

October 30, 2022
31st Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 19:1-10

Jesus came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town.

Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house."

And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone, I shall repay it four times over." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham.

For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

Background:

In the gospel from last week, Jesus told the familiar parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector praying in the temple. This week the gospel describes Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector. Between these two texts are five other passages. Luke describes how the people were bringing infants to Jesus so that he could touch them (Luke 18:15-17). An official asked Jesus what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus urged that official to sell what he had and invited him to become his follower. The official went away sad because he had many possessions (Luke 18:18-23). This incident leads Jesus to comment on how wealth makes it difficult to enter the Kingdom of God. Also in this chapter of Luke's gospel, Jesus makes his third prediction of his passion and resurrection, and he heals a blind beggar (Luke 18: 24-43).

At the beginning of this Sunday's gospel Luke tells us that Jesus intends to pass through Jericho. The text also states that Zacchaeus is trying to see Jesus. That desire to see Jesus leads a wealthy, short, chief tax collector to climb a tree along Jesus' route. The text says that Jesus looks up and tells Zacchaeus to hurry down because he must stay at his house today. Zacchaeus responds by hurrying down the tree and receiving Jesus into his house with great joy. A great deal is happening about which we are not told. What is it that makes Jesus, who intended to only pass through Jericho, decide he needs to stay at the house of Zacchaeus? What has happened within Zacchaeus that he would climb a tree just so he could see Jesus, and welcome him into his home with great joy?

Who was this Zacchaeus? He was a chief tax collector on a major east-west trade route. Because he was a chief tax collector, he probably had other tax collectors working under him. Because Jericho was on a trade route, it presented more opportunity to collect taxes on goods.

The Jews prided themselves for being a people whom God had freed from slavery. They despised any form of servitude to foreign rule. They would have looked upon all tax collectors with disdain, and a chief tax collector even more so. Because of that bias, they likely missed other qualities in Zacchaeus: That Zacchaeus desired to see Jesus, which led him to risk the embarrassing spectacle of a short man running ahead of the crowd to climb a tree and get above the crowd, just so he could get a glimpse of Jesus. When Jesus invites himself to stay at his house, Zacchaeus climbs down the tree and welcomes Jesus with great hospitality. When he expresses his desire to make reparation for anyone he has wronged, he promises to return whatever he extorted four-fold, and give to the poor half his possessions. Those who see Zacchaeus as a sinner and grumble that Jesus has gone to dine at the house of a sinner do not seem to be able to recognize this side of a man they know a chief tax collector.

Reflection Questions:

1. How do you feel about paying taxes? Does your attitude spill over to people who work for the IRS?
2. How do you feel about people who are wealthy? Do you personally know anyone that fits that description?
3. Who are the people with whom you are comfortable sharing a meal? Who are the people with whom you would be uncomfortable?
4. Do you know how many times in the gospels Jesus eats with sinners, women, or outcasts?
5. Why do you think Jesus says to Zacchaeus, "I must stay at your house?" (Luke 19:5)
6. Do you think Jesus would also like to come and stay at your house?
7. What would you do to catch a glimpse of Jesus if he was walking down a street in your community? What would you be willing to do just to be able to see him?
8. Does your response to the above question ring true with the effort you put into your present prayer life?
9. Can you talk with God now about what you imagine went on between Jesus and Zacchaeus that day when they encountered each other, or maybe you would rather talk about your own desire to see Jesus and hear him invite himself to stay in your house. What would that be like for you?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to fr.paul.gallagher.ofm@gmail.com.

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscclalledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for October 30, 2022, the Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

Before the Lord the whole universe is as a grain from a balance or a drop of morning dew come down upon the earth. But you have mercy on all, because you can do all things; and you overlook people's sins that they may repent, for you love all things that you have made. How could a thing remain, unless you willed it; or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you? But you spare all things, because they are yours, O Lord, your spirit is in all things! Therefore you rebuke offenders little by little, and warn them, that they may abandon their wickedness and believe in you!

I will praise your name for ever, my king and my God. I will extol you, and I will bless your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless you, and praise your name.

The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness.

The Lord is good to all and compassionate toward all his works.

Let all your works give you thanks, O Lord, and let your faithful ones bless you.

Let them discourse of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might.

The Lord is faithful in all his words and holy in all his works.

The Lord lifts up all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down.

Brothers and sisters: We always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and powerfully bring to fulfillment every good purpose and every effort of faith, that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him. With regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling with him, we ask you not to be shaken out of your minds suddenly, or to be alarmed either by a “spirit,” or by an oral statement, or by a letter allegedly from us to the effect that the day of the Lord is at hand.

A wealthy chief tax collector in Jericho named Zacchaeus was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said, “Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.” When they all saw this, they grumbled, “He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner.” But Zacchaeus said to the Lord, “Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over.” Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost.”

Excerpts from Wisdom 11:22-12:2; Psalm 145:1-2, 8-14; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-2:2; and Luke 19:1-10

From Joe:

Friends,

Here are the gospel background and reflection questions for October 30th, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. The gospel from Luke is the story about Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector who climbed a sycamore tree in Jericho to see Jesus pass by. This is the memorable part of the story. But the part that mattered more to Jesus was Zacchaeus' declaration of the reversal of his ways. He said to Jesus, "Half of my possessions I shall give to the poor. If I have extorted anyone I shall repay it four times over." Jesus replied, "Today salvation has come to this house. The son of man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

The other readings also have references to God's allowances for those who can be saved by their faith. In the first reading from Wisdom, "You rebuke offenders little by little, and remind them of their sins, so that they may abandon their wickedness and believe in you, O Lord!" Psalm 145 proclaims, "The Lord is good to all and compassionate toward all his works. He lifts up all who are falling. Let your faithful ones discourse of the glory of your kingdom." In the second reading, from the second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul writes, "We pray that God may make you worthy of his calling, and bring to fulfillment every good purpose, that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you."

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!