

## The Guest

LK 19:1-10 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a `sinner.' But 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." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

I think I know what Zacchaeus felt like that day...

We had planned a reunion for a number of old friends and employees at our home. There was one friend, in particular, that I had hoped would attend but because of some past events and harsh words spoken, I wasn't sure if he would actually come. I had asked for and received forgiveness for some things I'd said and done and thought I'd been forgiven, but I still wasn't sure. I knew that the real test would be when I opened the door of my home and this friend walked in. That would be the genuine confirmation of his forgiveness.

As each of the attendees arrived, I opened the door to greet each guest but was disappointed that it was not the one guest I hoped to see the most. Finally, after most of the guests had arrived, I opened the door and it was him. He stepped into my home, we embraced and at that moment I knew I was forgiven. It was a special feeling. My anxiety was transformed to peace. Suddenly, all was well with my previously troubled soul.

Now, I can imagine Zacchaeus standing at his door admitting each guest but he was waiting for the guest of honor, Jesus to arrive. Now Jesus had said he was coming to stay at his house but perhaps on the way He had found out that Zacchaeus was not the kind of person He should be seen with. How many times had Zacchaeus invited people to his house but they had not come because they had discovered he was a despised tax collector. Perhaps Jesus would not come but instead would send some of his disciples to politely tell Zacchaeus that Jesus would not be coming after all. The disciples might give him a pleasant excuse and then hurry away quietly before they were seen talking to him. Then there was a knock at the door and Jesus, the guest of honor, entered and Zacchaeus felt the loving embrace, acceptance and forgiveness from his Savior. Out of the joy of his soul he announced all the changes that were going to take place in his life because he had been visited and he had been forgiven.

Coming to faith in Jesus is much the same. We can't believe that we could be loved and forgiven by such a Savior. We know we are unworthy. We know by heart the list of things we have done that should exclude us from acceptance by such a perfect Savior. We have even wondered if some of the sins on our list are so serious that they are unforgivable. We know we are undeserving of such perfect love and forgiveness. Yes, we are unworthy but then Surprise! Jesus, the guest of honor, stands there waiting ready to come in and embrace us and fellowship with us and forgive.

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