

The story is about the “Good Shepherd” who was on the mission to find a lost sheep and restore it back to the fold before He laid down his own life as a ransom for it.

So Jesus entered this “City of Palm Trees” called Jericho. Now this city was the richest part of the country. It had many things going for it. Its soil was fertile, climate was perfect, produce was abundant so much that it was called a “little Paradise”. The land was filled with Palm and Sycamore trees, balsam plants and cypress flowers. It was a very prosperous city. The rich and the famous lived there. The location of that city was also significant in multiple ways. It was strategically located at the intersection of the highway that runs between Syria and Arabia. So every merchant and traveler has to pass through this city. It was just 15 miles north east of Jerusalem, the city of God, the Holy habitation of the Most High (**Ps 46:4**). Any traditional, orthodox Jew has to pass through this city to go to Jerusalem, thus avoiding the detestable Samaritans. And so with merchants trading goods, the religious Jews flocking to celebrate the Passover which was just few days away, the temple priests stationing to fulfill their duty (because of the tremendous crowd in Jerusalem), Jericho was in euphoria when Jesus entered it. And because of its exposure to the Gentile merchants and the Jewish pilgrims, to avoid any conflicts or violence, the Romans chose it to be a military center too. Such is the prominence of this city Jericho. Should we be surprised to know that the tax collectors were in every street corner? After all, this was the “Eden of Palestine”, a place to become rich overnight just from taxing (over-taxing) the perfumes made out of the balsam plants, not to mention the exports and imports and the buying and selling of the locals and pilgrims.

The Gospels don't mention of anyone else by name except the blind beggar Bartimaeus (“Son of Timaeus” - Mark 10:46) and Zacchaeus that Jesus knew in this city, one a beggar despised because for his physical infirmity and the other despised because of his occupational allegiance. The physical limitations of both men served as means to inherit the Greatest Blessing of all.

Now accompanied by His disciples the Prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee (**Matt 21:11**) entered such a city during the day when busyness was at the peak (**v.1**). Dr. Luke doesn't give us a lot of details about this resident of Jericho, but just about enough for us to realize his background and his need for salvation. Luke introduces this man in **v.2** as Zacchaeus. The name means “pure” or “righteous”. Strange for a man whose character was completely the opposite, well the parents at least had good intention. The people would have joked about it. This man was a chief tax collector, a superintendent of the tax collectors. In the Roman times, a person has to bribe to become a chief tax collector because of the wealth that can be accumulated in a short span. And to recover it back quickly because of the political instability they over-tax by putting a fictitious value on the property or income. Sometimes they advanced the tax due date on those can't pay to charge interest. The Jewish public had utmost hatred towards these tax collectors because not only they worked for the Roman government but also exploited their own people, the fellow Jews. They were traitors in the eyes of angry Jews. They were greedy, dishonest, violent, selfish and manipulative. Morality is not in their dictionary but Compromise was! Such a sinful and despicable fellow was Zacchaeus. It's no wonder that he was also rich, wealthy.

We may see the small value God has for riches, by the people he gives them to. ~Alexander Pope, *Thoughts on Various Subjects*, 1727

This is why we should not conclude a person's spiritual status based on only wealth. Examine his/her life. Earlier in Chap. 18, a Rich man who came up to Jesus returned home rejecting the gift of eternal life that he sought after. Here Jesus went to a rich man who accepted the gift gladly though he never sought it. That's called the “**Unconditional Election**”. God chose this guile sinner and he was saved even without requesting it. So now let's study the 7 C's.

1. **Curiosity (v.3)** – “He was seeking to see who Jesus was”. Zacchaeus has never seen this Jesus who was famous and popular among the masses. He might have heard about the authoritative teaching or the miracles of Jesus. He should have seen the people rushing towards this Prophet or heard some of them talk about Him. He must have been impressed at Jesus freely associating with “tax collectors and sinners” unlike any other Rabbi for who would want to even talk to the “worst of the sinners” let alone eating and drinking. He might have even be aware that one of His Apostle Matthew was in the same profession as he was - a tax collector. When the entire public hated the tax collectors here's a “friend of tax collectors and sinners” (**Matt 11:19**). That would have definitely generated the curiosity to see this Rabbi Jesus who has become a “celebrity”. His curiosity was so much that he didn't care about the “loss of revenue”. Loss in the eyes of the world but Gain in the eyes of God! Definitely he wasn't seeking Jesus for any miracle or money or discourse or even salvation. All we wanted was to get a glimpse of this Prophet. But there were couple of problems. The crowd surrounding Jesus was huge. It has swelled in the course of time and Zacchaeus was “small of stature”, a short man. Because of this he could not see Jesus. It was just curiosity that led him to see Jesus. Many times we see people like him coming to Church

or meetings, just because of curiousness. **"Curiosity and simplicity are a sort of preparation for faith" said Calvin.** How true in this story!

2. **Conduct (v.4)** – If he were to see Jesus, he can't penetrate the crowd or expect people to allow him to the front. After all, he was a despised, cursed sinner. They would have asked him "What does he got to do with a Prophet?" Did that stop him from seeing Jesus? Did he go home "sad" like the Rich Ruler? No. Did he give up on his quest to see this Jesus? Absolutely not! So what did he do? He thought of a plan and not only had that he executed it. Look at the determination of this man. He ran ahead farther than the place where Jesus was at that moment and climbed up into a sycamore tree. Jericho was filled with such trees and he found his "perfect" tree and spot. No one will obstruct his view. He was curiously waiting to watch Jesus pass by.

Notice the unusualness here. (a) An adult official acting like a child running and climbing a tree, (b) a "sinner" who generally avoids being in the vicinity of a Rabbi seeks for it, (c) a man who avoids such a religious crowd in the midst of it, (d) a greedy, selfish tax-collector spending time and effort during that busy part of the day to watch a man who had no possessions – even no place to lay His head. (e) Finally, it's not by chance or coincidence that he was there for v.3 clearly says "he was seeking to see who Jesus was" and v.4 says "ran..climbed..to see Him". He was intentional. There is no plausible human reason for a tax collector to seek the Prophet but this Zacchaeus did. He is not going to gain anything out of Jesus from a worldly perspective. The only reason that this man was at that place at that time is because God has started working in his heart. God has purposed that this sinner will meet the Savior of the world and be saved on that day. **Here's the spiritual truth - Unless God works in the heart of any unbeliever they will not choose to seek Him!**

For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; [11] no one understands; no one seeks for God. (Rom 3:9-11, Ps 14:1-3)

It's called as **"Total Depravity"**. Because man is controlled by his/her sinful nature, being under the bondage of sin he/she will not seek the true God on his/her own. How many people really wish or choose to hear the Gospel, read the Bible or attend a Church/Bible Study? Invite your friends or relatives or co-workers for a party or carnival and see the difference in response.

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. (John 3:19)

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. [4] In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Cor 4:3-4)

God has to convict, convince and convert a human heart. He has to draw the wretched men to Himself.

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him (John 6:44)

3. **Command (v.5)** – "And when Jesus came to the place" – the place where Zacchaeus was. The sinner didn't go to the Savior but the Savior came and met him where he was. He initiated the relationship. Isn't that true from a spiritual perspective too? From the beginning, during the fall of man, Adam and Eve didn't go to God after they sinned, rather they hid themselves from His presence but it was the Holy God who sought them. Here's a tax collector who wanted to be unnoticed - in a way hid behind the branches and leaves of that sycamore tree was sought by Jesus. A man who cared more about his bank account than his "treasure in heaven" is going to have a "heart" transplant, a sick person who was going to be healed by the Physician (**Mark 2:17**).

Did the crowd or Jesus' impending suffering, death and resurrection distract Him from this mission? Oh, no. He is such a compassionate Lord who cared for the harassed, helpless sheep without a shepherd (**Matt 9:36**). So *Jesus came to the place, looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."* (**v.5**) Imagine that moment - Jesus stopping and looking up while Zacchaeus is looking down. The eyes of the Savior met at the eyes of the sinner. Zacchaeus wouldn't have expected what comes after. Jesus commanded him to hurry and come down. It was not a suggestion or a request. It's a command.

Notice Jesus calling him by name. They have never met before but Jesus knew this tax collector's name. He knew not only the place where this sinner was but also his name. This reveals His omniscience. His deity. Jesus was not just a man when he was in this planet but also God. He was in His incarnation and is and ever will be a God-man. We evidence His omniscience earlier in His ministry too when He calls His apostles to follow Him. In **John 1:42,47-48**, *Jesus looked at him and said, "So you are Simon the son of John?" and Jesus saw Nathanael*

coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" [48] Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." He was not just a man but a God-man. After His resurrection, Jesus called on Paul in **Acts 9**, the greatest Apostle "And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" [5] And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."

In the Bible we see that every time when God calls a person by name it is primarily to save that person or when a person is commissioned specifically ie. They are His children already. **Isa 43:1** says "But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." He knows His own. Jesus said "The sheep hear his (the shepherd's) voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. (**John 10:3**)

What a comforting thought to know that if we are His children, He knows us by name. Our God cares about those whose names are in the book of life (Phil 4:3, Rev 3:5). *He works in us for His good pleasure* (**Phil 2:13**)

The command follows. Jesus said "hurry and come down". It's a call for action. Speed up. Don't delay. Come down. It won't be a stretch to say what Matthew Henry says "that those that Christ calls must come down, must humble themselves, and not think to climb to heaven by any righteousness of their own; and they must make haste and come down, for delays are dangerous." Zacchaeus must not hesitate, but hasten; he knows it is not a matter that needs consideration whether he should welcome such a guest to his house.

What a privilege for Zacchaeus to have the "the Creator of the universe" stay at his house. We just recited **Isa 66:1**, "what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?" Solomon in his prayer of dedication said "Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!" (**1 Kings 8:27**) and here Jesus said "For I must stay at your house today".

Let's look at the **Divine Sovereignty**. There are 2 things or words that we need to focus upon. **The first is "must"**. It's a **Divine necessity**. It must happen. This is the same Greek word used in **Luke 4:43**, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God", **Luke 9:22**, "The Son of Man must suffer many things", **John 3:14**, "You must be born again" and in **Acts 1:16**, "The Scripture must be fulfilled" just to mention a few. It's not a matter of convenience or choice. It's needed. Jesus must stay at Zacchaeus' house with him. This was God's will. Jesus said to His disciples "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work." (**John 4:34**)

The second is "Today". Not in the near future but today. This day Jesus must stay at his house. **Here's the next spiritual truth - The timing of the salvation of a sinner has been predetermined by God. It's not the sinner who decides if or when he is saved but God alone.** For me it was in Mar 2002. All along God was working in me to read and to hear the Word of God to bring finally the conviction that I am a sinner and I needed the Savior. You might be praying for someone to be saved. Keep praying. Keep sharing God's word. In His time according to His will He will do the impossible.

Zacchaeus didn't expect any of this. He never thought Jesus would call him, let alone staying in his house. No "other" sinner would call him or go near his house and now the "Son of Man" is staying with him! But God by His grace has chosen this Zacchaeus a chief of the tax collector before the foundation of the world to be saved, to be His son. So Jesus went after that one lost sheep. **John 15:16** says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you." The Divine plan must be accomplished at the Divine timing! What a day it would have been in heaven!

4. **Compliance (v.6)** – "So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully." Did Zacchaeus obey the command? Absolutely as intended. This is called as the **human responsibility**. He hurried and came down. Not only he received Jesus but he did that "joyfully", "gladly". **Ps 16:11** says "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy". What else he could have asked for! He had no friends or social life. He was not allowed in the temple or synagogue to worship. They were banned from all the religious events. That's the reason why in Luke 18 we see the tax collector standing far-off. He couldn't go to the Lord's house but the Lord was coming to his house. Of all the people in the crowd, Jesus chose to stay at the house of an "outcast" that day. He didn't deserve this "royal call" but rather condemnation. Jesus commanded and he "joyfully" obeyed because of the **"irresistible grace of God"**.

Zacchaeus not only received Jesus into his house but also into his heart and v.8 confirms that. What a transformation it brings! **If you are not a Christian, Jesus wants to come into you too. Will you receive him joyfully today?**

5. **Complaint (v.7)** – "And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a

sinner.” This is very typical of the crowd esp. the Pharisees, the religious leaders of that day.

And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” (Luke 5:30 – at Matthew’s house)

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. [2] And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.” (Luke 15:1-2)

This was the reaction of the self-righteous crowd. They have concluded that Zacchaeus was a sinner unworthy of having a guest let alone having a guest like “Jesus” and so they murmur, not against Zacchaeus but against Jesus. Doesn’t He know about this man? How sinful and wicked he is. Doesn’t He know that he’s a chief tax collector? Jesus was supposed to be a guest of a religious leader, not a “sinner”. Rabbi’s and Prophets should stay away from such “outcasts”. This was their false belief. They had no understanding of who Jesus was and why He came. Jesus corrected such a crowd before by saying

“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. [32] I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” (Luke 5:31-32)

“Belief” and “Repentance” is needed for salvation. Without repentance there is no salvation. And so they murmured not only because Jesus went to Zacchaeus’ house but He went on His own will. Zacchaeus never invited Jesus nor spoke till now. Jesus did the talking and went. This made the crowd upset. Instead of hanging out with the religious elite, the “bishops” of that day how can he go not just to eat or drink but to stay to a “sinners” house? This is outrageous. This is the crowd represented by the Pharisee in **Luke 18:11** who stood alone without associating with the tax collector and prayed proudly “God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.” Self-righteous!

Application: Even if we are Christians there are times sadly when we are self-righteous, just like this crowd. We forget that we ourselves are “saved” sinners, saved by the Grace of God. We become judgmental and arrogant. We ourselves don’t want to associate with people like Zacchaeus nor allow any other Christian to do so. We often don’t have the burden for the “sinner”. We prefer to be with other Christians completely ignoring or rejecting the “Great Commission”. It becomes the “Great Omission”. **Shall we learn from the life of our Savior to take the time and effort to go to these folks? Take it as a challenge to reach out to at least 1 unbeliever in the next couple of weeks. Go where they are. Don’t expect them to come to you.**

6. **Confession (v.8)** – The Conviction led to Conversion which led to Confession. “*And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.”*”

Notice Jesus didn’t explain to Him who He was or the plan of salvation but just His presence brought the conviction of how sinful the host was before the Holy God.

And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!” (Isaiah 6:5 – Isaiah saw the Lord and that was enough for him to realize the Holiness of God and the sinfulness of men)

But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” (Luke 5:8 – When Peter realized who Jesus was he couldn’t stop but accept his sinfulness)

Zacchaeus was converted. He became a child of God. Jesus never told him to restore. It’s the conviction brought by the Holy Spirit which made Zacchaeus do this. **Another spiritual truth - “Transformed” lives is the evidence of a person’s salvation.** A person is genuinely saved only if his character has changed and is now adhering to God’s Word.

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom 12:2)

Paul says to the Christians in **Eph 4:22-24**, “to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, [23] and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, [24] and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” This is the evidence of one’s salvation.

Let’s look at what happened. Zacchaeus “stood” (ESV) or “stopped” (NASB). The Gk word means “to take a stand”, not just a physical movement. After being born-again, Zacchaeus took the stand in his heart and mind, he resolved to set things right. Then he addresses Jesus as “Lord” ie Master. In other words, he acknowledges that he is now a slave to Jesus, was a slave to sin but now a slave to Jesus, was blind but now he sees.

if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Rom 10:9)

Then he confesses what he’s going to do. ie “half of my goods I give to the poor and restore fourfold to the defrauded person”. This is repentance in action. Repentance means “to change one’s mind or purpose”. Here’s a selfish man who became selfless, a greedy man who became generous. Please understand that Zacchaeus was not doing this to be saved but because he was saved.

John the Baptist says in Luke 3:8:9 “Bear fruits in keeping with repentance.. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, [9] not a result of works, so that no one may boast. [10] For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. (Eph 2:8-10)

faith apart from works is dead. (James 2:26)

The things that mattered to him the most ie possessions, wealth, prosperity doesn’t mean anything to him anymore. A man who pursued riches is now pursuing righteousness. Faith is now evidenced by works.

Jonathan Edwards wrote, “How can you tell whether the Holy Spirit has performed a saving operation? As the principle evidence of life is motion, so the principle evidence of saving grace is holy practice. A person’s true spiritual state is not known by past experience but by the present pursuit of holiness. The “supreme proof” of a true conversion is what he called “holy affections”, which are a zeal for holy things and a longing after God and personal holiness.”

Remember in Chap 18, when Jesus asked another Rich man to do exactly what Zacchaeus was going to do even without being asked ie to “Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor” (v.22), the man who heard that became extremely sad, very sorrowful for he was extremely rich. He didn’t do it because he was not regenerated. He was not saved. “Mammon” was his master, not the Lord Jesus.

Jesus said in another occasion when warning about covetousness said about a rich man who said “ And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ [20] But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ [21] So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.” (Luke 12:19-21)

But here once God did what is impossible with men ie saving a wealthy person, even without being asked or commanded, Zacchaeus immediately wishes to restore and help the poor. He should have been aware of the OT law which says in **Lev 6:1-5**, “The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [2] “If anyone sins and commits a breach

of faith against the LORD by deceiving his neighbor in a matter of deposit or security, or through robbery, or if he has oppressed his neighbor [3] or has found something lost and lied about it, swearing falsely—in any of all the things that people do and sin thereby—[4] if he has sinned and has realized his guilt and will restore what he took by robbery or what he got by oppression or the deposit that was committed to him or the lost thing that he found [5] or anything about which he has sworn falsely, he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt.”

From Zacchaeus's words, we gather that 1) he had been guilty of defrauding people, 2) he was remorseful over his past actions, and 3) he was committed to making restitution.

Zacchaeus now wanted to restore 400% not just 120%. A true prodigal son! He went way beyond what was required. *What kind of faith do we have? Is it resulting in action? Are we trying to make things right? Are we glorifying God through our lives? It's a challenge for me as much as it is for you! With God's help we can do it!*

7. **Confirmation (v.9)** – And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. [10] For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

After Zacchaeus confessed what he was going to do, the Lord Himself confirms that Zacchaeus was indeed saved. That day, salvation has come to this “sinner’s” house. The one who was despised by the crowd is now accepted into God’s family. He was declared as a “Gentile” by the crowd but now declared as “a son of Abraham” by Christ, not just outwardly but inwardly, not because of his race but because of his faith.

For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. [29] But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God. (Rom 2:28-29)

Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (Gal 3:7,29)

A rich man can indeed be saved. The tax collector entered into the Kingdom of God. *Though it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person on his own to enter the kingdom of God, things that are impossible with men are possible with God! With God all things are possible!*

The Providence shine forth more gloriously in the world than in ordering the occasions, instruments and means of conversion of the people of God. You are more indebted to it for this than for all your other mercies – John Flavel

Clement of Alexandria, one of the church fathers, says that this man, Zacchaeus, became a very prominent Christian leader and ended up as a bishop in Caesarea. He served His Lord all his life. That's from church history. So perhaps it's so and that's why his name was used in this 6th encounter of Jesus with a tax collector and this time with the chief of them.

The additional special “C” is for **Commission (v.10)**

What was the act of Christ's doing? “*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*” This is purpose of Jesus coming to the earth as human. What a statement! He just accomplished that by saving the lost Zacchaeus and saved many more during His first coming. He found his lost sheep, his lost coin. Today also He's saving people from sin, God's wrath and judgment. Are you here like Zacchaeus? Is God convicting you? He wants to reside in you. He is calling you. He wants you to become his child. Will you surrender to Him? *Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor 6:1,2). Hurry and humble yourself before God in repentance!*