

Scripture Study

Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C



Opening prayer

Wisdom 11:22—12:2 (Ps 145:1-2,8-11,13-14) 2 Thessalonians 1:11—2:2 **Luke 19:1-10**

Overview of the Gospel:

- In this Sunday's Gospel reading, Jesus is passing through the town of Jericho as he makes his final journey to Jerusalem. As he does, a chief tax collector, Zacchaeus, clamors to have a look at him, even to the point of climbing a tree.
- As we saw last week, the Jews of that time and place regarded tax collectors as sinners and traitors. Zacchaeus himself acknowledges that he has led a sinful life (verse 8). Jesus, however, calls Zacchaeus by name, and asks that he be invited home to dine with him—that very evening. The response of Zacchaeus is immediate and joyful (verse 6).
- As usual, Jesus scandalizes the Pharisees by the company he keeps and they begin to murmur against him (verse 7; Matthew 9:10-13). Zacchaeus defends himself (to the Lord, not to those who were grumbling) and pledges restitution over and above the requirements of the Jewish Law (Exodus 21:37—22:1-3; Numbers 5:5-7).
- Jesus himself offers no excuses. He simply states the reason that he was sent into the world—to seek out and to save sinners (Matthew 9:13; John 3:16-17).

Questions:

- In the First Reading, the writer of the Book of Wisdom tells us that God is mindful and cares for the least of his Creation, and extends mercy to all who would accept it. How does this apply to Zacchaeus? How does it apply to you? How do you apply it to others?
- In the Second Reading, what are the gifts that St. Paul prays that God may bless the Thessalonians with? What power is going to supply these gifts? Possessed of these gifts, what event does Paul warn them not to become preoccupied with?
- Where else in the Scriptures do you see the town of Jericho mentioned (Joshua 2:1-7, 6; Mark 10:46; Luke 10:30)? What do you imagine this town to have been like?
- How does Zacchaeus compare with the rich official (Luke 18:18-30) in his approach and response to Jesus? How did Zacchaeus show himself to be a true son of Abraham (Luke 3:12-13; Romans 4:12)?
- Why does Jesus dine with Zacchaeus? Why does this bother others? Do you think Jesus' words (vv 9-10) stopped the crowds' muttering?
- Where did Jesus first find you? (Up a tree? Out on a limb?) How did he get you to join him?
- What was Zacchaeus' attitude toward his own dignity in his desire to see Jesus? How willing are you to make a fool of yourself so that salvation may come to your house? What wrongs do you need to make right?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 2712, 549, 2412, 1443

Closing Prayer

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings!

Before you receive Jesus Christ, you should remove from your heart all worldly attachments which you know to be displeasing to Him. -St. Augustine

"Zacchaeus made haste and received Jesus joyfully"

Scripture: *Luke 19:1-10*

He entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchae'us; he was a chief tax collector, and rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchae'us, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it they all murmured, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And Zacchae'us stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost."

Meditation: What would you do if Jesus knocked on your door and said, "I must stay at your house today"? Would you be excited or embarrassed? Jesus often "dropped-in" at unexpected times and he often visited the "uninvited" — the poor, the lame, and even public sinners like Zacchaeus, the tax collector! Jesus Christ is the Savior of mankind; He has healed many sick people, has raised the dead to life and, particularly, has



brought forgiveness of sin and the gift of grace to those who approach Him in faith. As in the case of the sinful woman (cf. Luke 7:36-50), here He brings salvation to Zacchaeus, for the mission of the Son of Man is to save that which was lost.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector and, as such, was hated by the people, because the tax collectors were collaborators of the Roman authorities and were often guilty of abuses, such as over-charging people and accumulating great wealth at the expense of others. The Gospel implies that this man also had things to seek forgiveness for (cf. verses 7-10). Certainly he was very keen to see Jesus (no doubt moved by grace) and he did everything he could to do so. Jesus rewards his efforts by staying as a guest in his house. Moved by our Lord's presence Zacchaeus begins to lead a new life.

The crowd began to grumble against Jesus for showing affection to a man they considered to be an evildoer. Why would Jesus single him out for the honor of staying at his home? Our Lord makes no excuses for his behavior: He explains that this is exactly why He has come—to seek out sinners. He is putting into practice the parable of the lost sheep (cf. Luke 15:4-7), which was already prophesied in Ezekiel: "I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak" (34:16).

Zacchaeus needed God's merciful love and in his encounter with Jesus he found more than he imagined possible. He shows the depth of his repentance by deciding to give half of his goods to the poor and to use the other half for making restitution for fraud. Zacchaeus' testimony included more than words. His change of heart resulted in a change of life, a change that the whole community could experience as genuine. The Lord is always ready to make his home with us. Do you make room for him in your heart, your home, and in every area of your life?

"Lord, come and stay with me. Fill my home with your presence and fill my heart with your praise. Help me to show kindness and mercy to all, even to those who cause me harm."