

# Encountering Jesus Part 2

## From Rejected to Accepted

### Luke 9:1-10

This morning I want to continue on in our study of Encountering Jesus which we started last week. The whole theme of what we have looked at and will be looking at is that You cannot encounter Jesus and not be impacted somehow. What do I mean by an encounter with Jesus? I mean an understanding of who he is and what he has done for you, having the Spirit of the living God, speaking to you and leading you, allowing the resurrected life of Jesus to resurrect our weak and frail human souls. When Jesus comes and lives within us, he brings purpose, hope, life, meaning, and substance to our lives.

When we look at the examples of Scripture, where Jesus intersected the lives of people, we find he did the same thing then, as he does now. Jesus changes people – either in a positive and receptive way, or like the hound of heaven who will not let us go so easily. Jesus changes us. This morning I want to look at a pretty popular Bible story in the life of Zacchaeus.

(Story of Harrison: IKEA/Zacchaeus)

One of the greatest needs in life is to feel valuable and accepted; that your life matters and that you are worthwhile. **In our society we tend to base our self-worth on four things:**

- 1. We judge our worth by our appearance. How do I look? That better I look, the more I am worth in people's eyes.**
- 2. We judge our worth by our achievement. What have I accomplished? If I am successful, then they will accept me.**
- 3. We judge our worth based on approval. How well am I like? If people like me, I must be okay.**
- 4. We judge our worth on our affluence. Do I have enough toys or things? If so, people will accept me as their equals. (Keeping up with the Jones')**

Basing our worth or acceptance on these things can lead to an identity crisis, because we all know that we can't be all of these things at all times. We can strive for these things but it doesn't guarantee that it will be enough for me to feel valuable. In fact, you will lose yourself if you strive for these things and it will leave you feeling empty and looking for more (like a ravaging machine). This man Zacchaeus was a man with an identity crisis. Look at what we know about him in **Luke 19:1-4:**

*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.*

According to our text we find three things about him: first, he was a chief tax collector. Tax collectors were normally Jews who had sold themselves out to the Romans for their own profit, hence why he was so rich. They were outcasts among their people because they were working for the foreign roman oppressors to collect money from their own countrymen.

Many times tax collectors took advantage of the situation and would pocket money for themselves. They were hated by their own people because their dishonesty and who they worked for. The fact that Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector probably further enhanced the situation.

Second, add to the first fact that Zacchaeus' vocation was what it was, the name "Zacchaeus" wasn't a definition of who he was. The name in the Hebrew is defined as "something pure, to do good, adoring good.", which definitely wasn't the way people saw him.

Third, Zacchaeus was physically short. Because of who he was he was disowned by his family, he was disowned by people around him, and his physical appearance made him a social outcast. Zacchaeus was a man with an identity crisis. Feeling of guilt and loneliness had to be over whelming his life.

Any of us ever felt that way? We aren't going to find any worth in ourselves, because You and I know who and what we are. **The only form of worth that we will find in life is by seeing ourselves as valuable as Jesus sees us.** There are times we feel like Zacchaeus' and there are many Zacchaeus' around us. How does Jesus see Zacchaeus? Look at **Luke 9:5-6**:

*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.*

The story of Zacchaeus illustrates to us **three truths about encountering Jesus**:

### **1. Jesus Notices You!**

People want to be noticed. Each and everyone of us have Jesus who knows who we are and he calls us by name. Jesus publicly acknowledges Zacchaeus and tells him that he knows who he is.

Today you might be up a tree, or maybe out on a limb, and you may think that God has forgotten you, but in reality, there has never been a time when God has taken his eyes off of you. He has seen everything and he continues to care about you. We have a hard time imagining God paying that much attention to us because we don't pay that much attention to God. We may not be looking toward God every second of every day, but He sure is looking at us every second of every day.

You might feel that others think you are worthless, but you matter so much to Him that He let His Son die for you. The Scriptures tell us in **Luke 12:7**:

*7 And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.*

**The deepest expression of love is attention. When you give somebody your attention you are giving them your love.** God is always paying attention to us. The problem is that we tend to try to get attention for the wrong reasons: Our appearance, our achievement, the approval of others, and our affluence. God simply pays attention to us for who and what we are, with unconditional love and acceptance. It is important for us to stop depend upon other people to feel worthy, and start depending upon God. When we encounter Jesus he lets us know that we have his attention.

## **2. Jesus Lifts You Up**

Jesus looked up at Zacchaeus in front of this huge crowd and called him by name, which shocked everybody because Jesus knew the name of the biggest sinner in town. But, in spite of Zacchaeus' sin, Jesus lifts him up while everybody else was putting him down. **Ephesians 2:10** tells us:

*10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

There are two types of artwork. There are prints, which are massed produced on a large scale, all being identical, and there are masterpieces where it may have taken months for an artist to complete. We are not mass-produced by God, to be just like other people. By His own Word, we are masterpieces; made unique and made for good purposes - God's purposes. A man once said:

God loves us so much, that if He had a wallet, He would carry our pictures in it.

**Isaiah 49:16** tells us:

*16 See, I have written your name on the palms of my hands.*

When Jesus Christ looks at the scars in His hands He sees your hand. God doesn't need to carry our pictures, because He has each one of our names written in the scars of His hands.

There are people who have had some very bad things said to them and done to them over the years. They have been told they are not worth anything, or that they are stupid, or ugly or all sorts of unkind things. As much as people hurt us, we need to remember that God values us and we are precious to him. **Instead of allowing people to dictate what our lives should be, let us break free and start living in the freedom that was purchased for us so that we can live our lives for God.**

When we say, "I can't see my value because of all that has happened to me.", God says, "I can see all your value in spite of all that's happened to you." When this world trips you up, it is only Jesus who lifts you up.

### 3. Jesus Wants You

I think the hardest thing for us to understand is that no matter what we have ever done in our lives, God still wants to have a personal relationship with us because he loves us.

People made Zacchaeus feel their hatred because he was a cheat and they hated him. So Jesus Christ did something. He didn't just walk up to the tree and look up and notice him. And He didn't just call him by name and affirm him in front of those who hated him. He invited Himself to Zacchaeus' home for dinner. Look at **Luke 19:7**:

*7 But the people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled.*

The truth is we are a lot like Zacchaeus was. We have all done things that have hurt others. But Jesus is far more interested in changing us than He is in condemning us. So He looks at you and He says, "I know you, I love you and I want you in spite of all that you've done. And I want you to love Me and have a relationship with Me."

**No matter what has ever happened in your life, no matter how badly you have ever been hurt, or how badly you have hurt others, Jesus wants to love you and have you love Him.** Jesus want to have a relationship with you.

The Story continues on and Jesus goes to Zacchaeus' house and **Luke 19:8-9** tells us:

*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.*

Something had happened in his heart because the most selfish man in the city all of a sudden became the most generous man in the city. What happened? Jesus Christ and the love of God changed him - that's what happened.

How do you know if you've really met Jesus Christ? Your attitudes change. You become a more generous person. All of a sudden you start thinking about other people. You realize how much you've been given and you want to give back.

When Jesus comes into your life, it changes you. Many people reject each other, but acceptance opens the heart and welcomes change. In fact, I believe that unconditional acceptance allows people to be themselves and come to their own conclusion or resolve. God is powerful enough to meet anyone, at any point in time or life, and show his great love and acceptance of them, leading them to a life of God-given worth and value.

Jesus can restore our identity back to us, and change us to live up to our name as “followers of Jesus – Christians” Zacchaeus went from one who struggled with his identity to one who found acceptance and whose life was change because of it. Not only may we find the same in our lives, but may we share the love and acceptance of Jesus Christ through the message of the Good News that he has reunited us with God once again. Let’s Pray!