

JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: LUKE 18:35-19:11



Jesus came to seek and to save what was lost.

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

The blind beggar was healed – On his way to Jericho, Jesus passed near a blind man. Some of those present told the man that Jesus was passing by. The blind man called out to Jesus and would not be quieted by those who were leading him. In fact, he shouted all the louder, “Son of David, have mercy on me.” This blind man knew who Jesus was, at least in part. Jesus was the promised descendant of David who would reign on the throne. There would be no other reason to call out His name like this. Why not say “Son of Joseph” or “Jesus of Nazareth”? This man had faith that Jesus was no ordinary man and had the power to heal. After asking Jesus for his sight, Jesus commended his faith and immediately restored the blind man.

Zacchaeus pursued Jesus – After the raising of Lazarus, word spread quickly about Jesus. Not only did this amazing man heal the sick, cast out demons, and perform wonders like the multiplication of the fishes and loaves, He also raised the dead. Israel had been without a prophet for a long time. And Israel was under Roman rule, which they would have understood to be God’s judgment upon them. They longed for God to restore them. Now, a descendant of David was performing miracles that could be attributed only to God.

Zacchaeus, a short man from Jericho, wanted to see Jesus, so he climbed a tree. Jesus looked up. He called the tax collector by name and invited Himself to dinner at Zacchaeus’ home. Zacchaeus gladly came down from the tree and accepted Christ’s invitation. Similarly, Jesus seeks after us. He invites himself into our lives. In a sense, the gospel message is an invitation for us to receive Jesus into our lives. We do this by trusting and believing in what He has said and done.

The people thought the kingdom was about to come – After Zacchaeus came down from the tree and repented, the people were amazed. Not only did Jesus do physical miracles, but he was also able to change the hearts of men. Even tax collectors were giving back to those they had defrauded. Tax collectors collaborated with the Romans and were often considered traitors. Here the people saw a tax collector turn away from his Roman collaboration and turn back to the people of Israel. The people thought, for sure, the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

Jesus makes the connection to the gospel in this story. Jesus tells us, "Today salvation has come to this house." We also learn that it was the "Son of Man," Jesus, who came to "seek and save the lost."

Though it seems that Zacchaeus was trying to draw near to Jesus, it was in fact Jesus who was coming to save Zacchaeus. This salvation is possible because of what Jesus was about to do on the cross. The evidence of a changed heart in this story is obvious: Zacchaeus gave away half his money.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMANUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Isaiah 11:1-10

Connecting the passage to Christ:

Jesus is the banner that will bring all the nations to Himself. He is the one who will bring an end to the hostility of the curse. Jesus, a descendant of Jesse, will bring rest to the people. Paul attributes this passage to Christ in Romans 15:12.

Questions for reflection:

- What does it mean that an infant will play near the nest of a poisonous snake? (In creation, prior to the fall, there was no hostility between man and the animals. In heaven, there will be no hostility, no sickness, no dying. God will recreate the earth, removing the curse.)
- Will there be animals in heaven? (The Scripture passage refers to animals in heaven. Some think this is merely figurative language, but it is safe to assume that the same amazing creation that we now have will be restored when Jesus makes the new earth and comes to live with men.)

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SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

FIND ZACCHAEUS

Supplies

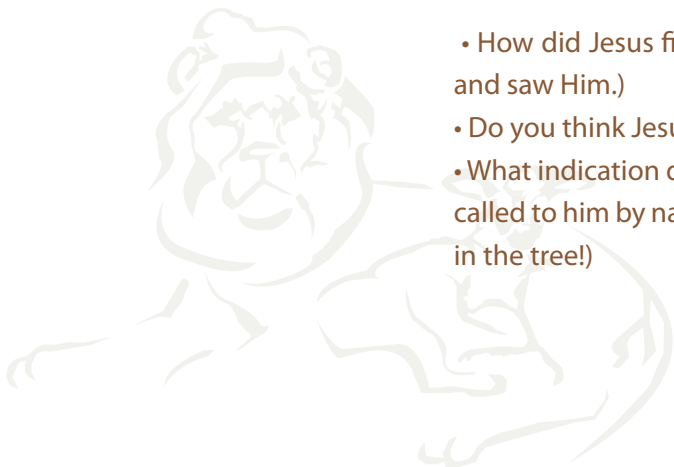
ten small plastic toy men
(you can use a variety
of children's toys for this
exercise)

This object illustration is a simple way to introduce the children to the fact that Jesus knew where to look for Zacchaeus, and he knows exactly where we are as well. Jesus simply walked to the place where Zacchaeus was and looked up at him.

Prior to class, hide the men around the room. They should at least be partly visible. When the children come in, ask them to see if they can find Zacchaeus and the others like him hiding in the room. Have them count the number of men and report to you. (To fool them you can place two together in a location or place other colorful objects that might fool the children if they count too fast.)

Ask the children who thinks there are seven, eight, etc. Only allow the children one answer and call out the actual number toward the end. Ask the children the following questions:

- How did Jesus find Zacchaeus? (Jesus simply walked to the spot and looked up and saw Him.)
- Do you think Jesus knew Zacchaeus was in the tree before He saw him? (Yes.)
- What indication do we have that Jesus knew Zacchaeus was up in the tree? (Jesus called to him by name. If Jesus already knew his name, certainly Jesus knew he was in the tree!)



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WHAT IF YOU GAVE AWAY HALF?

Supplies:
white board

Use this to help illustrate the significance of Zacchaeus' repentance.

Ask for a volunteer or two and then explain to them that you want to see just how much they would be giving away if they did what Zacchaeus did.

Make a list of half of what they own, item by item. Here are a few categories:

Money in the bank

Other money

Clothing (Our clothing represents great riches. Some people in the world have only what they are wearing.)

Possessions – bike, baseball cards, books, etc.

Put a monetary value on all the items. Then divide it in half. The class will be amazed at just how much money they would have to give away if they were Zacchaeus.

Talk about how our good works are a demonstration of the faith we have. See James 2.

Why is it amazing that Zacchaeus gave away half of what he owned? (Zacchaeus was a greedy man who loved money.)

Does God require that everyone give away half of what they own? (No. God did not require it of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus did it to demonstrate his repentance and his love for God. We should be willing to do something just as significant should the Spirit of God lead us.)



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IRRESISTIBLE

Supplies:

- One coconut
- chocolate bar
- orange
- container of salt

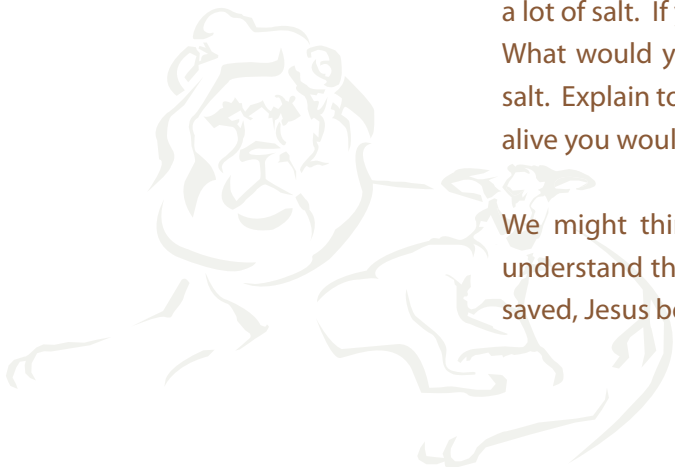
Show the items to the class and have them guess what they are. Then tell them you are going to teach them a complicated word. Say the word irresistible and ask them what it means. (Something that you just can't resist.) Then ask them which of the four objects do they think is irresistible by a show of applause. They will pick the chocolate bar.

Explain that Zacchaeus once thought money was the most irresistible and as a tax collector cheated people out of their money. But, once he met Jesus and understood that Jesus opened his eyes, Zacchaeus thought Jesus was irresistible. When God calls us, his call is effective and just like in the life of Zacchaeus we are irresistibly drawn to God.

Remind them they thought the chocolate bar was irresistible then tell them the following three illustrations:

1. Imagine you were stranded on an island surrounded by salt water with nothing to drink and (hold up the coconut) the trees were filled with coconuts, what would you find irresistible, the coconut or the chocolate bar? (Remind them the coconut is filled with coconut milk you can drink to keep you alive.) Explain that once you understood what was inside, you would find the coconut irresistible.
2. Pretend for a moment you were a pirate on a ship for a long voyage. On your trip you get sick with the disease scurvy, a lack of vitamin C. What do you think would be more irresistible, the orange or the chocolate bar? (Hold them both up.) Explain to the children that once you understood that vitamin C could heal you, you would find it irresistible.
3. What if you were lost in a deep dark jungle. You had plenty to eat and drink but because of the heat you lost a lot of sweat and with it your body lost a lot of salt. If you don't get enough salt you could have a heart attack and die. What would you find more irresistible, the chocolate bar or the container of salt. Explain to that once you understood that the salt was needed to keep you alive you would find it more irresistible than the chocolate bar.

We might think that the things of the world are irresistible but once we understand that we are dead in our sins and only by trusting Jesus we can be saved, Jesus become's irresistible.



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JESUS KNOWS US EACH BY NAME

This object lesson is to demonstrate the wonder that Jesus knew Zacchaeus and knows us all by name.

Ask for a volunteer (pick a student who has been around for a while). Ask them to go row by row and give everyone's name. Keep trying this with new volunteers until someone can name every person. Then ask the following questions:

- Was it difficult to tell everyone's name? (Yes)
- Was there anyone you didn't know? If so, how did you feel when you came to them? (I thought it would be impossible to know the name of someone I never met.)
- How did Jesus know Zacchaeus' name? (Jesus is God and knows all things.)

Does he know us? (Yes. Jesus knows us by name. John tells us that Jesus is the Good Shepherd who knows His sheep. See John 10)

PRAYER

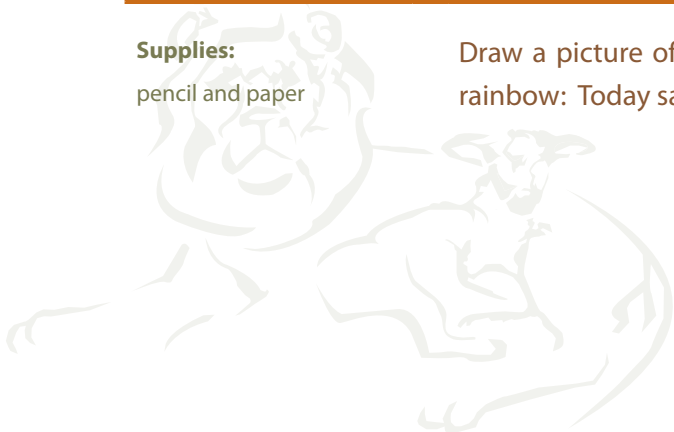
Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

AN ACTIVITY

Supplies:
pencil and paper

Draw a picture of Zacchaeus and Jesus. Write these words across the top like a rainbow: Today salvation has come to this house.



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FOR THE OLDER GRADES

WHAT HAVE YOU GIVEN UP FOR JESUS?

Supplies:

paper and pencils for the class

Have the class write a short paragraph to answer the question: "What have I given up for Jesus?"

They might initially struggle to think of anything. Help them understand that anything they have said "no" to because it would displease the Lord is something they have given up for Him. Any money they have given would certainly be included. Ask them the following questions to help jog their thinking.

Can you think of a time when you said "no" to a peer who wanted you to sin and then that person didn't want to be around you because of your choices?

Did you ever want to take revenge but, knowing that it was wrong, gave up your desire for retaliation?

Did you ever give away the last of a treat to a brother or sister when there was only one left?

Remember Jesus said, "Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers, that you have done unto me." (Matthew 25:40)

Talk to your class about the importance of the fruit of repentance. The fruit of repentance is the good works which always follow anyone who believes. James tells us faith without works is dead (James 2).

If a person has no works to validate their salvation, that person should not assume he or she is a Christian. Rather than live with false confidence, they should run to Christ as though they are destined for hell. Ultimately, we find assurance in the witness of the Holy Spirit inside of us (Eph. 1:13-14). Everyone whom the Lord saves goes on to produce good fruit (John 15:16).

A LITTLE BIT MORE

The kingdom appearing at once – The people in this story were not thinking of a kingdom like the one Jesus brought. They were thinking that the Messiah was going to appear in all His power and glory to finally defeat the enemy (Rome) and restore the kingdom (Israel, as in the days of David).