

The Reading is from the Holy Gospel According to St. Luke (19:1-10; II Tim. 4:9-15)

+ In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit +

Today's Gospel is about the spiritual eyes of a man being healed. It's about the healing not of the body, but of the soul. This healing is accomplished by Christ working together with the will and desire of man name Zacchaeus. And being the God-man He accomplishes the healing, enlightenment, and salvation of Zacchaeus, and all of us, on earth.ⁱ

Zacchaeus was a small man. His physical height, in this case, is a reflection of His spiritual stature. He was a small man kept short by the weight of riches.ⁱⁱ He was chief among those who defrauded the people, and was part of the Roman oppression. Nevertheless, Zacchaeus was attracted to Christ and had a desire, a desire, to see who Jesus was; who He is.ⁱⁱⁱ

Despite his sinfulness he did not turn away from Christ, but instead sought a way past the crowd, ran forward, and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus. See the desire? See the intensity? See the longing?^{iv} Zacchaeus was bound by sin and corruption, and he knew it, but he desired to free of it.

If we pay attention to our hearts, if we are attentive and watchful, do we not find ourselves to be just like Zacchaeus: Chief among sinners, but nevertheless desiring to see and know Christ; to be free? We have the first fruits of the Spirit, but we too, as St. Paul says, groan within ourselves eagerly waiting in hope our salvation and our freedom in Divine Sonship.^v

Yes, we are very much like Zacchaeus. So let us imitate his desire that Christ might meet us on our pilgrim's road, for Christ. Recall the Wisdom of Solomon where it is written that wisdom meets on the road those who desire her. Today we see this most clearly, for it is Christ who is the Wisdom of God who meets the longing Zacchaeus on the road.^{vi}

Now when Christ came to Zacchaeus' home the people complained. They murmured that Christ went in to be the guest of a tax collector and sinner. So to show his repentance and silence those who would accuse Jesus Zacchaeus said, "Lord, I give half my good to the poor and if I have defrauded any by false accusation, I restore it fourfold." So Zacchaeus goes from being a lover of money, and a sinner, to a pure heart free from the bond of possession and greed. And it all started with a desire to see Jesus; to know Christ.^{vii}

Now here is another lesson: that the Word of God, who comes from the Father, took on flesh to seek and to save, to heal, the lost. He is the one who stands at the door and knocks; who comes in and dines with those who hear His voice and opens the door.^{viii} And He knocked as it were on Zacchaeus' door.

In the world today there is the false and yet popular idea that "I am fine just the way I am," or "I was born this way," or "God loves me just the way I am." It is true; we are born into a world that suffers the consequences of the fall. It is true that although we were dead in sin God loved us. But the incarnation, the cross, the grave, the third day resurrection, the ascension, the sitting at the right hand of the Father, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the second coming teach the whole truth. And we see this truth in Zacchaeus - that God desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness in live. God loves us and meets us where we are, but He doesn't leave us there. He met Zacchaeus, a chief sinner, but left that tax collector in a transformed state of repentance.

God loves us, and because He loves us He does not want to see us stuck in sin. If He thought we were fine just the way we are He would not have taken on flesh, healed our humanity, and put the reality of sin and death to death. If he thought we were fine being stuck in sin and death He would not have completed and perfected our humanity in and by His glorious crucifixion.

So for us to share in this perfection of God we can start with the desire and longing as we see expressed in Zacchaeus. Then we will find that Christ meets us along the road. We will find that Christ stands at the door and knock. We will find that Christ dines with us when we open. And so we will find that we are found by Him, and being found are transfigured in and by His glory.

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ⁱ St. Gregory Palamas *The Homilies*, Mount Tabour Publishing 511.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*, 511.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

^{iv} *Ibid.*, 512.

^v Rom. 8:18-25

^{vi} *Ibid.*, Wisdom of Solomon 6:16-20

^{vii} St. Gregory Palamas, 513.

^{viii} Rev. 3:20. Notice also the similarity of Zacchaeus' riches with the riches of the church of Laodicea, and that Christ comes in to dine with and save Zacchaeus.