

Reading:- Luke Chapter 19 verses 1 to 10

Zacchaeus was a small but important man who was the chief of the tax collectors. The job of a tax-collector was to collect money from the people.

Zacchaeus worked in the walled town of Jericho, with a gate in the wall, called the toll gate. Here Zacchaeus and other tax-collectors would sit at a table, waiting for travellers to come through the gate into Jericho. There would be men and camels and asses bringing their goods to be sold in the market; men on foot with their bundles slung on their backs; farmers coming in to sell their fruit and vegetables. Each one had to stop at the tax-collectors' table to pay a tax (a sum of money), on the goods he had brought to sell. Some of the money collected was handed over to the Roman Emperor, who ruled over the Jews in Palestine, and the rest was the wages of the tax-gathers. The tax-collector was often greedy and dishonest, and the Jewish people hated him. Zacchaeus had a big house in or near Jericho, he dressed more elaborately than the common people, but he had few friends, and would be a very lonely man.

Jericho was a beautiful town, with lovely trees in its streets and gardens. On this day it was crowded with people, many on their way to Jerusalem to the feast of the passover. Among the travellers was Jesus and his disciples; the people, hearing of his coming, turned out to see him, to hear him speak, and perhaps, even see a miracle performed. Zacchaeus was very eager to see Jesus, but because he was so small he could not see over the peoples heads. And being disliked by the people, they made it difficult for him to see Jesus. He saw a Sycamore tree and climbed the tree and sat on one of the branches. Everyone laughed at Zacchaeus sitting in a tree.

When Jesus passed by he stopped right under the tree where Zacchaeus was and looking up Jesus called to him "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide at thy house." Zacchaeus made haste and came down, very surprised and impressed that Jesus knew his name. The crowd made some very nasty remarks about Jesus going to be a guest of a man who was a sinner.

But Zacchaeus was sorry now for any wrong he had done. Zacchaeus said "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." Imagine the gasps of the crowd, but most important of all, imagine the pleasure of Jesus. Jesus had saved this man from his wrong way of life, and that was what he came to do for all of us.

Point to remember:- Jesus by his love changed the life of a man whom people despised.