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*"Christ caring for People
through People"*

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Luke 19:1-10 (The Message)

Jesus walked through Jericho. Zacchaeus was there, the head tax man and quite rich. He wanted desperately to see Jesus, but the crowd was in his way—he was a short man and couldn't see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed up in a sycamore tree so he could see Jesus when he came by. When Jesus got to the tree, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry down. Today is my day to be a guest in your home." Zacchaeus scrambled out of the tree, hardly believing his good luck, delighted to take Jesus home with him. Everyone who saw the incident was indignant and grumped, "What business does he have getting cozy with this crook?" Zacchaeus just stood there, a little stunned. He stammered apologetically, "Master, I give away half my income to the poor—and if I'm caught cheating, I pay four times the damages." Jesus said, "Today is salvation day in this home! For the Son of Man came to find and restore the lost."

In the words of commentator Matthew Henry, "Zacchaeus is a happy man, now that he is turned from sin to God. Now that he is saved from his sins, from the guilt of them, from the power of them, all the benefits of salvation are his. Christ is come to his house, and where Christ comes he brings salvation with him." Being a well educated Jew the words of the Psalmist David may have leapt to his mind after this experience:

"Count yourself lucky, how happy you must be, you get a fresh start, your slate is wiped clean. Count yourself lucky— God holds nothing against you - and you're holding nothing back from him. When I kept it all inside, my bones turned to powder, my words became daylong groans. The pressure never let up; all the juices of my life dried up. Then I let it all out; I said, "I'll make a clean breast of my failures to God." Suddenly the pressure was gone, my guilt dissolved, my sin disappeared. Every one of us needs to pray." Psalm 32:1-6 (The Message)

Zacchaeus took notice of Jesus. He probably thought that Jesus would pass by and never notice him sitting up in that tree. But Jesus once again showed great sensitivity to those around him. I'm reminded of the woman with the bleeding problem who touched the hem of his garment in the midst of a pressing crowd. The disciples were amazed that Jesus even noticed her. But he did. Jesus was aware and looking out for those in great need. And Zacchaeus had such a need. Like the Psalmist David he was under severe emotional and spiritual stress. These internal stresses would not have been noticed by others in the crowd, but they instantly attracted Jesus' attention. This was exactly the kind of need he had come to seek out and to relieve. Jesus entered his house that day, and he also entered his heart. Instantly the pressure, the guilt, and the anxiety, were gone. No wonder Zach was a happy man.

Jesus is ready today and every day to work such a miracle in each of us. If we once pay attention to him he will certainly pay attention to us and we will find ourselves similarly the possessors of such a change. We will indeed count ourselves lucky and happy for we too will receive a fresh start and have our slates whipped clean. *"Count yourself lucky— God holds nothing against you – and you (shouldn't be) holding anything back from him."*

May you look for him today. Be assured he is looking for you already.

Amen.

(Rev.) John McGurrin