

November 18, 2025

Daily Reflections



JESUS IS PASSING THROUGH

By Sister Jeanne Fallon, CSJ

Today's Gospel

At that time 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, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house." And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they 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."

Reflection

Who is Zacchaeus? This man of short stature was the chief tax collector in Jericho, a town on a main trade route. He was despised by his neighbors because he was sharing in the Roman domination by contracting to collect revenues in the area. Because of this, he was rich. As I was reading this familiar passage, it occurred to me to ask, what was happening in Zacchaeus that made him run ahead of the crowd and climb a sycamore tree so he could get a good look at Jesus? What was stirring in him that aroused such interest in this holy man passing through town with his disciples? What made him go out on a limb?

And Jesus, on his part, must have recognized something in Zacchaeus that made him call Zach by name to hurry and come down. ***“I must stay at your house today.”*** Jesus reached out to the tax collector like a friend and invited himself and his disciples to dine in Zacchaeus’ home. Did Jesus recognize a seeker and want to meet him face to face on level ground in his own family surroundings? Perhaps Jesus saw him in a different light ... not as a hated public sinner or an enemy, but as a person of worth in whom there was goodness and yearning. This intimate gesture of Jesus of wanting to eat, to break bread with Zacchaeus and his family, prompted something profound in Zacchaeus: surprisingly, he wanted to give half his possessions to the poor and to repay four-fold anyone he might have defrauded so he could make right his actions toward the community. Jesus responded, *“Today salvation has come to this house!”* This is why I came! To save what was lost!



Zacchaeus the Tax Collector
Image created by David Robinson, SJ

For Pondering

Zacchaeus showed interest in Jesus on his way to Jerusalem; he was anxious to see what kind of man Jesus was, that his disciples followed him all the way from Galilee. Jesus immediately reached out, wanting to meet him and his family away from the gaze of the crowd. Jesus called Zacchaeus into relationship with him and Zacchaeus responded with joy, bringing this pilgrim and his companions home for dinner. Something in him was awakened and he realized that he was being called to share his wealth with those in need and to make amends if he had defrauded anyone. The personal encounter with Jesus changed Zacchaeus in the core of his being – this was a new beginning for him, a chance to make right his mistakes and sins against humanity. Ponder with me:

- Am I aware of times when God invites me to share my wealth with others? My time, my talent, my service, my possessions? How do I respond?
- Is this Gospel passage an invitation for me to get to know Jesus Christ, his message of love, mercy and forgiveness?
- Am I being drawn to go ‘out on a limb’ like Zacchaeus so I can encounter Jesus Christ in my ordinary, daily life? To know him is to love him.

For Prayer

I wonder if the following prayer of Rebbe Nachman was stirring in Zacchaeus when he tried to get a glimpse of Jesus of Nazareth?

*“God, I want to break down
every barrier
that separates me from You.
I want to lay out before You
the parts of myself I love,
and the parts I despise;
the parts of myself that are healthy,
and the parts that need healing;
the parts I feel secure enough to speak of,
and the insecurities
I haven’t the courage to share.”*

REBBE NACHMAN OF BRESLOV

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