

THE POWER OF ACCEPTANCE

Luke 19:1-9

Zacchaeus the Tax Collector

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ²A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. ⁵When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” ⁶So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. ⁷All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.” ⁸But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” ⁹Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.

Setting:

Zacchaeus was a “traitor” to his own Jewish heritage, had sold himself out to the hated Roman government to collect taxes from his townspeople and travelers through the region. He was contracted to pay the Romans a certain amount of money, but had the power to levy any amount of tax on anyone he chose, any time, any day, and pocket everything above what he paid the Romans. He was a ‘sinner’ of the greatest description, in the mind of the Jewish culture/society, and no respectable person would ever be caught having anything to do with him! But Jesus was willing to break all the social/religious boundaries by offering to go to Zach’s house, and visit with him, actually, to befriend him! **To want to go to one’s house, was the highest of compliments, and sign of friendship/acceptance.**

Definition of personal acceptance: to welcome someone into personal friendship, to be associated with, and have a relationship with them, to love/value/respect them as human beings created by God!

TO ‘ACCEPT’ SOMEONE IS:

1. A gift one chooses to extend to another, or withhold. V.5

--It cannot be earned, nor terminated, often is not deserved

2. An expression of ‘Divine Love’, going beyond capacity to understand or practice. V.7

--To accept/love the person, is not the same as approving of their actions/choices/lifestyle, etc.

--We can NEVER do anything to make God love us more, nor less! We can do likewise!

3. A powerful transforming influence. V.8

--Jesus accepted Zacchaeus BEFORE repentance, not after! It was in the power of Jesus’ loving acceptance that Zach had the motivation to repent, and turn his life around! It was what brought Zacchaeus back into the Jewish faith and culture. A way to “save (redeem) the lost”. V.10

--It is still today one of the most powerful expressions of God’s love which we can give to others! It is our way of “loving others into God’s family”. God calls us to show His love to everyone, by **accepting them as they are**, even when their actions/choices/lifestyle are totally opposite what God, or we, desire them to be!