



RIVERSIDE
GAWLER

Splash
Adults

Zacchaeus Transformed

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Why exactly did Jesus have a divine appointment with Zacchaeus, why was Zacchaeus singled out for an encounter with the Son of God? It's an interesting question and I believe far more complicated than it first appears. This is not simply a story of Jesus confronting bad behaviour and straightening it out. I believe this is a story about searching for real identity. I believe it is a story that showcases the desire of Jesus to address the real issue in Zacchaeus' life. Why do I say that? Well a few parts of the narrative make me ask some questions! You might want to read the story in Luke 19: 1-10 (page 872 in the church Bible) and ponder these questions along with me.

1) Why does a rich, comfortable, self-made man of status so desperately want to see Jesus? What is compelling him to do something as outrageous as to climb a tree in public?

Something is going on; this is not normal behaviour. Maybe Zacchaeus has an inferiority complex, we know he's small, that couldn't have been easy, and it may have even led him to work for the Romans. Zacchaeus might have been rich but I'm pretty sure he didn't have any solid friends; he's burnt his bridges with his own people by becoming a collaborator and traitor in their eyes. A small thieving Jew would also have not got any great support from his imperial employees. I believe Zacchaeus was lonely, rejected, discontented and lost. Money, status and power were not the answer, he was missing something.

2) Why does Zacchaeus make a declaration about his past financial dealings and attempt to make amends?

I suppose Jesus must have said something to Zacchaeus about his job and the way he did things but that is not recorded in Scripture, but something has changed in Zacchaeus. He's realising that he's in the wrong, chosen the wrong track, made some poor decisions about his life that have had huge consequences. It seems that as soon as he had allowed Jesus into his world, his world changed. I find it interesting that Zacchaeus doesn't abandon his tax collecting; he's just going to do it properly with integrity and compassion, no more stealing, no more embezzlement. The external hasn't changed the internal attitude has. Jesus has had such an impact that Zacchaeus has changed from the inside out.

3) Why did Jesus choose to call Zacchaeus a true son of Abraham?

Jesus always knows exactly what we need. Zacchaeus needed confirmation that it was still possible to be one of God's chosen people, still a beloved son. When his identity was confirmed and he's turned away from his sinful past he is filled with a joy that overflows to bless others. Just imagine the poor of that town being blessed by his generosity. Just imagine those who had been mistreated being paid back by a repentant Zacchaeus. His life was transformed from the inside so that he could bless others on the outside.

QUESTIONS FOR YOU

Are you living out your true identity?

Does your past impact your present?

Do you know who you really are or is there something missing?

Do you need an encounter with the living God, Jesus Christ?

