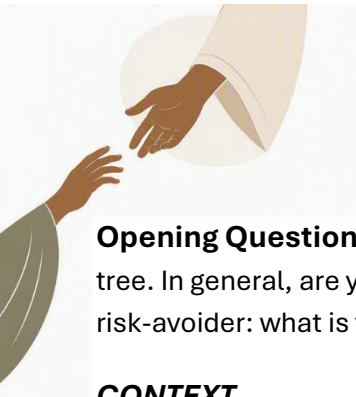




Week Seven: Encountering Jesus when we are LOST

Luke 19:1-10

Opening Question: Today we meet a main character who takes a risk by shimmying himself up to the top of a tree. In general, are you a risk-taker or risk-avoider? If risk-taker: what is one of the riskiest things you have done? If risk-avoider: what is your favorite low-key activity?

CONTEXT

A quick look back: Last week Jesus engaged with his disciples in the midst of their pride. What example did he use to combat pride? What does pride cause us to miss and why does this matter? What did Jesus teach about “insiders” and “outsiders”?

Today’s Passage: Today in our story we find Jesus inviting himself to the house of Zacchaeus- one of the most despised people in Jericho. Zacchaeus is a tax collector, which means that he is someone born of Jewish heritage who has chosen to work for Rome and is thus considered a traitor. The Jews despised Roman taxes because they supported a secular government and its pagan gods. As a tax collector, Zacchaeus would have already made himself rich by overcharging his fellow Jews, but as the CHIEF tax collector, he would have been even richer off the gains he made from those working under him. But today, Zacchaeus acts in all kinds of unexpected ways- running down the street and climbing trees (both considered totally undignified in this 1st century world!) and then drawing the attention of Jesus himself. What happens after that stuns the crowds and changes Zacchaeus’s life forever. Today we get to see what happens when the lost encounter Jesus.

CONTENT

Read Luke 19: 1-10 out loud and then pick ONE of the following ways (Option A, B, or C) to help your group engage with this passage.

Option A. Notice/Wonder: Ask everyone to read the passage again quietly on their own. As they read, ask them to make a list like the one below. Remember that what people notice or wonder can just be small, simple things.

What do I NOTICE about this text?

What do I WONDER about?

Once everyone has had the chance to make their list, come together as a group to share and discuss your observations, writing them in a place where everyone can see the list as it develops.

Option B. Creative Engagement: Give everyone paper and drawing supplies. Have everyone read the passage again on their own, then invite them to spend some time illustrating the passage (or a part of the passage) in whatever way they want- concrete, abstract, colors, images, lists, words. When everyone has completed their art, come together to share and discuss what you drew and why.

Option C. Guided Bible Study Questions:

1. The text implies that Zacchaeus is seeing Jesus for the first time. What happens in vs 5 that makes this meeting miraculous? What does Jesus know?
2. We don’t get any dialogue indicating that Jesus calls Zacchaeus to change or repent, and yet we see a radical transformation in Zacchaeus. What did Jesus do that caused this to happen?
3. According to Jewish law, anyone who cheated someone out of money was required to pay back that amount plus 20 percent (Num 5:7). What does Zacchaeus decide to pay? What does this tell you about the authenticity of his repentance?

4. What does Jesus call Zacchaeus in vs 9? Based on what you know from the context section today, how do you think the crowds reacted to this? What might this have meant to Zacchaeus?
5. The crowds call Zacchaeus a “sinner” (vs 7). But Jesus calls him something else. How does Jesus identify Zacchaeus in the last word of vs 10? How does this help us understand the way Jesus sees those caught in destructive patterns of behavior?

APPLICATION

How does all of this connect to our lives? Here are some questions to help guide your discussion.

Choose one or several.

- Think about putting this story in a modern context. Who might be the “Zacchaeus” of our time? Where could you see this story taking place? Who would be in the crowd? How does imagining the story in a modern context help it come alive or bring new insight into its significance?
- Have you ever been the recipient of a lavish or perfectly-timed act of generosity? What happened and what was that experience like?
- Sometimes when we feel far from God- dry in our faith, stuck in patterns of sin, too busy with other things- we imagine that God is disappointed in us. That Jesus probably wants nothing to do with us. How does this story challenge that narrative? Why is the word “lost” so important to this story and to understanding how Jesus sees us in these moments?
- Have you ever had someone invite you into something (their home, a group they are in, a friendship circle, etc..) that ended up changing or influencing your life in a significant way? Share with the group.

PRAYER

Close your time together in prayer using one of the ideas below

- Use words/images/themes from the passage to guide your prayer.
- Raise up your “wonderings” from the notice/wonder section to God in prayer
- Take prayer requests and pray over each other as a group or in small groups
- Use this written prayer:

God of the lost-

Even though your word is so clear in telling us that you came “to seek and save the lost,” it is often so hard for us to believe this. So hard for us to receive this. Because when we are honest, we know that every single one of us is lost. Every one of us has patterns in our lives that misshape us, misidentify us, mislead us. Thank you for knowing our name. For calling us out of hiding, out of denial, out of fear. And for so boldly inviting yourself right into the middle of our mess. What a joy it is when we realize that we are seen, known, loved, saved. We pray today that we might respond to that joy with actions that demonstrate your abundance and generosity to those around us. And that we might be people who are not afraid to claim with total confidence that because Jesus has shown up in our lives- we, the beloved found ones- will never be the same. Thank you, Jesus, for seeking and saving us.

We pray this in Your name, Amen.