



Welcoming Zacchaeus

(based on Luke 19:1-10)

The city of Jericho buzzed with the exciting news. “Jesus is coming,” the people shouted to each other. “Let’s go and see him!” A huge crowd gathered along the road. Everyone was very excited to see Jesus.

A tax collector named Zacchaeus (zak-KEE-uhs) was in the crowd. Zacchaeus was rich, but he was not popular. Almost everyone hated tax collectors because they worked for the Roman leaders.

Zacchaeus was a short man who could not see over the crowd. The people in the crowd would not let the tax collector push to the front so he could see. After trying for a while, Zacchaeus ran ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree that was next to the road. It was a lovely tall tree and gave Zacchaeus a great view.

When Jesus reached the tree, he looked up and saw Zacchaeus sitting there. To Zacchaeus’ delight Jesus spoke to him, “Zacchaeus,” Jesus called. “Hurry down. I must be a guest in your house today.”

Zacchaeus scrambled out of the tree hardly able to believe his good fortune. Could it be true? Jesus wanted to come to his house?

The crowd was not as pleased as Zacchaeus. In fact, they were very upset. “Jesus is going to the house of a tax collector,” they muttered indignantly to each other. “Everyone knows that tax collectors do not follow in God’s way. Why would Jesus go to the house of a sinner?”

When he heard the grumbles of the crowd, Zacchaeus stopped and spoke to Jesus: “Teacher, I give away half of my money to the poor,” he stammered. “If I discover that I have cheated anyone, I pay that person back four times what I owe him.”

The crowd went quiet and looked at Zacchaeus in astonishment. Could it be true? Could a tax collector follow in God’s way? Jesus smiled and looked around at the crowd.

“A good thing has happened here today,” said Jesus.

“Now you can see by his actions that Zacchaeus is part of the family of God. He is a child of Abraham just like you. I have come to welcome those on the outside back into the community.”

Then Zacchaeus and Jesus went to Zacchaeus’ home and had a wonderful meal together.



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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Invite your children to imagine that they are Zacchaeus. Encourage them to shade their eyes, look around, stand on tiptoe, climb stairs, and jump high to see Jesus.
- The story tells us that some people did not like Zacchaeus. Wonder how Jesus going to Zacchaeus's house helped Zacchaeus make friends in his community.
- Jesus announced he was coming to Zacchaeus's house. Ask people in your family to imagine what they would do to welcome Jesus. Take turns finishing this sentence: "Jesus is coming to my house, and I will welcome him by or with . . ."



Responding to God's Grace

- Help your child show hospitality this week by inviting a child who they have not invited before or would not usually invite to come to your home or to a park for a playdate. Provide supplies for your child to make an invitation or help them practice a phone call. Deliver the invitation or make the call and communicate plans with the child's parents or caregivers. Let your child help with the preparations for the day, such as making a snack. Provide opportunities for your child to offer hospitality regularly.
- Invite your children to make welcome signs for your home. Fold and decorate an index card with "Welcome" to place on a bedside table for an overnight guest. Make a larger sign to tape on a door or a banner to hang on a gate or fence. Talk to your church or other organizations about making and posting signs to welcome visitors.
- Consider how Zacchaeus was ostracized or excluded from his community and how that made him feel. Read *Wings* by Christopher Myers and consider the same feelings by the boy in the story. Are there times when you feel excluded? How can you welcome someone who feels that way? How does the Zacchaeus story show us God's grace?

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Watch a YouTube video about Zacchaeus: "God's Story: Zacchaeus" (goo.gl/L6TAU5). Zacchaeus recognized that although he was hosting Jesus in his home, it was really Jesus who was welcoming him, offering him love and forgiveness. What can you do to show your gratitude for God's grace?
- Pray this prayer this week.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come. Amen.

Note: goo.gl web addresses are case sensitive.