

Who Is The Seeker?

Ever watch teenage puppies play? The game keeps changing. One chases the other – until – suddenly they change and the other chases the one. Ever play hide and seek? – remember how as soon as the seeker finds the hider, the hider becomes the seeker?

Such games point us in the direction of at least one answer to our title question. “Who is the seeker?”

Before we look more closely at this story, there are some details and connections between the story of Zaccheaus and earlier stories that we don't want to miss. The next verse of Luke's gospel tells us, *“that as they were listening to this, he went on to tell a parable, because he was near Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.”*

Remember the rich young ruler who went away very sad because he could not bear to part with his money. Zacchaeus is a lovely contrast. He will not only share his wealth, he will also make restitution 4 times over to the people he cheated. The story of the blind man that Jesus healed, the one who cried out alongside the road, *“Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me”*, immediately precedes the story of Zacchaeus who wants to see Jesus. Remember the little children who wanted to be with Jesus but who were blocked by the disciples — today it is short (little) Zaccheaus who is blocked by the crowd.

This is chapter 19 – but if we look in chapter 18, we will meet the humble tax collector praying in the temple. Also in that same set of stories, we'll find the persistent widow. Zacchaeus is nothing if not persistent in his efforts to see Jesus. So this story hints at characters and stories in previous chapters, and thus functions as a reminder, and a summary of those earlier passages, before we head into all the events that are going to happen in Jerusalem.

Well – back to our title question again. Who is the Seeker?

As the story begins, the story teller clearly identifies Zaccheaus as seeking Jesus. *Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way.*

It's fair to say that Zaccheaus was actually a pretty dedicated seeker. I don't know about you, but I can't recall even being tempted to climb a tree in order to check out a celebrity.

How 'bout you – anyone here ever climbed a tree in order to check someone out? I do remember going down to the rail in the coliseum at the Big E when I was about 10 or 12 to pet Trigger and shake Roy

Rogers' hand.

Zaccheaus was a dedicated seeker. How dedicated are we in seeking the presence of Christ within and among us?

The other day on Facebook in one of those guilt trip postings, someone noted that each and every day contains 86400 seconds then asked how many seconds readers had spent saying "thanks" to God.

On a more positive note, "Yes" magazine has issued a 21 day thanksgiving challenge to their readers, inviting us to share on line something for which we are grateful each and every day from Nov 7 to Nov 27. Believing as I do, that thanks-giving is the most important spiritual practice for our living, I've decided to join that challenge.

There is no better way to seek the presence of God, than to practice thanks-giving. As we see the ways in which we are blessed, we also see the hand of the One who pours blessing upon blessing all over us, each and every day. Rather than climbing trees to see the presence of God, let us so practice thanks-giving that thanks-giving becomes our best life-giving and hope-restoring habit.

That is how we might hear the first part of the story of Zaccheaus.

Then, the roles reverse — Jesus becomes the seeker. You remember, Jesus calls Zaccheaus down from the tree and invites himself to Zack's house for lunch. *When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried down and was happy*

to welcome Jesus. All who saw it began to grumble and said, "Jesus has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner."

We don't get to hear their conversation. We do hear the results. Zaccheaus promises to give half his wealth to the poor, **and** make restitution plus to anyone he has defrauded. Clearly Jesus sought and found this man who was lost, lost to himself, and as the chief tax collector, lost to his people. Like the woman seeking a lost coin, the father seeking his lost sons, the shepherd seeking his lost sheep, Jesus became the seeker and the finder of the soul of Zaccheaus.

Friends, Love continues to seek us 'til this very day and hour. A man by the name of Francis Thompson once wrote a poem called the Hound of Heaven. His poem offered a picture of God as a hound of heaven relentlessly chasing a hare across all the sufferings and joys of life.

Just as Jesus sought after that lost son of Abraham, Zaccheaus, chief tax collector of Jericho, just a few miles from the city of Jerusalem; so God in love relentlessly seeks after each and every one of us.

Surely we can trust such a God with both our love and deepest trust, for even as we seek God, we discover God is seeking us. As we seek God, let us rejoice. As we are found, let rejoice, give thanks and sing.

Amen