

October 30, 2022

Luke 19:1-10

“Marching Orders: Trust God’s Super Glue”

Because so many of us sang that song about Zacchaeus when we were little it makes it hard to engage this story and **know how far Jesus is pushing the envelope**. The song ends with “*For I’m going to your house today.*” Which sounds like the most normal and natural thing in the world. But it wasn’t.

This is similar to the story of the good Samaritan. That phrase, “*Good Samaritan,*” would have been an *oxymoron* in Jesus’ day among people of faith. Kind of like, “good hit man.”

The story of Zacchaeus comes at the end of a line of stories which turn things on their head. Yet, we often assume a life of faith is *tied to unchanging beliefs about God*. You would think Jesus had never *complimented outsiders* or invited himself to Zacchaeus home for dinner. Oh sure, **God doesn’t change – but we do**...and God, it seems, is constantly *urging us along* to live more in line with God’s coming kingdom and less in line with our comfort level.

And it’s true, humans **are on the look out for stability and comfort in a broken and chaotic world**: including me. But if we are going to *follow Jesus – and not some abstract notion of faith*, the nature of what is appropriately *considered stable* and how we navigate chaos may not be what we thought it was.

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem for the greatest cosmic clash of all time. And he *takes time to deal with people who need him along the way*. And one of those people is the now famous chief tax collector named Zacchaeus. I admit that when I read this story, I know the ending and so I see the short rich man who wanted to see Jesus in a very *two-dimensional way*. In a way in which I could *never really see myself* in his place – which is dangerous. Finding God’s presence in the scriptures requires we see what happens from everyone’s point of view – *especially* those who are not the heroes of the story.

Zacchaeus must run ahead and throw away his dignity by climbing a tree because the crowd won’t let him see Jesus. Why? *Because he had power and money but no respect*. He was considered a traitor by the very Jewish people he belonged with. As the story opens and Jesus is walking in – we already see *brokenness* in Zacchaeus, brokenness in the crowd and brokenness in Jesus’ future.

We don't know how Jesus knew the tax collector's name. I suspect most people wouldn't say his name unless they *followed it by spitting*. They were in fact way ahead of their time as they all had an abiding desire to "**Get Shorty**" long before Danny DeVito made it a thing.

One commentator I read this week even suggested that Zacchaeus – after climbing up the tree so he could see Jesus – *might well have been hiding in the leaves of the tree not wanting to be seen*. He had sacrificed his dignity to climb that tree and may well have wanted to remain unnoticed...until Jesus noticed him. *How often have we just wanted to remain unnoticed?* It just felt safer that way. *God rarely seems willing to leave it at that*. Zacchaeus was amazed at the reception Jesus gave him – one might even say a life-giving reception. We have opportunities on both sides of the equation as well. God gives us life giving receptions we don't expect. And it isn't arrogance to believe that treating people with dignity and passing along the grace of God is something we can do as brothers and sisters of Jesus.

I know it is a strange sermon title today...but *super glue is a great thing*. When done right it miraculously *holds things together and doesn't draw attention to itself*. And God's super glue doesn't just put back together what was broken – but also *shapes* us into that which only God seemed to know we could be.

Zacchaeus name is an abbreviation of Zachariah meaning "*The Righteous One*" His name held his **destiny** – even as he stumbled through life...Jesus saw who he could be and sought him out – even as others despised him. Jesus wanted to *Get Shorty* too – but in a different way and for life giving purposes.

Jesus sees Zacchaeus can be more than he has been – even when he was lost and despised. It cost Jesus public support to *seek and restore* Zacchaeus to the community of faith. But *Jesus knew it would be worth it*. **We are broken people living in a broken world – and God considers it worth it to seek us out – and put us back together better than we were before**. Let's not focus on what's wrong and broken...let's give God room to put everything back together in life giving and redemptive ways – even if we need a little super glue – it is always true God in Christ can make us better than we were.