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## Meditation on Luke 19:1-10

*'Face to Face with Jesus | Man Out on A Limb'*

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*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [Phil 1,2] Amen.*

∴ ONE ∴

My dear sisters and brothers,

After those five weeks that I was not able to be here at Peace Church it is wonderful to see all of you face to face again.

How important and how different is it, to really be able to meet face to face.

With the Corona pandemic starting in March 2020, and with the lockdowns which we had to go through we suddenly had to experience how it is not to be able to meet face to face.

Yes, we were able to phone, skype, zoom, or whatever. Great ways of keeping up connections, of keeping in some sort of virtual touch.

But it is so different when we meet face to face.

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And this morning we hear about an absolute special face to face encounter.

Zaccheus meets Jesus face to face, this in front of a large audience.

::: TWO :::

Listen to the story in Luke 19, verses 1-10:

*<sup>1</sup> Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through.*

*<sup>2</sup> A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy.*

*<sup>3</sup> He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd.*

*<sup>4</sup> So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.*

*<sup>5</sup> When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."<sup>6</sup> So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.*

*<sup>7</sup> All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."*

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<sup>8</sup> *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.”*

<sup>9</sup> *Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.*

<sup>10</sup> *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*<sup>1</sup>

### ::: THREE :::

What wonderful last to sentences to this whole story:

*Jesus said to [Zaccheus], “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.*

*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*

There is Zaccheus who was looking for Jesus, even climbed out on the limb of a tree to see Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> [The New International Version](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Lk 19:1–10.

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I don't know if he really wanted to have such a face to face encounter with Jesus. All which is said is that he wanted to see him.

Isn't the whole situation described here a little slapsticky?

A short grown *chief* tax collector?

An *officer* working for the romans, but an outcast to his own people?

A man ready to climb on a tree, like a child, not caring about others who might make fun of him?

I could imagine this opening setting quite well as that of a Louis de Funès movie.

### ::: FOUR :::

But the situation doesn't remain this way.

Zaccheus is able to see Jesus. But much more important now is that Jesus sees Zaccheus.

And obviously he sees much more than just a man in a tree.

And he obviously sees much more than a short grown chief tax collector..., more than an *officer* working for the romans, but an outcast to his own people...

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And he sees so much more... he sees, understands why this man is ready to climb on a tree, like a child, not caring about others who might make fun of him.

He sees the man who needs salvation. Salvation as the desperate wish to belong again.

::: FIVE :::

Now listen to some thoughts by the Rev. Dr. Derek Weber, Director of Discipleship Ministries of the United Methodist Church:

*“He’s not worth it. That’s what [the crowd is] saying. Don’t waste your time on him, keep the trains running, Jesus. Stay on target. Keep out of the gutters, off the side streets, out of the trees.*

*Stick to your own kind. His kind, the sinner kind, isn’t worth bothering with.*

*Jesus says his kind is your kind. He is one of you. A son of Abraham, like you. A child of God, like you.*

*If I ignore him, I ignore you.*

*But I didn't come to ignore the ones who will go out on a limb just to see me.*

*The ones who will risk reputation, such as it might have been.*

*The ones who will put aside "proper behavior" and become like a little child just to see me.*

*We don't know what was in Zacchaeus's mind when he ran and climbed a tree.*

*Which I guess means, in part, that since our motives are at best mixed, we've got a chance too.*

*Jesus just might invite himself into our houses with a surprising urgency.*

*No matter what anyone else seems to think, we are worth the effort, worth the disruption, worth the inconvenience of loving.*

**::: SIX :::**

*Now ask yourself this question of this passage: "Where are you in the story?" Are you standing with the crowd, shaking your head at those people who aren't worth it?*

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*Or are you standing next to Jesus, inviting yourself into the homes of those others think are sinners?*

*Or perhaps, are you too out on a limb, hoping for a glimpse of Jesus and a whole new way of living?"<sup>2</sup>*

### ::: SEVEN :::

*'Every encounter with Jesus brings transformation.*

*At the very least, we see ourselves in a new light, in all our humanness. And we can either weep or laugh.*

*When we weep, we might pull into ourselves and run away from the source of pain and shame.*

*But if we can laugh, then we might be able to stay and find healing and a new way of being alive in the world.*

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<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/face-to-face-with-jesus/twenty-first-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes/twenty-first-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-preaching-notes> (2022-10-28)

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*Through these encounters, these face-to-face moments that individuals and groups had with Jesus here in the gospel of Luke, we can find a way to new life and new hope if we're willing to be honest with ourselves and with him.*

*We too here [...] want to be face to face with Jesus.'*

*In our grown-up cynicism, we don't believe in the power of an encounter with Christ as we used to.*

*Maybe here we can recapture our childlike faith enough to believe that redemption is really possible. We might believe it enough to go out on a limb ourselves.<sup>3</sup>*

And how would it be when Jesus came up to you saying:

“Today salvation has come to your house, because you, too, are a child of God. I came to seek and to save you. And I have found you.”

::: Amen

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<sup>3</sup> See Rev. Dr. Derek Weber, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/face-to-face-with-jesus/twenty-first-sunday-after-pentecost-year-c-lectionary-planning-notes> (2022-10-28)