Zaccheaus Bible Study: Found

I have played hide-and-seek with many children over the years. While older children understand the object of the game…when you are hiding, you try to not be *found* by the person doing the seeking…younger children view the game differently. In fact, younger children don't seem to understand the point of the game at all. The biggest thrill for the hiding younger child is to be *found*.

Most of the time, when younger children are "hiding", they giggle and talk, awaiting that exciting moment of being discovered by the seeker. And then, when the seeker finally uncovers their hiding place, they erupt in giggles and squeals of delight…they revel in being *found*.

One of my favorite Bible stories is a sort of hide and seek story about a man named Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was so much more than a wee little man. He was a Jewish man who had exchanged the honor of his heritage to work for the Roman government; a government that was oppressing his people. He had hired himself out as an employee of the Roman Empire. He was a tax collector, because there was much money to be made and Zacchaeus wanted to make it.

Zacchaeus was not just any tax collector, he was the *chief* tax collector, the man responsible for gathering all of the taxes in the region of Judea, with tax collectors of lesser positions working under him.

It seemed the trade-off was worth it to Zacchaeus…he liked being rich. And Zacchaeus didn't seem to mind being the object of contempt and disdain of his fellow countrymen.

But maybe the money and all of his riches couldn't fill up the empty places deep within him. Maybe the lack of friends left him wanting…wanting something that a nice house and gold coins couldn't satisfy.

As the story goes, Zacchaeus heard one day that the Rabbi Jesus would be passing through his town of Jericho. This peaked the tax collector's interest…he wanted to see this man whom he had heard so much about.

Crowds of people were everywhere trying to get a look at Jesus; there was no way that a person of shorter stature *stood* a chance (ok, pun intended) at getting a glimpse of Jesus. Zacchaeus had an idea…he would run ahead of the crowds and climb up into a sycamore tree that was beside the road.

It seemed kind of a ridiculous idea for a man of his position to risk the humiliation that climbing a tree might bring upon him if he were discovered. The people would surely jeer at him and mock him. But, Zacchaeus began to realize that he just had to see this man, Jesus, this miracle worker, for himself.

So, he did it. Zacchaeus ran ahead and climbed the tree. He remained silent as he watched the crowd approach with Jesus in the center of the throng. Zacchaeus may have

even held his breath as the multitude began passing under the tree. He caught a glimpse of the Rabbi. The Rabbi's steps came to a halt right underneath the tree. *Jesus looked up and into the eyes of the tax collector.* Jesus spoke, calling him by name, "Zacchaeus! You must come down from the tree quickly because I am on my way to your house. I thought we would have a visit today."

The surprised tax collector did just as Jesus told him…he came down out of the tree. With great excitement and delight the chief tax collector escorted Jesus to his home.

We're not told what the two men talked about that day. But we are told in Scripture that their conversations wrought a change in the wee little man. Zacchaeus had a change of heart; he wanted to make restitution for all the money he had wrongly taken from his fellow citizens. He wanted to repay them. Zacchaeus also wanted to give of his wealth to the poor.

On a day that Zacchaeus thought he would simply be a bystander in the crowds when Jesus came to town, he ended up playing host for the Messiah and he wound up with a friend who would change his life forever. When Zacchaeus climbed up into that tree seeking to see, he did not know that it would lead to being *found* by a loving Savior.

Read the story about Zacchaeus found in Luke 19:1-10:

"Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. (2) A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. (3) He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. (4) So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

(5) When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.' (6) So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

(7) All the people saw this and began to mutter, 'He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.'

(8) But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.'

(9) Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. (10) For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.'"

Think about—

--the time and events leading up to the day you were first *found* by Jesus. Describe what happened and how being *found* by a loving God made you feel.

--How would it make you feel today, this very day, if Jesus found you and told you that He just wanted to come spend the day with you?

--If Jesus came to your home, what would you want to talk to Him about? What would you want to do with Him as your Companion?

In Luke 19:9-10, at the end of the story of Zacchaeus and Jesus, Jesus summed up the events of the day: "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a son of Abraham (a true believer). And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those who are lost." (New Living Translation)

--Would you like to be found by Jesus today? He is in the seeking business. We can never go too far away from His presence that He doesn't come looking for us.

Prayer—My Seeker and Savior God, sometimes I feel like I am far away from where You are. Thank You for always seeking me out. Thank you for desiring to be with me. I welcome You into the home of my heart today.

Author: Donna Brown - June 13, 2019