
Max Lucado writes in his book, *In The Eye Of The Storm*, "Chippie the parakeet never saw it coming. One second he was peacefully perched in his cage. The next he was sucked in, washed up, and blown over. The problems began when Chippie's owner decided to clean Chippie's cage with a vacuum cleaner. She removed the attachment from the end of the hose and stuck it in the cage. The phone rang, and she turned to pick it up. She'd barely said "hello" when "soppy!" Chippie got sucked in. The bird owner gasped, put down the phone, turned off the vacuum, and opened the bag. There was Chippie - still alive, but stunned. Since the bird was covered with dust and soot, she grabbed him and raced to the bathroom, turned on the faucet, and held Chippie under the running water. Then, realizing that Chippie was soaked and shivering, she did what any compassionate bird owner would do. . . She reached for the hair dryer and blasted her pet with hot air. Poor Chippie never knew what hit him. The bird owner told a friend that "Chippie doesn't sing much any more, he just sits and stares." Sucked in, washed up, and blown over . . . That's enough to steal the song from the stoutest heart." Perhaps Zacchaeus could relate to Chippie, because he was pushed out by the people there was no room for the short tax-collector to stand and see Jesus. Zacchaeus climbed a tree, so he could see Jesus, but in contrast to Chippie, Jesus taught Zacchaeus how to sing a new song of faith and joy.

Commentary Lesson

The Zacchaeus story is thought-provoking. Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. It was a final journey; betrayal, crucifixion, and death were just days away. But in the darkening time in Jesus' ministry, there was an opportunity for ministry. Both Zacchaeus and Jesus made the most of it. The lessons we can learn when Jesus found Zacchaeus up a tree are: Jesus sees us, Jesus knows us, Jesus needs us, but most of all we need Jesus. Zacchaeus was a wealthy man but he was not happy. He was the chief tax collector. In other words, he was the best at cheating the people in the prosperous area of Jericho. He was at the top of his profession. He recognized there was something missing in his life and he was determined to see Jesus. He had heard of this Jesus who welcomed tax-collectors and sinners, and he wondered was there any hope left for him. We might imagine the situation was like a Christmas Parade, tall people crowding on both sides of the street to gain a glimpse at Santa Claus. But instead of Santa, it was Jesus that the crowds were trying to see. No one was willing
to make room for this vertically challenged tax-collector. So Zacchaeus did the unthinkable, he ran and climbed a tree. No self respecting man would ever run or climb a tree. But this lonely tax-collector was determined to see Jesus.

When Jesus reached the spot right below Zacchaeus, who was up a sycamore fig tree he looked up and saw him. There was no evidence we know of that would have informed Jesus that Zacchaeus was there. No one cared. Except Jesus, and he looked up and saw him. That is the first lesson we can learn from when Jesus found Zacchaeus up a tree. That lesson is Jesus sees us. Jesus sees us when we may feel like Zacchaeus pushed to the side or overlooked. Jesus sees us in the good times and the difficult times of life. The truth of that old gospel song is - "his eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches over me."

Jesus didn't just say "Come on down, little guy." Jesus called Zacchaeus by name. That's the next lesson we can learn. Jesus calls us by name. Jesus knows us, all our hopes and dreams. He knows all our fears, worries, and insecurities. It may sound comforting, as well as, a little unnerving to fully recognize that God has such an intimate and vast knowledge of each of us. We can fool some of the people some of the time, but we can never fool Jesus, for he know us. Jesus may have been physically tired and weary needing rest. The roads in those days would have been nothing but a dusty dirt road, perhaps Jesus was thirsty. Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." (v.5) Jesus was fully God as well as fully man. The next lesson we can learn is - Jesus needs us. God could have written the plan of salvation in the sky in every language. But God has graciously chosen to use us, his creation to bring about the redemption of the world. There is a legend that when God was creating the world, four angels came to him. The first one asked, rather childlike "What are you doing?" The next angel asked, rather materialistically "Can I have it when you are through with it?" The next angel asked rather scientifically "How are you doing that?" But the last angel asked what we each need to be asking, "What can I do to help?" There is still much to be done. God can use our lives as co-laborers with Christ to share the good news and to serve in the name of Christ. Our Lord has a purpose for us as disciples of Christ - we have been given a challenge, the great commission. Jesus is counting on us. Through the power of the Spirit, let's us boldly and cheerfully do our part for Christ's glory.

Jesus goes to Zacchaeus home. In those days it was common to have a large open courtyard at a rich person's home. This would have been the case with Zacchaeus. He said, to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times as much." His bold life-changing promise would have been sweet music in the ears of those who were standing around. No doubt most, if not all, were people of whom, at some or other, this tax-collector had taken advantage. Zacchaeus life was miraculously changed by being in Jesus' Presence. His amazing promise to give away his money, that which had been his god for so long, illustrates the fourth and final lesson - we need Jesus. We can not save ourselves. Zacchaeus realized that Jesus, the promised Messiah, was who he needed more than anything else. We need Jesus. Nothing can satisfy the longings of our heart and soul like Jesus. In the beginning of the story it appeared that Zacchaeus was determined to find Jesus. But in v.10 "For the Son of Man came to seek out and save what was lost." So in reality it was Jesus who was seeking Zacchaeus and you and me... Remember the lessons we can learn from when Jesus found Zacchaeus up a tree are - Jesus sees us, Jesus knows us, Jesus needs us, but most of all and most importantly we need Jesus.