

**Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)**

**Luke 19:1-10**

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. This week, we will read Luke chapter 19. Today, we will read verses 1-10.

At the end of chapter 18, it speaks of Jesus approaching Jericho, and outside the city He met a blind man; as a result, He healed that blind man. "And immediately he received his sight, and followed Him, glorifying God." This happened outside the city of Jericho.

We have mentioned that this city of Jericho is a new city. In the Old Testament, although it was a cursed city, by the time of Jesus, King Herod had built a new city right next to the ruins of the old one, and this new city became extremely prosperous and wealthy. Actually, Jesus did not need to pass through Jericho. Most Jews tried their best to avoid going through Jericho because in the Old Testament it was a cursed city; but Jesus was determined to pass through Jericho, because right there was a person whom He needed to save—the one we are going to read about today.

**Verses 1-2: "Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich."**

Luke uses just a few words to tell us about this person. His name was Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus originally means "just" or "pure"—a very good name. Yet he was a chief tax collector. In Roman times, the Romans contracted out the tax collection in each region according to its wealth to the Israelites; these people were the tax collectors. And this Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector. What the Romans required was that the required amount of tax for that region be paid on time; after that, they asked

no further questions and instead gave the tax collector great space and great autonomy.

If this tax collector was just and honest, besides collecting the required taxes he would only add some handling fees sufficient for his living, but he could never become rich. The vast majority of tax collectors did not do this. Because the Romans gave them great power, they often over-collected taxes according to their own will. After handing over what was due to the Romans, the rest they kept for themselves. And this Zacchaeus, whose name means just and pure, was not only a tax collector but a chief tax collector; that is, he was in charge of the entire tax work in the Jericho region. Luke also says he was rich; in other words, he had gained much unrighteous wealth.

At this time Jesus was already very famous. No matter where He went, many people followed Him. Outside the city of Jericho, He caused a blind man to see; and that blind man loudly praised God and glorified God. I believe this news had also reached Zacchaeus' ears. He was a curious person.

**Verse 3: “And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature.”**

Although he had power and position and lived a wealthy life, he probably always felt that something was missing in his life. Having heard about all kinds of things concerning Jesus, he was very curious and wanted to see what kind of person Jesus really was. Just then he heard that Jesus had entered Jericho, so he was even more eager to see Jesus.

He wanted to see Jesus but faced two difficulties. The first difficulty was the external environment: there were many people. Because Jesus was famous, wherever He went there were crowds of people, so it was not easy to get close. The people crowding around Jesus could not receive any benefit themselves, and at the same time they kept others who wanted to approach Jesus from getting near. That was the external environment. The second difficulty was his natural

limitation: he was short in stature. With so many people, and being short, he could not see. But Zacchaeus, having become a chief tax collector, was clearly a very resourceful person.

**Verse 4: “So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way.”**

He quickly spotted the road that Jesus would surely pass by, so he ran ahead. There happened to be a large sycamore tree there. Sycamore trees usually have lush branches and leaves, so he climbed up into the sycamore tree with the purpose of seeing Jesus. It is not unusual for children to climb trees, but Zacchaeus was a man of power and wealth. We can imagine that the clothes he wore were also very luxurious. For such a somewhat older man from a wealthy family, dressed in fine and bright clothing, to climb a tree was really somewhat undignified. But because his desire to see Jesus was so strong, it overcame the feeling of embarrassment in his heart, and with great effort he climbed up into the sycamore tree.

**Verse 5: “And when Jesus came to that place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.’”**

He wanted to see Jesus, but Jesus’ purpose in entering Jericho was to find him. As Jesus walked along that road and came under the sycamore tree, knowing that Zacchaeus was up in the tree, He looked up and saw him. In these few verses there are many instances of “seeing.” Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, so he climbed up into the sycamore tree because he was too short. And when Jesus came under the sycamore tree, He looked up and saw Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, and Jesus also wanted to see Zacchaeus. The difference was that because of his short stature, Zacchaeus had looked up at others all his life—this is also where short people are at a disadvantage. But at this moment he was up in the sycamore tree, and Jesus looked up at him, so Jesus was the one looking up at him.

When we read the Bible we must picture such a scene in our minds: this man who had been despised all his life, regarded by the Israelites as a scoundrel and an extortioner of other people's money—the chief tax collector—had heard many very good reports and many deeds about Jesus. His heart longed for Jesus and he wanted to see Him. And the Jesus he wanted to see was now right under the sycamore tree, looking up at him. Not only looking at him, but also saying to him, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down!” He probably never imagined that Jesus could call out his name at once.

I believe that when he heard Jesus call “Zacchaeus,” his heart must have been shaken. Behind his wealthy life there must have been some areas of dissatisfaction; therefore he wanted to see Jesus. Unexpectedly, Jesus came personally before him, looked up at him, immediately called out his name, told him to come down quickly, and said, “for today I must stay at your house.” With his simple and pure desire just to see Jesus, he received in return the promise that Jesus would stay with him. He was truly overjoyed beyond expectation.

**Verse 6: “So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.”**

This was a scene he never could have imagined when he first wanted to see Jesus. Jesus actually knew him, called out his name, and would stay in his house. We can imagine that his reception was wholehearted and with all his strength; he brought out his very best. We do not know what kind of conversation took place between Jesus and Zacchaeus during this reception; Luke does not record any of that. Instead, he records the crowd—those who crowded around Jesus and prevented those who truly sought Jesus from getting near. When they saw that Jesus had gone to Zacchaeus' house, of course they knew that Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector.

**Verse 7: “But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, ‘He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.’”**

These sinners who crowded around Jesus could not receive the benefit of salvation themselves. Yet toward what Jesus said, every word and every action of His, they were full of discussion and full of criticism. They knew Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector, a sinner among them who often extorted their money. They all regarded him as a sinner, and yet Jesus went to stay with a sinner; therefore they kept murmuring and complaining.

**Verse 8: “Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.’”**

Before Zacchaeus met Jesus, he was still a money-hoarding chief tax collector. Unexpectedly, after seeing Jesus, receiving Jesus, and staying with Jesus, he immediately said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor.” This is such a great miracle, even greater than the blind man receiving his sight. And after Zacchaeus saw the Lord, he was immediately able to break free from the bondage of wealth over him; he was able to give half of all he had to the poor. He was a chief tax collector and extremely rich, yet he was able to break free from the bondage of possessions far more than the young ruler in chapter 18.

Not only that, he also said, “and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.” In Leviticus 6:1-5 it mentions that if you oppress someone and extort money from them, you must restore the principal and add one-fifth. But Zacchaeus said if he had taken anything by false accusation, he would restore fourfold. Restoring four times is according to the principle that whatever you have robbed or stolen from others, you must repay four times. He deeply knew that what he had done in the past was wrong. Not only was he saved, but he was also willing to pay the price for the wrong things he had done in the past. And this price was according to the heaviest standard of wrongdoing. So Zacchaeus was not only saved; he immediately cleaned up his old life. He was also able to break free from the control of possessions over him and give half of all he had to the poor. What great salvation this is!

**Verses 9-10: “And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.’”**

Zacchaeus, because he had heard about Jesus and out of curiosity wanted to see Jesus—with just such a simple desire—received salvation as a result. Not only did salvation come, but this salvation immediately changed the man himself: from a money-loving Zacchaeus who extorted others, he became a generous Zacchaeus willing to give half of all he had to help the poor. This is also the purpose for which Jesus came into the world: He came to seek and to save that which was lost. Every person saved by Him not only has the hope of eternal life but also lives out a high moral life in this present life.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for placing the example of Zacchaeus before us. We also truly confess to You that we too are often under various kinds of bondage and various kinds of control. But because we have a willing heart, a heart that is willing to come and see You and willing to draw near to You, You give us exceedingly great salvation. This salvation not only gives us the hope of eternal life but also, in our life in this present age, enables us to break free from all kinds of bondage and to live out a life that matches the character of Your children. Today, in my life, shine Your light on me and lead me so that I may be like Zacchaeus—no longer living the old life of the past, but living in the newness of the spirit a life that matches the identity of Your children. Bless me and everyone, everything, and every matter I contact today, so that they may all become a beautiful testimony for You. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ.