**As Generous as Zacchaeus**

**Read:** Luke 19:1-10

The story of Zacchaeus begins with a bit of comedy, he’s too short to see Jesus and must climb a tree. Why is this so funny? Well, just take a moment to think about it, he is a chief tax collector, someone who is used to getting his own way. Someone who is extremely wealthy (more on that shortly) and therefore someone who is likely to have dressed very smartly. Todays “tax collectors” are generally faceless but back then they would have had to come to your door to collect your taxes. They were known, and probably a little bit feared. Vastly different to tax just being deducted from our salaries or wages, but take the title away, and just think about the description can you think of any examples of people like that today? Bankers? Businesspeople? Politicians? Anyone? Now can you imagine them in front of a crowd of people running? What about climbing a tree? The idea is comical indeed.

Perhaps this is coincidence and it’s not meant to be funny, or maybe it was a way of drawing people into the story, or maybe it was a way to prepare people for the ridiculousness that was yet to come. Ridiculousness yet to come you ask? Well whilst you’ve got that mental image of someone powerful running and climbing a tree with a crowd looking on, now think about that person giving away their wealth, their power, their influence, and reputation. Hard to picture isn’t it. We are used to those kinds of people being ruthless in maintaining their wealth and status, only parting with their cash if mandated to do so by losing a lawsuit.

However, by the end of Zacchaeus’ short story this is exactly what he does. His encounter with Jesus, God made man, which we’re told is a brief exchange followed by a meal at Zacchaeus’ house, causes him to give half his possessions to the poor and 4 times whatever he’d taken from someone. The required 10 percent to be given the poor and 120% to be paid back to someone you wronged (if you ever got caught) and Zacchaeus offers 50% to the poor and 400% to those he has wronged. Zacchaeus isn’t just following the law; he is surpassing it.

Zacchaeus’ reaction to his encounter with the all-encompassing love of God in Jesus is to repent and turn away from his current way of living towards something different, something new. And he is willing to go the extra mile to show just how serious he is about this decision. Legally, he was not required to give that much but he chose to because Jesus came to his house for tea.

* What do you think Zacchaeus saw/found in Jesus that caused him to give so much away?
* Apologising and making reparations are expected when you wrong someone. Take a minute to reflect on your own apologies, do you go through the motions or do you make gestures to show how deeply sorry you are?
* Have you ever been over the top generous like Zacchaeus? If so, when was the last time?
* What about with God? When he shows you the errors of your ways do you give thanks, respond gleefully and generously?
* It is worth remembering that whilst Zacchaeus was rich, this level of generosity would have almost bankrupted him. Ask yourself, am I ready to go all in with God?