a person, who heard that a very special person called Jesus was passing by.... they wanted to see what was going on....

They wanted to see Jesus, but this person wasn't very tall and couldn't see over the crowd, and so they climbed a tree to get a better view....

Now that person was Zacchaeus.

Later on, we're going to hear his story of meeting with Jesus

But for now we stand to sing our next song My Jesus, My Saviour.....

Family Time 2:

Now in our story we have three sets of people....

We've got **Zacchaeus**... we've got **the crowds**, and we've got **Jesus**.

I want us to think a little bit about each one....

So, let's start with **Zacchaeus**...

Now his name is interesting....

Zacchaeus means 'the righteous one' which means good, right and true.

But Zacchaeus wasn't living up to his name...

Q - What do we know about him? What did Zacchaeus love the most?

Well many people in Jericho would have known him, but very few liked him.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector. He collected money from the Jews for the Roman government.

Tax collectors often collected more money than necessary and kept the surplus for themselves.

They also created taxes for all sorts of things, and again kept that money for themselves.

And Zacchaeus wasn't just any tax collector, he was the chief tax collector which meant he had many other tax collectors working under him, and they had to pay him a piece of all that they were earning.

Zacchaeus was rich...very rich...and all from dishonest gain.

Zacchaeus clearly treasured his wealth, his money more than he treasured friends or his reputation.

And yet, as Jesus came into Jericho Zacchaeus was curious...

he wanted to see and so he climbs a tree...
perhaps thinking that up there he could watch everything without being seen.

Then we have the **crowd** in our story?

Q - What do we know about them? What were they like?

Well the crowd do not like Zacchaeus... after all he has collected more money than necessary from them and kept it for himself...

They look down on him.... They hate his greed and dishonesty

Q - So how do they react when Jesus looks up at the Sycamore tree, calls Zacchaeus by name and tells him he is coming to his house?

When Jesus says he is going to Zacchaeus' house.... they cannot believe it....

It is a complete shock and surprise....

They can't understand how Jesus can choose to go and spend time with a man like Zacchaeus, a sinner....someone so horrible.

They complain and grumble...

For the crowd gathered Zacchaeus was the worst of the worst...

they rejected him and treated him as an outcast.

How dare Jesus now go to him?

Then we have **Jesus**

We're told that as soon as Jesus came to the place where Zacchaeus was hiding up high in the tree, he immediately looks up.

And it is as though Jesus peers right into Zacchaeus' soul, Jesus knows about all the money taken unfairly, he's sees Zacchaeus heart and calls out in compassion to this lonely man.

"Zacchaeus hurry up and come down, for I must stay at your house today."

Jesus not only knew Zacchaeus was hiding up there, but he also knew his name, how amazing!

And Jesus doesn't ask permission, he doesn't say 'please Zacchaeus, if its ok with you, may I come to your house', and I'm pretty sure Zacchaeus didn't run a Bed and Breakfast either!

Rather Jesus calls,

and Zacchaeus jumps down out of the tree....

with twigs and leaves flying and welcomes Jesus joyfully to his home.

And so, here we are with **Zacchaeus and Jesus**.... the crowd in many senses, have been left behind....

Zacchaeus had climbed the tree hoping to get a glance of Jesus, only to find that Jesus had actually come looking for him!

Now we don't know exactly what took place in Zacchaeus' house that day....

We don't know exactly what Jesus said or did....

But what is clear, is that Zacchaeus' encounter with Jesus changes him.

He offered to give half of his possessions to the poor and to pay back four times what he had cheated from others.

Zacchaeus no longer treasured his wealth. He had a complete change of heart....

He repented...which means he turned right around.

No longer would he be taking from others but rather he would be generous in giving back.

Zacchaeus realised that Jesus offered something much better.

A complete transformation takes place...

And Jesus confirms this change of heart saying,

"Today salvation has come to this house."

And he also adds, because he too is a 'Son of Abraham'

Jesus here is saying...

look this man is a true person of faith...

he is part of the community of faith.

And Jesus ends by saying why he came....

'For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

Q- Anyone know what the first question in the Bible is?

It is God asking, "Adam, Eve where are you?" (Gen. 3:9).

It is not the heart of a policeman looking for a criminal,
but it is the heart of a Father looking for a lost child.

God has always been a pursuer

Zacchaeus thought he was looking for Jesus, but Jesus was looking for him!

It is not that we loved God, but that God first loved us (1 John 4:10)

Jesus' mission was/is to seek and save the lost...

to invite men, women, children, people from all walks of life, young and old...

to draw close to Him, to know Him,

to repent and allow Him to change them for the better.

My encounter with the Queen ...well it didn't really happen...

I had a very brief glimpse of her from a distance,

She certainly didn't call me by name!

And to be honest my life hasn't changed because of that garden party.

However, I can say, that meeting with Jesus has changed/is changing my life....

I know that I am loved, that I am forgiven,

I know that God calls me,

and in turn I have purpose, direction and meaning....

Jesus today sees each of us as we are,

He calls each of us by name....

inviting us to Himself and wanting us to draw close to him in friendship.

So, don't delay – jump down like Zacchaeus, and allow Jesus to change you.

Let's finish with a prayer:

Heavenly Father, we know that when we meet Jesus, it will be a life-changing experience.

Thank you for sending him into our world to seek and save the lost.

In his name we pray. Amen.