



## Zacchaeus

### *The love of Jesus makes us capable of loving*

**4 Introduction:** *Jesus met great and small, rich and poor, doctors of the law and people who had not studied, young people, children: He loved everyone, and each one found in Him a teacher, a friend, a brother.*

**5** *Jesus made no difference, in fact he often went in search of those people who, for various reasons, were a little distant from others.*

*He wanted us to discover what it really means to love everyone!*

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**6 A very beautiful story - The Bible**

**7 Zacchaeus** (Cf. Lk 19: 1-10)

**8** Zacchaeus, he is a very rich man. He lives in the city of Jericho and everyone has to go to him to bring the tax money they have to pay.

**9** But Zacchaeus has also heard about Jesus and wants to know him. So, when he knows that Jesus has arrived in the city, he approaches the crowd to try to see him, but he cannot: there are many people around Jesus and he is too small in stature. What to do?

**10** He runs a little ahead and climbs up a tree, in a place where Jesus should pass: so he hopes to see him!

**11** When Jesus arrives at that point on the road, he stops, looks up and says to him: "Zacchaeus, get down quickly, because today I have to stop at your house!".

**12** Surprised, Zacchaeus immediately descends from the tree and with great joy welcomes Jesus into his home.

**13** He makes him sit at his table and offers him the best things he has.

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#### A beautiful story

*God accompanies us from creation to "new heavens and new earths" (Episode 14)*

**14** The people who had followed Jesus, seeing this, are not happy about what Jesus is doing and say among themselves, "He has entered a sinner's house!"

**15** Zacchaeus, on the other hand, says to Jesus: "Lord, I will give half of my goods to the poor and if I have stolen from someone I will give them back four times as much."

**16** Jesus answers him: "Today salvation has entered this house. You are also loved by God and I have sought you, to help you, to let you discover that God loves you. I came to earth to seek and save especially those who have lost their way".

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## **17** *A very beautiful story - The Bible*

**18** *Jesus really loves everyone! And it is his love that makes those who have made mistakes understand how to become new persons.*

**19** *Zacchaeus is just curious. He climbs the tree to see Jesus, but he doesn't really think that this gesture of his will change anything in his life. Instead, Jesus' loving gaze changes his heart<sup>1</sup>. It doesn't matter if he made a mistake, he can always start loving again. The love of Jesus was so great...that Zacchaeus wants to love with the same measure: giving back more than he took!<sup>2</sup>*

**20** *We also sometimes make mistakes, but we can always start loving again! Jesus is always waiting for us!*

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**21** Let us live like this.

**22** "Sir...if I stole from someone, I'll give them back four times as much!" (Lk 19: 8)

**23** "Don't wait! Like Zacchaeus, begin to love immediately! And Jesus will be pleased. Chiara"(C. Lubich, in *Gen4* no. 10-11, October-November 1982, p.5)

## **24** I was angry on a sunny day

**25** My name is Riccardo and I live in Argentina. It was a beautiful day and the sun was shining outside.

**26** But instead of playing outside, I was locked in my room because I got so mad at my mom. That's sad. After a while, however, I thought that maybe my mother was sad too, because she loves me very much and surely she was as sorry as I was for what had happened to us.

**27** Then I thought: "I'll put my room in order to surprise her!" So I started cleaning and arranging everything in order, which I really don't like to do!

**28** When I finished, I ran outside, gave Mom a kiss and took her to see the room: Mom, happy, she hugged me!

**29** How nice! I looked outside...it was still sunny: now I could go and play!

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**30** Let us live this.

**31** "Sir...if I stole from someone, I'll give them back four times as much!" (Lk 19: 8)

**32** "Don't wait! Like Zacchaeus, he begins to love immediately! And Jesus will be pleased. Chiara"(C. Lubich, in *Gen4* no. 10-11, October-November 1982, p.5)

**33** Like Jesus, I try to love everyone

**34** My name is Emily.

**35** In my class there is a girl who dislikes everyone, because she always has so many things - pencils, pens, colors...- but she never lends anything to others.

**36** One day, however, she came to class very agitated. She pulled out a book from her folder that had fallen on the way to class and that was broken in several places. She really didn't want the teacher to see it that way.

**37** She asked if anyone had a scotch to lend her to fix the book before the class began.

But all the other companions refused: "We don't give it to you, because you never lend us anything!"

**38** But I felt in my heart that I could not do this and I said to the others: "Jesus loved everyone, I too want to do the same".

**39** Then I went to her, gave her the scotch and even helped her fix the book.

**40** I felt that Jesus in my heart was happy!" (Africa-Kenya)

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**41** Notes:

<sup>1</sup>. Zacchaeus "tried to see who Jesus was" (Lk 19: 3); he did not want to meet him, but he was curious: he wanted to see that character of whom he had heard extraordinary things. It was a curious thing. And being short in stature, "to be able to see him" (Lk 19: 4) he climbs a tree. When Jesus gets there, he looks up and sees him (cf. Lk 19: 5). And this is

important: the first glance is not of Zacchaeus, but of Jesus, who among the many faces that surrounded him – the crowd – looks for just that. The Lord's merciful gaze reaches us before we ourselves realize that we need it to be saved. And with this gaze of the divine Master begins the miracle of the conversion of the sinner. In fact, Jesus calls him, and calls him by name: "Zacchaeus, go down immediately, because today I must stop at your house" (Lk 19: 5). He does not reproach him, he does not "preach" to him; he tells him that he *must* go to him: "he must", because it is the Father's will. Despite people's murmurings, Jesus chooses to stop at the home of that public sinner. [...] The welcome and attention of Jesus towards him led that man to a clear change of mentality: in an instant he realizes how petty a life all taken up with money is, at the cost of stealing from others and receiving their contempt. Having the Lord there, in his home, makes him see everything with different eyes, even with a little of the tenderness with which Jesus looked at him. And his way of seeing and using money also changes: the gesture of grabbing is replaced by that of giving. In fact, he decides to give half of what he owns to the poor and to return four times as much to those he has robbed (cf. Lk 19: 8). Zacchaeus discovers from Jesus that it is possible to love freely: until now he was stingy, now he becomes generous; he had the taste to accumulate, now he rejoices in distributing. By encountering Love, discovering that he is loved despite his sins, he becomes capable of loving others, making money a sign of solidarity and communion. [...] (Pope Francis, *Angelus*, 3.11.2019)

<sup>2</sup> "Go down immediately, because today I must stop at your house" (Lk 19: 5) "The first thing that comes to mind in front of this scene is the love of Jesus for those who seem furthest from God. It is a love that takes the initiative, going beyond human patterns, prejudices, the opinions of so-called well-thinkers, social conveniences, everything. It is a love that does not judge, does not weigh guilt and personal responsibility [...]; a love that does not measure distances, but rather is attracted by man's weakness and his inability to get out of it.

'Get off now, because I have to stop at your house today.' The second important aspect in the episode of Zacchaeus is the radical transformation that takes place in him. Humanly speaking, his situation is very difficult. But with the arrival of Jesus in his home, the unpredictable happens. Conquered by his love, Zacchaeus feels driven to open his heart, to admit all his sins, declaring himself ready to repair the evil committed and to set his life in a totally new way: no longer on selfishness, but on service to others. Finally, it is worth noting the personal relationship that is established between him and Jesus, with the peace that follows and the joy of Zacchaeus being now his collaborator and friend. 'Get off now, because I have to stop at your house today.' How then to live this month's Word of Life? We too, like Zacchaeus, are poor sinners. Jesus also says to us: "Come down immediately", that is, leave your isolation, your fears, your prejudices, your retreat into the past, your fears of not making it and go to Jesus. You believe that his love is much greater than your weakness. He sees goodwill in you more than mistakes and failures; indeed, he came precisely to free and give strength to that flame, that desire for good that is within you. [...]" (C. Lubich, in *Parole di Vita*, edited by F. Ciardi, Città Nuova, Rome 2017, pp. 442-443)

\*Some insights from the rich theology of the **Eastern Orthodox Churches**, edited by Sherin H. Salama:

"**St. John Chrysostom** believes that the arrival of Christ the Lord in the house of Zacchaeus gave joy to Zacchaeus, so much so that it seemed as if he had two wings, soaring over temporal things, so he said: "Lord, I give half of my money to the poor..." We can say that sin wounds the soul and makes it lose joy, so it lives attached to the world and temporal things, losing eternal hope and inner joy. However, the transfiguration of the Lord in the soul and the hearing of His voice fill it with hope and elevate it above all temporal dependence, so that it lives as on the wings of the spirit, ascending from glory to glory, enjoying grace to grace and soaring from strength to strength with true joy."

(*Explanation of the Bible - The New Testament - Father Tadros Yacoub Malti Necklace "From the Interpretation and Reflections of the Early Fathers"- Luke 19 - Interpretation of the Gospel of Luke, Our Friend in Jerusalem*)

## 42 By the Gen4 Center