

# The Strength of Our Witness

Focus scripture **Luke 19:1-10**

## Tax Collectors 101

Click [here](#)

## Tax Collector Climbs Tree

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## Today's Bible Reading

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## The story of Zacchaeus

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## Additional Bible Readings

Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4

Psalms 119:137-144

2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12

**God, inspirer of zeal, keeper of promises, sustainer of faith, grant us strength, grant us wisdom, grant us hope, we pray. Amen.**

While passing through the city of Jericho, Jesus encounters a person of great riches and small stature, someone held in disdain. He is Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, a franchise owner who prepays the allotted Roman tax and hires collectors to recoup his costs plus a profit. Because he works for the Romans at the expense of his own people, he is perceived as morally corrupt and ritually unclean.

Zacchaeus runs against all social conventions of the time and climbs a tree to get a better view of Jesus. Surprisingly, Jesus calls Zacchaeus's by name and breaches social etiquette by inviting himself to this stranger's house. In the Mediterranean world, it is considered an honour to be the host. In Lebanon today, a host greets a guest by saying tsharrafna, "you honour us." Jesus must honour Zacchaeus by being his guest. In turn, Zacchaeus welcomes Jesus and experiences joy.

Encountering Jesus is transformational for Zacchaeus; not only does Jesus affirm Zacchaeus's biological descent, but he also affirms his spiritual identity. But what about transformation in those onlookers who are quick to judge Zacchaeus' guilt? No doubt they had intentions to love God and neighbour (as their faith taught). But that faith knowledge had not yet truly been transformed into behaviour to others who differed in appearance, social class, occupation, or associations. What transformation is possible in them? And what genuinely loving, non-judgmental, inclusive, and productive relationships can be formed in the future among them all? As Jesus declares, salvation – as well as community – includes everyone.

