

=FAVORITE BIBLE CHAPTERS=

Lesson 30

Luke 19

INTRODUCTION: Perhaps the story of Zacchæus in Luke 19 should start in Luke 5:27-29. Matthew was the tax collector at Capernaum. Jesus had passed by and talked with Matthew, and Matthew had realized that Jesus was the Messiah. He had been converted and had left all to follow Jesus. Upon his conversion, he had a great feast and invited all the publicans (tax collectors) and sinners to come to that feast. What he did was to go back to the old crowd, invite them to a feast, and there tell them what had happened to him. He told them about Jesus coming by. He told them about his conversion and announced that he was leaving his lucrative job in order to follow Jesus and become His disciple.

There is no doubt but that Zacchæus from down in Jericho was at this meeting, for he too was a publican or tax collector. Perhaps when Matthew gave his testimony, Zacchæus was impressed. No doubt there had been a profound influence on his life when he saw what Matthew had done. Then one day Zacchæus heard that Jesus was coming through Jericho. Perhaps he said, "I must see Him again. I will never forget when I saw Him before." With that, we come to Luke 19.

(Teacher, stress to the pupils the importance of witnessing to the old crowd. A child who has been saved should go back to school and witness. An adult who has been saved should go back to the old crowd and witness.) This is exactly what happened to the woman at the well. She got saved, ran into Sychar, and talked about the Saviour to the men with whom she had sinned.

- I. JERICHO WAS A CURSED CITY. Notice Luke 19:1. Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem to be crucified, but He passed through Jericho. In other words, He passed through the city that was cursed. He did not participate in the sin of the city, nor did He make the people in the city His best friends, but He did take the Gospel where men needed the Gospel. The more sinful a place is, the more the people need the Gospel. Jesus came to save sinners. See Luke 19:10.
- II. ZACCHÆUS LIVED IN JERICHO. The word "Zacchæus" means "pure." Here we have a picture of hypocrisy. His name meant "pure," and yet he was a tax collector. He was guilty of stealing from people. He was guilty of extortion. His name said one thing; his life said another. (Teacher, dwell here on the sin of hypocrisy, and stress the importance of sincerity.)
- III. ZACCHÆUS WAS A PUBLICAN. A publican was a tax collector under the Roman government. Palestine at this time was under the rule of the Roman Empire. In each area a tax collector or publican was appointed. The job was one for which the people would bid. Men of wealth would bid for the right to get the job. The government of Rome would tax the collector himself for so much money from his area. Whatever he could raise from the people over and above this amount was his. This is the kind of man Zacchæus was. He was merciless with the people, stealing from them and yet having the Roman government behind him. Here is a picture of the fact that Jesus loves sinners. It matters not how far one has gone into sin, he is still the object of the love of Christ. (Teacher, stress this important truth to the class: God will forgive, regardless of the sin or the depth of sin to which the sinner has gone.)
- IV. ZACCHÆUS WAS CHIEF AMONG THE PUBLICANS. Read Luke 19:2. In other words, he was the "big boy" himself. He was more than just a sinner; he was a terrible sinner, and according to this same verse, he was rich.
- V. ZACCHÆUS WAS A LITTLE MAN. In Luke 19:3, notice the words, "...he was little of stature." (Teacher, encourage people in your class who might be small of stature; God can use them too. Point them to little people who are successful for God.)
- VI. ZACCHÆUS COULD NOT SEE JESUS BECAUSE SOMEONE WAS IN HIS WAY. Notice in Luke 19:3b, the words, "and could not for the press." Zacchæus was short. He wanted to see Jesus but could not; someone was in his way. How true this is and how often it is true! People stand in the way of

sinners seeing Jesus. (Teacher, stress the importance here of our lives being the kind of lives that can aid people in seeing Jesus and not hinder people from seeing Him.)

- VII. ZACCHÆUS WAS HATED BY THE PEOPLE. It is easy to imagine this. All the money he could get from them over and above what he was to pay to the Roman government was his. Hence, he got all he could from the people. Perhaps he was the most hated man in town. Yet, there was Someone Who loved him; Jesus did. Not only should we love the unlovely, but we should love the unloved. There ought not be a person in our town who is unloved. We ought to love them for Jesus' sake.
- VIII. ZACCHÆUS HAD CHARACTER. Notice Luke 19:4. He was going to see Jesus regardless of obstacles. He perhaps came to the road where Jesus was passing by, saw it lined with people, but could not see for the press. Then perhaps he went upstairs in a house, but the windows were filled. Then he went up on the roof, which was flat, but people were there too; however, nothing could stop Zacchæus from seeing Jesus! Ah, here is an example for each of us. What we ought to do we can do, and we should not stop until it is done. Do not give up. Keep on going. Set your goal. Arrive at your goal. Don't let anything stop you from it.

So Zacchæus climbed up a tree. Luke 19:4, "And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way." Imagine how the people must have laughed and how the little children must have ridiculed! There was the richest and the most hated man in town up a tree, but Zacchæus was willing to be embarrassed in order to see Jesus!

- IX. JESUS TOLD ZACCHÆUS TO HURRY TO HIM. Notice in Luke 19:5, the words "Zacchæus, make haste, and come down." Jesus tells everyone to hurry and receive Christ. (Teacher, stress the importance of doing in a hurry what we are going to do for God. Talk about the perilous days in which we live. Talk about the uncertainty of life, and stress the importance of each of us doing what God wants him to do, and doing it quickly.)
- X. ZACCHÆUS INVITED JESUS INTO HIS HOUSE. See Luke 19:5-7. This is what every Christian should do—invite Jesus into his house. The atmosphere should be Christlike. The literature should be Christlike. The radio programs, television programs, newspapers, magazines, etc. should be that which would honor Christ. (Teacher, discuss this subject with the pupils. Ask if there are things in their rooms or houses that should not be there. Do not embarrass anyone here, but discuss the importance of inviting Christ into the house.)
- XI. ZACCHÆUS PROVED HIS SALVATION. Notice in Luke 19:8, he is returning fourfold all the money that he has gotten by cheating. This goes back to Exodus 22:1 which required a man who stole a sheep to return four sheep for the one he had stolen. This means that Zacchæus knew some Bible. In other words, Zacchæus was giving God exactly what God told him to give. (Teacher, discuss tithing and the importance of giving God the tithe. Especially should little children be taught in the early days of their life to tithe on whatever is their increase.)

CONCLUSION: There is so much in this story. Take plenty of time to teach it all. In this one little story we can teach soul winning, salvation, diligence, character, promptness, tithing, etc. Let us leave with our children and our pupils this week these truths so vital to their lives.