

• The Quiet Hour. •

Zacchaeus the Publican.*

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He entered and was passing through Jericho (v. 1). "To get the full meaning of this incident the reader must remember the two-fold character of Jericho. It was a city of both priests and publicans. Thus religion and commerce met her without mingling, and Christ is choosing the house of Zacchaeus of the rabbis and priests of Judaism; and this on a journey to the capital where, as all His followers believed, He was about to establish the theocracy. It is not strange that 'they all murmured.'"

Chief publican (v. 2). Better, chief tax-gatherer. The collection of the Roman taxes was carried on under Zacchaeus as head officer. No men were more despised by usual Jews than publicans, since they gave themselves to the gathering of the revenue of the hated Roman government, and were reputed extortioners. Of course, all this odium would focus on the head officer.

And he was rich (v. 2). Specially notice that Jesus did not demand of Zacchaeus as of the young ruler that he part from his riches. The test of supreme devotion to Christ is not the same in all cases, though the demand is invariable.

He sought to see Jesus (v. 3). Undoubtedly reports of our Lord's kindness to tax-gatherers and sinners had reached Zacchaeus. He would get sight of such a one. Let the fame of Jesus, as the kindly and welcoming one, urge you to seek Him. However others may despise and disdain, Jesus never will.

Could not for the crowd (v. 3). See how Zacchaeus triumphed over hindrances: (a) The crowd: often now a crowd will keep from Christ, especially an unsympathetic and sneering crowd; how many times have men told me, "I would be a Christian, did I not fear the jeers of my crowd"! (b) His own physical disability; how many times men say, "My passionate nature, the physical habits I have got into, prevent my seeking Christ!"

Climbed up into a sycamore-tree (v. 4). The tree was the Egyptian flag, which has low, horizontal branches into which one can easily swing himself.

He was to pass that way (v. 4). He puts himself in the way of Christ. Are you not sure that if you would do similarly to Zacchaeus, be determined, refuse to let difficulty master you, put yourself under religious influences; for example, not shun the church and revival meetings, but attend them, you would certainly find Christ?

Zacchaeus (v. 5). There comes the personal, inviting call of the seeking God to us, even the call by name. Have you not heard it?

For to-day I must abide at thy house (v. 5). Christ will thoroughly identify Himself with Zacchaeus. Whom all else disdain Jesus welcomes. Jesus invites to forgiveness, fellowship with Himself. But mark that "make haste." Do not slight or put off acceptance.

And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully (v. 6). Notice the swift acceptance, the reception of Jesus; Zacchaeus took Christ into his heart and

home; the consequent joy. The utmost joy is personal acceptance of Christ.

I give (v. 8). The verb is in the present tense. But "the present is used for the future in Greek, when an action, still future, is to be designated as good as already present, either because it is already firmly resolved upon, or because it follows according to some unalterable law." The fruits of genuine conversion begin immediately to appear in Zacchaeus. The chief sin has hitherto been with Zacchaeus about his money-getting. Immediately he will cease from that sin, and, as far as possible, will at once set to rights the wrong he has thus done. Instead of being covetous he will be generous, he will use his wealth as one intrusted with it should, as a steward.

I restore fourfold (v. 8). Zacchaeus will at once set himself at making restitution. "The Mosaic law (Num. 5:6, 7) requires; when restitution was voluntary, that a fifth more than the sum unjustly taken should be restored. The promise of Zacchaeus includes much more." Zacchaeus will outstrip the mere letter of the law; he is determined to be exactly right. "What a marvellous change such a conversion of every person in a community would make! A change that would reach the pocket and cause full restitution for all gains from cheating, over-reaching, sharp trading; of restitution for slander of good name: for depreciation of character, of work."

To-day is salvation come to this house (v. 9). The result of such conversion is immediate salvation; "to-day" it comes.

A son of Abraham (v. 9). Zacchaeus was such by physical descent; he is now such inwardly and spiritually (Rom. 2:28, 29); he is a Christian. And this is the mission of the Saviour, to seek and save the lost, not in their sin, but from their sin. Let Him thus save you. He is seeking you that He may.

Herod's Remorse.

When Herod heard of the fame of Jesus, a species of resurrection occurred. The night of bacchanalian revel came back; the holy prophet's blood dripped upon the palace floor again; and the soul said, This Jesus is the man whom I murdered! There is, so to speak, a moral memory as well as a memory that is merely intellectual. Conscience writes in blood. She may brood in long silence, but she can not forget. All the universe helps her recollection. Every leaf of the forest contains her indictments, and every voice of the air prompts her remembrance. The revel passed, the dancing, demon-hearted daughter went back to her bloodthirsty mother, the lights were extinguished, and the palace relapsed into the accustomed order; but the prophet's blood cried with a cry not to be stifled, and angels with swords of fire watched the tetrarch night and day. All men are watched. The sheltering wings of the unseen angel are close to every one of us. The eye seems but an infinitesimal portion of what is around—we are hemmed in with God. This great truth we forget; but exceptional circumstances transpire which for a moment rend the veil, and give us to see how public is our most secret life—how the angels hear the throb of the heart, and God counts the thoughts of the mind.—Joseph Parker.

Prayer.

Most merciful and blessed God, we come, in the name of Jesus, our elder Brother, to seek Thy blessing. How much this can convey of light, strength, peace joy, we have never yet fully known: we pray that we may do so now; for it is Thy favor which makes heaven what it is; the absence of it makes hell what it is. O Lord, bless us! Thou knowest our condition and our needs, and Thou canst give blessings to us in the way most suited to our wants. If any of us are not Thy children by faith in Christ Jesus, Lord, by Thy Spirit, make us such. If we are, improve us daily, by making us more like Thyself. We would be wholly Thine, would follow Thee fully, would cleave unto Thee with full purpose of heart. Help our weakness and confirm the desire of our souls. We would cling to the cross, afresh we would come to the fountain opened; by renewed faith we would appropriate to ourselves the perfect righteousness of Thy Son, and we pray that for His sake our consciences may be purified and calmed and our sins be all forgiven.—Selected.

Hope.

The difference between discouragement and joyful work is made by hope. It is the most blessed of task-masters. He who works with hope before him knows not fatigue, and feels not pain. He who works without it is a slave lashed to his toil by an inexorable and tyrannical necessity. The farmer plies his hoe in one furrow, his boy toils in the next one. The work is an almost unendurable burden to the boy, who is without foresight; it is no burden to the father, for hope stands before him, and points to a vision of autumnal glory with waving grain and well-filled store-houses. Hope makes the difference between the nurse and mother. The one toils in mental tasks, because her daily bread depends upon her daily fidelity. The other looks forward, sees the girl budding into beautiful womanhood, the boy into a refined manhood, and gladly endures. Blessed is the Christian who works cheered by the sure hope of his Master's final victory. He cares little for the tears now, for he can look forward to the hour when he shall come to the harvest-home, bringing his sheaves with him. He bears easily the noise and the wounding of the battle, for he hears prophetically the music of victory, and knows that he follows a Captain who has never known defeat, and that the joy of victory, like the joy of the harvest, shall more than compensate for all life's weary toil and all earth's strife and conflict.—The Common People.

Quiet Usefulness.

An empty wagon makes more noise than one that carries a heavy fruitage of good. The most quiet lives are often the most useful. Dr. John Hall once said: "The maelstrom attracts more notice than the quiet fountain; a comet draws more attention than the steady star; but it is better to be the fountain than the maelstrom, and star than comet, following out the sphere and orbit of quiet usefulness in which God places us."

Queen Victoria's personal family is a very large one. She herself had seven sons and daughters. They have thirty-two children, her grand-children, and there are thirty-four great-grandchildren, making a total of seventy-three descendants.

Golden Text.—The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.—Luke 19:10. Fourth Quarter, Lesson XI., December 16 Luke 19:1-10.