

# Jesus at the House of Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10

## PPT Title

### Jesus at the House of Zacchaeus

**Main Point:** Jesus changes the lives of sinners who follow Him.

**Key Verse:** *Anyone who believes in Christ is a new creation. The old is gone! The new has come!* — 2 Corinthians 5:17

**Props:** A plastic caterpillar (or picture of a caterpillar). A plastic butterfly (or picture).

### BACKGROUND

**Say:** One time a rich young ruler came to Jesus and asked Him what one thing he must do to receive eternal life. Maybe you remember the story. The young man was good at keeping the rules, but Jesus told him that the kingdom of God wasn't just about keeping rules.

Jesus wanted this young man to be His follower, but He also knew that the man had turned his money into an idol. He loved his riches as much or more than he loved God! So Jesus told the man to sell everything and give the money to the poor. Then he would be able to follow Jesus and be part of the kingdom of God. But something surprising happened next. The rich young ruler became very sad and walked away from Jesus. He loved his money so much that he didn't want to give it up, even to follow the Son of God.



Here's what Jesus said next to His disciples: *"How hard it is for rich people to enter God's kingdom! Is it hard for a camel to go through the eye of a needle? It is even harder for the rich to enter God's kingdom!"* (Luke 18:24-25)

This worried the disciples. *"Then who can be saved?"* they asked. Jesus answered, *"Things that are impossible with people are possible with God."* (Luke 18:26-27)

Today we are going to read a story about another rich man who met up with Jesus. But unlike the rich young ruler, who wanted eternal life but wasn't willing to change his life, the rich man in today's story is a beautiful example of what Jesus told his disciples. *"Things that are impossible with people are possible with God."*

The man in today's story is named Zacchaeus. He was a tax collector, which meant that most people hated him. He was also very, very small in size, which meant that he probably got lost in a crowd. But Jesus didn't care about either of these things. Jesus wanted to spend time with Zacchaeus, and Zacchaeus was more than happy to become Jesus' friend. Look with me at Luke 19:1-10.

**Teacher Note:** Any children who have sung the Sunday School song, "Zacchaeus," will be able to tell you Zacchaeus' distinguishing characteristic—his short stature.

*Zacchaeus was a wee little man/And a wee little man was he/He climbed up in that sycamore tree/For the Lord he wanted to see.*

But the kids are probably less likely to know other facts about Zacchaeus. He was a tax collector. He was despised and looked upon as the worst of sinners by most people. And finally, he was a completely changed man after spending some time with Jesus.

Although we don't know what Jesus said to Zacchaeus after arriving at the tax collector's home, we do see the result of their interaction. Zacchaeus was changed, through and through. Because of his encounter with the Son of God that day, the wee little tax collector became a new creation.

So really, the fact that Zacchaeus was small matters little to the story. The fact that his sinner's heart repented completely is going to be our focus today.

## ZACCHAEUS IS CURIOUS ABOUT JESUS

**Say:** *Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man named Zacchaeus lived there. He was a chief tax collector and was very rich.*

*Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was. But he was a short man. He could not see Jesus because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree. He wanted to see Jesus, who was coming that way. — Luke 19:1-4*

**Teacher Note:** Jesus was passing through Jericho on His way to Jerusalem, where the events of Holy Week would soon unfold. Many, many Jews from Galilee were passing through Jericho that day on their way to observe Passover in Jerusalem. Jericho was a gateway into Roman-controlled territory and a major tax collection site, which is likely why Zacchaeus was so wealthy. He had much opportunity to abuse the system that funded the occupying Roman army.

**Say:** Zacchaeus was a man who worked for the Roman government collecting taxes. A tax is money collected by a government from its citizens. For example, when you buy a book at the bookstore, a certain amount of tax is added to the price of the book. The government then collects the tax money that you pay on the book. Most grown ups pay taxes on the money they earn at work, on the things they buy, on their homes, on their cars. You get the idea.

In Jesus' time, Israel was under the control of the Roman empire. People in Israel didn't like this at all. They were not a free nation. They had to obey Roman laws and submit to Roman authority. And because tax collectors worked for the Roman government, they were a constant reminder that Israel was once again under the authority of a foreign government. Every time a citizen had to pay money to a tax collector, they probably thought really bad thoughts about the person taking their money.

That was more than enough to make tax collectors unpopular, don't you think? But there was something else that made people hate the tax collectors. Many of the tax collectors were also very dishonest, and collected more money than they were supposed to. What do you suppose they did with the extra money they collected? That's right. They put it in their own pockets and kept it!

So for these reasons tax collectors were not very popular people in their communities. And because Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector—the boss of all the other tax collectors—he was probably especially disliked.

When Jesus traveled through Zacchaeus' town of Jericho, He was on His way to Jerusalem, where He would celebrate the last supper with His disciples.



So many people followed Jesus wherever He went at this point in His ministry. Everyone wanted to hear Him teach about the kingdom of God. Everyone wanted to see Him heal the sick. And Zacchaeus was no exception. We're not told why he was so curious about Jesus, but Zacchaeus the tax collector was very eager to see what Jesus was doing.

There was only one problem. Zacchaeus was much smaller than everyone else in the crowd that surrounded Jesus. He tried standing on his tip toes, but that didn't work. He tried pushing his way to the front of the crowd, but that didn't work. Maybe he even asked if he could climb up on someone's shoulders! But who would let the chief tax collector do that?



Finally, Zacchaeus had an idea. He ran ahead of the crowd and climbed up into the biggest tree he could find. It was a sycamore fig tree. Finally, little Zacchaeus the tax collector, could see what Jesus was up to. He had a bird's-eye view of all the action.

**Application:** Zacchaeus was curious about Jesus and wanted to see with his PHYSICAL eyes what all the commotion was about. But God was also working in Zacchaeus' heart to enable him to see with SPIRITUAL eyes. God wanted the little tax collector to see that Jesus could bring salvation to every single person in that crowd, even a hated outcast like Zacchaeus. God wants us to see Jesus like that, too. When we listen to stories about Jesus and learn about what He said and did, we are like Zacchaeus watching from a distance. But when we truly understand that Jesus is the Son of God who died so that our sins can be forgiven and we can have eternal life, then we are seeing with our spiritual eyes!

Now let's read on in Luke 19:5-7.

### ZACCHAEUS IS CALLED BY NAME



**Say:** *Jesus reached the spot where Zacchaeus was. He looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down at once. I must stay at your house today." So Zacchaeus came down at once and welcomed Him gladly.*

*All the people saw this. They began to whisper among themselves. They said, "Jesus has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.' "*

Zacchaeus climbed up into the tree so that he could see the attention that Jesus was getting. Now HE was the center of attention!

Jesus stopped right under the tree where the little tax collector was perched did something really surprising. He called Zacchaeus by name! The two men had never met before, yet Jesus knew everything about Zacchaeus. Because Jesus is God, He knew all there was to know about the man in the tree—his name, his job, even the number of hairs on his head!

**Application:** Psalm 139:13 says, *You created the deepest parts of my being. You put me together inside my mother's body.* God knew everything about you before you were even born, because He is the one who made you! And John 10:3, which tells us that Jesus is the Good Shepherd and we are His dearly loved sheep, says: *...The sheep listen to His voice. He calls His own sheep by name and leads them out.*

**Ask:** Did Jesus know that Zacchaeus was a sinner? Yes! And Jesus, the Good Shepherd, called out to him anyway. Happily Zacchaeus listened to the Good Shepherd's voice, and that made all the difference in his life. When we listen to the Shepherd calling us by name and respond to Him, our lives will be changed too!

*... The sheep listen to His voice.  
And He calls His own sheep  
by name and leads them out.*

— John 10:3



**Say:** When Zacchaeus heard Jesus tell him to come down from the tree, what did he do? He came down immediately. There must have been something amazing about Jesus to make the tax collector scramble down from the branches as fast as he could! All throughout the New Testament are stories of people who stopped whatever they were doing to follow Jesus. **Ask:** Who did we learn about who left everything to follow Jesus? Peter, James and John were the fishermen who left their nets right on the beach to follow Jesus!

How do you think Zacchaeus felt when Jesus said He wanted to stay at the little tax collector's house? *Excited. Nervous. Confused.* Zacchaeus was probably feeling all those emotions and more. We aren't told exactly what he thought. But we are told in Luke 19:7 how the CROWD felt about Jesus going to the home of a tax collector: *They began to whisper among themselves. They said, "Jesus has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.' "*

Tax collectors like Zacchaeus were especially looked down upon by the Pharisees and rule makers. To them, he was among the worst of sinners. Zacchaeus wouldn't even have been allowed to be part of the synagogue or to worship with others. But here Jesus was, inviting Himself to a tax collector's house, acting like He was His friend. So people began to whisper and complain, even though every single person in Jericho that day was a sinner just like Zacchaeus.

*Everyone has sinned.  
No one measures  
up to God's glory.*  
Romans 3:23

Romans 3:23 says, *Everyone has sinned. No one measures up to God's glory.* That includes Pharisees. And that includes you and me. We may not be tax collectors, we may not be thieves or murderers, but we are all sinners. And any sin, big or small, separates us from God.

When Jesus says to any sinner "follow Me," and that sinner decides to follow Him, God forgives their sin and gives them a new life. They are part of the kingdom of God! If only the people in the crowd had opened their eyes to that truth, they would have been rejoicing that Zacchaeus was about to become a whole new person instead of complaining about Jesus' friendship with a "sinner."

Let's continue reading to learn just how different Zacchaeus was after Jesus came to his house! Look at Luke 19:8-10.

### ZACCHAEUS BECOMES A NEW CREATION



**Say:** *But Zacchaeus stood up. He said, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of what I own to those who are poor. And if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay it back. I will pay back four times the amount I took."*

*Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "Today salvation has come to your house. You are a member of Abraham's family line. The Son of Man came to look for the lost and save them."*

Wow. This Zacchaeus was behaving very differently than the rich young ruler we talked about at the beginning of the lesson! The rich young ruler did not follow Jesus because he loved money more than he loved Jesus. He like some of the things that Jesus said, but he wasn't ready to give up everything to be part of the kingdom.

**REPENTANCE**  
*"change your mind"  
"turn away from sin"*

Zacchaeus, though, was completely changed by his encounter with Jesus. Zacchaeus repented of his sins right there, in front of Jesus and the crowd. True repentance means that you "change your mind" and "turn away from sin." Zacchaeus demonstrated his repentance by saying he would give half his money to the poor and that he would make things right with anyone he had cheated in his job as tax collector. In fact, he wasn't just going to pay back what he stole from people, he was going to pay back FOUR TIMES what he stole!

Zacchaeus truly became a new man that day. But how is that possible? 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, *Anyone who believes in Christ is a new creation. The old is gone! The new has come!*



That is what happened to Zacchaeus when he decided to repent and follow Jesus. When the tax collector became part of the kingdom of God, he was changed from the inside out. Before he met Jesus, Zacchaeus was kind of like a caterpillar. **Hold up the plastic caterpillar or picture of a caterpillar.** Caterpillars are very hungry. They just eat, eat, eat all the time. They are so greedy that if you put one in a jar with a bunch of green leaves, the leaves will disappear before you know it! Zacchaeus was greedy like that, wasn't he?



But when a caterpillar transforms into a butterfly, it is changed completely, from the inside out. **Hold up the plastic caterpillar or picture of a caterpillar.** Nothing about the butterfly even resembles the creepy, crawly, greedy, munching caterpillar it used to be. It is a totally new creation. When a butterfly flits by on a sunny summer day, it brings joy to all who see it because it is so beautiful!



**Application:** Meeting Jesus changed Zacchaeus into a completely new person. And Jesus wants everyone to believe in Him so they can be new creations, too! Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for our sins. When we believe that, repent, and follow Him—just like Zacchaeus did—Jesus will change our lives and make us new and beautiful!

**PPT Key Verse**

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**PPT Main Point**

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