

# Climbing Trees

Do we pray to the Lord when things aren't going as planned, and the world seems to be against us? God wants us to! Do we approach Him in prayer with humility? Remember, God is our Father and wants to see His children mold into the image of Jesus. We discussed this last week, but we have by no means exhausted the discussion of growing our relationship with God.

*Note: I've enjoyed and recommend Mark E. Moore's "The Chronological Life of Christ." Some of my comments can be found in his material by coincidence (he's not the only one making such observations articulated in his material), and other times, I've leaned on his accurate and helpful observations. He's done an excellent job making 1st-century culture and practices available.*

*No events occurred between last week's lesson and today.*

## Zaachaeus (Luke 19:1-10)

- *Harmonizing and/or explaining the text:*
  - "**Jericho** An ancient city in the Jordan Valley, about 10 miles northeast of Jerusalem; conquered by Joshua and the Israelites when the walls collapsed. Jericho is Jesus' last major stop before entering Jerusalem." (*Faithlife Study Bible*)
  - It's interesting to consider how Jericho was the first city taken when Israel entered the Promised Land, but the last city entered leading up to Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem, where He'd be crucified. Yet, it was God's victory.
  - He was a chief tax collector, which meant he held power and position under the Roman government over other collectors. As Moore points out, Jericho was a major trade center for those traveling between Egypt, Palestine, Arabia, and Syria. He's kind of a big deal in the community.
  - If we're paying attention, we'll notice how Zaachaeus stands in contrast to the young, rich ruler. Over the last few chapters, Luke has emphasized how Jesus saves the lost and heals those who are sick. He exalts those who are humble and humbles those who exalt themselves. It's a fitting reminder before Jesus makes His way into Jerusalem.
- *Something to meditate on:*
  - Luke is the only author to mention Zacchaeus. How would Zacchaeus feel about that? I have a feeling Zaachaeus would have felt honored but wouldn't have thought it necessary. Jesus' acknowledgment of him would have been sufficient. As Paul wrote to brethren in Philippi, "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith - that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection . . ." (*Philippians 3:7-10*).
  - Did you know that there's debate as to whether Zacchaeus was repenting or defending himself against an unjustified stigma? Some argue it's jumping the gun and assuming he was repenting of sin. They say that vs. 8 describes what he has already been doing.

- The key issue in this account involves the interpretation of the verbs found in 19:8. How should the present tense (in Greek) of the verbs "give" and "pay back" be interpreted? Are they "customary presents" that reveal what Zacchaeus had been doing for some time? Was Zacchaeus claiming "I have been in the habit of giving half my goods to the poor and paying back fourfold"? If so, Jesus' words in 19:9 serve more as a vindication of Zacchaeus's faith than as a statement of his conversion. On the other hand, the verbs can be translated as "futuristic presents," which reveal what Zacchaeus was about to do, because of his encounter with Jesus, i.e., due to his conversion. Then we should translate these verbs "[As a result of my coming to faith] I shall give half of all I own ... and restore fourfold." The grammar permits either interpretation. (*Robert H. Stein, Luke, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 466–467.*)
- My personal opinion? Repentance seems to fit the overall context; Jesus' use of "today," and, generally speaking, the rich mentioned in Luke aren't exactly complementary (Luke 6:24; 12:16–21; 16:19–31; 18:18–25). Having said that - would Zacchaeus be deserving of Jesus' love and attention? Would his "good works" have justified him? Repentance and forgiveness: I've never seen anything more beautiful. I've seen it in those around me. Hopefully, the Lord has witnessed it in me, but most importantly, the forgiveness that Jesus offers is unmatched. I love seeing Zacchaeus' heart melt. He restores four-fold. Reminds me of David's reaction after hearing Nathan's cloaked rebuke in 2 Samuel 12:6. I've seen that. It'll change you. I hear about God coming as a Shepherd for his sheep in Ezekiel 34:11-24. I envy Zaachaeus. To have Jesus look at me. To hear Him say my name, "Shawn." That would be enough. And I would know what I need to do. It wouldn't be mysterious. I'd do it. He would make His home in me, and I in Him. However, I don't have that, and it can't be an excuse for not heeding the call. Because He is calling you by name. He's telling you to "come down," "let go," or "walk away" because "I must stay at your house today." One day, brethren, we'll be face-to-face. You'll never regret repenting.

### Ten Minas (11-27)

- *Harmonizing and/or explaining the text:*
  - This parable is very similar to Matthew 25:14-30. It has subtle differences, but it retains the same meaning and builds upon His teachings about the destruction of Jerusalem and the parable of the 10 virgins.
  - Take note of why He told this parable: He was near Jerusalem, and they thought that the kingdom of God would appear immediately. I take this as a general warning: be prepared for God's arrival.
  - Moore provides an exciting background to this parable: "When Jesus tells this parable his audience surely snickers. You see, this very thing took place about twenty-five years earlier. Archelaus succeeded his father, Herod the Great. He became Tetrarch over Judea, Samaria and Idumea. But that wasn't enough for him. So he left his palace in Jericho and traveled to Rome to request the title of King (A.D. 6). The Jews hated him and sent a delegation to plead with Caesar that Archelaus not be made king over them. Archelaus was thus deposed - the Jews won their case. Thus, this crowd would have been shocked to hear that the nobleman in the parable returned as king — the locals lost! But there is a second historic parallel here - Jesus himself. Many of this very crowd, not much more than a week from now, will shout 'Crucify him!'; The 'nobleman; was rejected by his people who refused to accept him as king.

Their petty protest will last only as long as the king is away. When he returns, there will be a reckoning of both the citizens (v. 27), and his own servants (v. 15)." (Moore, pg. 486).

- As Moore correctly points out, when we hear "talents," we think "skills," but a talent refers to a unit weight, so it could be a talent of silver, bronze, or gold. However, the principle applies to more than money.
- The "one-talent man has misrepresented the nobleman, so the nobleman turns his own words on him. "If that's what you thought, then you should have responded correctly.
- *Something to meditate on:*
  - Let's not make excuses with God's gifts. Consider all of Luke's gospel up to this point. There comes a time in our lives when we must change our minds and take God's business seriously. We need to see God correctly. This is His Kingdom. He does return. He does have an expectation, and He is not the pushover many make Him out to be. He's not cruel and unjust, but He is King. We must maintain a balanced and healthy view of God, lest we mock Him in our lives through what we say and do, as well as what we don't say and do.