

COURAGEOUS

CHRISTIANS

HOLIDAY CLUB

Zacchaeus: Courage to give everything to Jesus

One day, Jesus and disciples were on their way back up to Jerusalem and they travelled through Jericho. Many had heard that Jesus was going to pass through the town and so a large crowd had gathered, hoping to see him.

‘I hope he will heal my son,’ said one woman to her neighbour. ‘I heard that he healed a man born blind.’

‘I hope that I can just touch his cloak!’ said another man.

‘I just want to hear him speak about God and about forgiveness,’ said another man. ‘I need to hear that God loves me!’

Now a man named Zacchaeus lived in Jericho. He was the chief tax collector, responsible for handing over all the taxes to the Roman authorities. People didn’t like Zacchaeus very much because he was rude and unkind and many knew that he made them pay more money than they needed to. Also, he worked for the Romans and the Romans were not kind to the Jews. Zacchaeus was intrigued to hear that Jesus was coming to Jericho for he too had heard amazing stories about this teacher from Nazareth. He tried to push his way through the crowd to the front so he could see. But because he was short, and because people didn’t like him rudely pushing and shoving, they wouldn’t let him through. ‘What shall I do?’ thought Zacchaeus. ‘I will not be able to see Jesus from back here! I am not tall enough. I don’t want to miss him! What shall I do?’ As Zacchaeus looked up at the huge sycamore tree beside the road, an idea came to him.

The crowd grew restless. Suddenly they began to cheer and clap as Jesus came and sat down in their midst. A hush fell as he began to speak. But just as he opened his mouth,

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Jesus looked up at the sycamore tree beside the road and spotted Zacchaeus there, sitting on a branch.

‘Hey there, Zach!’ said Jesus. He smiled at the little man hiding in the tree. ‘Come down from there! I am coming to your house today, Zach!’ The crowd began to mutter and grumble.

‘Why is the Teacher going to Zacchaeus’ house? Doesn’t he know that this man has bullied and cheated us for years? Why does he want to spend time with him?’

Zacchaeus could hear them complaining but he was overjoyed. He scrambled down the tree and led Jesus and his disciples back to his large, spacious home. ‘Please, help yourself to food and drink,’ Zacchaeus said to them all. ‘You are welcome here. I am sorry that I cheated and stole from all those people. I want to put it right. I will pay back anyone I have stolen from four times what I owe. And...’ Zacchaeus hesitated.

Jesus looked at Zacchaeus and smiled. ‘And?’ he asked, the question hanging in the air.

‘And... I will give away half of all my possessions to the poor. I promise. I really want to change. Meeting you has changed me, Jesus.’

Jesus took Zacchaeus in his arms and hugged him tight. ‘You are forgiven. You have been rescued from your old life and new life has been given to you and your household today. That is why I came to your house today, Zach!’