

**Speaker** : Assistant Pastor Karen (Lee Peng ) Seah  
**Sermon Title** : Seeing God as He is  
**Scripture Text** : Luke 19:1-10

## Introduction

Our desperate desire for God opens the way for us to experience the reality of His presence. When we seek Him earnestly with a sincere heart, He graciously swings wide the door of His presence and allows us to catch glimpses of His glory.

These experiences are pivotal reference points in our spiritual walk. They resonate deep within the core of our being because this is what we were created for – to desire God and enjoy His presence.

The story of Zacchaeus is a reminder to us that God richly rewards those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

“1 Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. 2 Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. 3 And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. 5 And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him,[a] and said to him, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” 6 So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. 7 But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, “He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.” 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.” 9 And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; 10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”  
(Luke 19:1-10 (NKJV))

## I. Desperate Desire for God

Zacchaeus sought to see Jesus (vs. 3a)

The word ‘sought’ is Greek *zeteo* ‘to devote serious effort to realize one’s desire or objective.’

To ‘see’ means to ‘know, perceive or understand.’

His endeavours to see Jesus was however hampered by:

- Physical limitation (vs. 3b)
- The crowd (vs. 3b)

### A. Hindrances in our Pursuit of God

- Physical or mental fatigue
- Time constraint
- Emotional battles
- Spiritual weariness
- Other limitations

## **B. The 'Crowd Influence' in our Spiritual Walk**

Our spiritual passion is affected by the people who populate our personal worlds.

- Passionate people: they ignite and fuel our desire for God
- Draining People: they sap our passion for God

## **C. Overcoming Obstacles in our Pursuit of God**

- Zacchaeus ran ahead (vs. 4a)  
He outran the crowd and headed to where he knew Jesus would pass.
- He climbed up the sycamore-fig tree (vs. 4a)  
The sycamore fig tree can grow up to about 40 feet (12 meters) high, with branches spreading in every direction, making it easy to climb.

His action was unconventional, radical and unbecoming one who was the chief of publicans.

In his desire to see Jesus, Zacchaeus:

- Overcame all forms of inconveniences
- Laid down his pride and status
- Positioned himself in a place where he could see Jesus

## **II. Prompt Obedience to God's Calling**

"5 And when Jesus came to the 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.  
6 So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully" (Luke 19:5, 6)

### **A. Jesus' Command**

Jesus knew Zacchaeus by name and saw the condition of his heart. He responded to Zacchaeus' desire to meet Him with a command.

- Make haste and come down (vs. 5b)
- Today I must stay at your house (vs. 5b)  
'Stay' is Greek meno often understood in the sense of 'live, dwell or lodge.

There are moments in our lives when God 'interrupts' our schedule and demands our immediate attention to something He requires of us.

### **B. Zacchaeus' Response**

- He made haste and came down (vs. 6a)
- He joyfully welcomed Jesus (vs. 6b)

Zacchaeus obeyed promptly and joyfully despite not knowing what was ahead of him. He regarded it a privilege rather than a burden to have Jesus as an uninvited guest stay at his house.

## C. The Crowd's Response

They all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner (vs.7)

- They responded from a very human perspective
- Their sense of justice demanded that Jesus should conform to their expectations.

Is our image of God a true representation of who He is?

- The tendency is to fashion God in our image rather than seeing Him as He has revealed Himself to us in Scriptures.
- When we adjust our concept of God to conform to our own thinking and desires, we end up with a distorted, inaccurate view of God.

## III. A Life-Transforming Encounter

Zacchaeus' brief encounter with Jesus was a defining moment. He was touched by the gracious expression of love and mercy shown toward one so undeserving as him.

He repented and sought to make restitution by: -

- Giving half his possessions to the poor (vs. 8a)
- Restoring 4 times the amount of what he had cheated (vs. 8b)

When he once took freely from others, he now gave generously.

What lasting impact did Zacchaeus' encounter with Jesus have on him? Zacchaeus saw Jesus as He is, full of grace and truth and that experience changed his life forever. His encounter with Jesus was the start of a spiritual journey that would culminate in a life of service to God.

2 suggestions on who Zacchaeus was:

- According to Clement of Alexandria, a Christian theologian (best remembered as the teacher of Origen), in his book Stromata, Zacchaeus was surnamed Matthias by the apostles, and took the place of Judas Iscariot after Jesus' ascension.
- The later Apostolic Constitutions identify 'Zaccheus the Publican' as the first bishop of Caesarea.

Whatever it was, Zacchaeus was most likely a great influence in the kingdom of God

## Conclusion

How we see God will determine the direction of our spiritual life and influence our decisions.

We may have been Christians for many years but could it be possible that the Jesus we think we know may be just a caricature of who He really is?

How we see God is reflected in the manner we portray Him through our lives.  
Is our portrayal of Jesus an accurate representation of who He really is?

For many people who may perhaps never read the Bible, the only Jesus they know is the Jesus they see through your life and my life.

Let us seek God diligently that we may see Him as He really is and portray Him the way He desires us to reveal Him to the world.