

November 3, 2019  
Zacchaeus



Adult Resource  
Sheet 1

## Focus on Luke 19:1–10

*Semicontinuous*  
*Hab. 1:1–4; 2:1–4 Ps.*  
*119:137–144*  
*Complementary Isa.*  
*1:10–18*  
*Ps. 32:1–7*  
*2 Thess. 1:1–4, 11–12*  
***Luke 19:1–10***

**WHAT is important to know?** —From *“Exegetical Perspective”* by E. Elizabeth Johnson Zacchaeus’s repentance demonstrates the presence of God’s salvation in the world. Jesus says to the crowds who have criticized him for associating with the (now former) tax collector, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost” (19:9–10). Zacchaeus (whose name derives from the Hebrew for “clean” or “innocent”) is in the end declared saved. Salvation has come to “his house” because he has repented, changed his ways, and come to follow Jesus. This is the very purpose of Jesus’ life and ministry, “to save the lost” (v. 10).

### **WHERE is God in these words?**

—From *“Theological Perspective”* by Robert Leach

When God calls us, we respond with faith and obedience. When Jesus calls out the name “Zacchaeus,” we can see a theological concept at work—namely, that in our divine call God names us as his own children (Gal. 3:26). This is the missiological objective of the Son of Man (Luke 19:9), who is Lord of salvation. The divinely providential initiative of Jesus illustrates that the salvation of God always begins with God. Jesus is God with us, Immanuel, who saves us because we are impotent to save ourselves (Rom. 7:19).

### **SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?**

—From *“Pastoral Perspective”* by Laura S. Sugg

As we try to follow Christ in worship, in our work lives, or in the marketplace, we can remember a happy saint of the church: wee Zacchaeus. We may not *have* to climb a tree to see Jesus above the crowd—Jesus will find us anyway. If, however, you are finding yourself tired of staring at the backs of the crowd, look for your tree to climb. If graced with a memorable encounter with God, perhaps your response will be as joyous as Zacchaeus’s and it will lead to your own kind of cheerful commitment to justice. “For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”

### **NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?**

—From *“Homiletical Perspective”* by  
Marjorie Procter-Smith

Zacchaeus is, at least initially, apparently motivated by curiosity, but Jesus is motivated by love. Jesus meets Zacchaeus’s curiosity with invitation and ultimately with the declaration of salvation to his house. Importantly, Jesus’ desire for Zacchaeus’s salvation flies in the face of the normal expectations of the crowd. They grumble that Jesus is the guest of a notorious sinner like Zacchaeus. Jesus’ action, however, is consistent with a frequent theme in Luke’s Gospel. Jesus time and time again acts against social expectation and religious decorum, by associating with those regarded as outcast or unclean in some sense. In seeking out Zacchaeus, Jesus demonstrates the extravagant desire of God for the salvation of the lost, that is, for our salvation.

## Transformational Narrative

Many stories have a pattern or structure. By looking at the pattern, we can see the meaning of the story more clearly. This can be true of biblical stories also. The literary device of transformational narrative is one such way of exploring the structure of a story to get at its meaning.

A transformational narrative is a story with a particular structure. First, person A is faced with a problem. Person A tries to solve the problem but is unable to do so, no matter how many attempts he or she makes. Then person B comes along and solves the problem—and does so in a way that actually enables A to participate in the solution that B provides. Furthermore, the solution turns out not merely to be a reversal of the original bad situation but actually to be a gain for A. So A is better off in the end than at the beginning. The central figure in the narrative, of course, is B, without whose work or intervention A would never have been able to overcome the problem, let alone come out better in the end.

Now discuss the story of Zacchaeus as a transformational narrative. Use these steps:

- Zacchaeus is “person A.” Consider: What is Zacchaeus’s problem or need? (Go deeper than curiosity. Who is at the center of Zacchaeus’s life? Why do his neighbors find him unacceptable? In what sense is Zacchaeus lost [v.10]?)
- Jesus is “person B.” What does Jesus do to solve Zacchaeus’s problem? (With whom does Jesus identify? Why do you think that Jesus invites himself to Zacchaeus’s house? Does Jesus accept Zacchaeus as he is or in spite of the way he is? Why does Jesus himself now become unacceptable to the onlookers? Why might this be called a story of grace?)
- In what sense is the outcome a gain for Zacchaeus? (Why does Jesus say that “salvation has come to this house”? Also, did anyone else in the story gain anything?)

Based on material in Margaret A. Krych,  
*Teaching the Gospel Today:  
A Guide for Education in the Congregation*  
(Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1987), chapter 5.

