

Why Did the Rich Man Climb the Tree?

A party guest repeated a parable about a Pharisee and a Tax Collector. As a chief tax collector himself, Zacchaeus had roared with laughter as his friend described the Pharisees' faces when the travelling preacher implied that their "righteousness" would not put them right with their God.

News came of a crowd accompanying this man through the town on the way up to the city. Zacchaeus decided to catch a glimpse of Jesus, to see what sort of person he really was. He ran to the sycamore-fig tree on the corner of the main road and, being rather short, climbed up it to get a better view.

Jesus stopped at the foot of the tree and invited himself to stay. It did not take long for Zacchaeus to get back down and welcome his guest, with all his followers, to his home. While his servants rushed around washing feet, preparing food and pouring drinks, he sat quietly with Jesus in the courtyard garden. They talked about how his desire for great wealth had distanced him from God and how lost he felt.

There were tears in Zacchaeus' eyes when they joined the others at the table. His knowledge that Jesus had sought him out and saved him, made him humble but full of joy. To his household's bewilderment, he announced that he was giving half of his possessions to the poor. His steward was also dismayed to hear that he had to go back through the tax accounts and repay four times the amount of any "irregularities" in income received.

"Why did the rich man climb the tree?" To see for himself the man he had heard about. Jesus met him where he was and showed him God's mercy and love. He can do the same for us too.

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