

THE STORY OF ZACCHAEUS

Zacchaeus was a tax collector who got rich by making others pay lots of taxes. Zacchaeus also took some of the money for himself. When Zacchaeus heard Jesus was in town, he wanted to see Him. But Zacchaeus was short, and Jesus was always surrounded by a crowd.

So Zacchaeus decided to run ahead of the crowd and climb a sycamore tree. From there he could watch for Jesus. He watched as Jesus drew closer. He held his breath when Jesus stopped right beneath his tree. Then Jesus looked straight up at him!

"Zacchaeus," said Jesus with a smile, "come on down. I want to stay at your house today!"

Zacchaeus hopped down. "You are welcome at my house, Jesus," said the little man with a big smile.

But others grumbled, muttering to each other. "Why does Jesus want to go home with a sinner?"

Zacchaeus turned to Jesus and said, "Look, Here and now, I promise to give half of my money to the poor. If I have cheated anyone in taxes, I will pay them back four times that amount."

"Salvation comes to Zacchaeus's house today!" announced Jesus. "For I have come to look for and to seek those who are lost."

The Effects of Real Faith

Zacchaeus probably became rich by cheating people, something tax collectors were known for in those days. But Zacchaeus met Jesus, and he became a new man. He had faith in Jesus' power and love.

Zacchaeus promised to pay back - even more than he had taken - those he had cheated. He examined his Conscience. He knew he did something wrong. He wanted Jesus to forgive him.

But the crowd didn't like this. They needed new hearts too, but they didn't realize it. Why do you think they needed new hearts too? They needed to FORGIVE Zacchaeus as Jesus did!

Real faith is not a matter of simply believing in and loving Jesus. It involves turning from old ways that go against God's commands and starting a new life. Real faith acts to make things right again. When you go to First Penance, think not only about what you did that was wrong, but how you won't do it again. Live as Jesus does!

Discussion: Sometimes it is difficult for people to separate the sin from the sinner.

Discussion: Zacchaeus sought Jesus, and got closer to him than he had hoped. God says if we seek him, we will find him. Many people wonder where God is in their lives, but never go looking for him. What are some ways we can seek after God in our lives?

Discussion: Zacchaeus didn't use his shortness as an excuse to quit looking for Jesus. What obstacles do we have to overcome to see Jesus? Are any of these obstacles great enough to separate us from Jesus?