

WEEK THREE



I WILL

CONFESS, TRUST, PROMISE

Zacchaeus Meets Jesus
Luke 19:1-10

Opening Ritual:

To begin class each week, have a cup of water and a bowl. Invite everyone to take a deep breath as the leader slowly pours the water into the bowl.

Then pray aloud:

God of Water and the Spirit,

May we be open to the new things you are doing.

*Reveal to us today what it means to confess Jesus as Savior, trust
in your grace and promise to serve. Amen.*

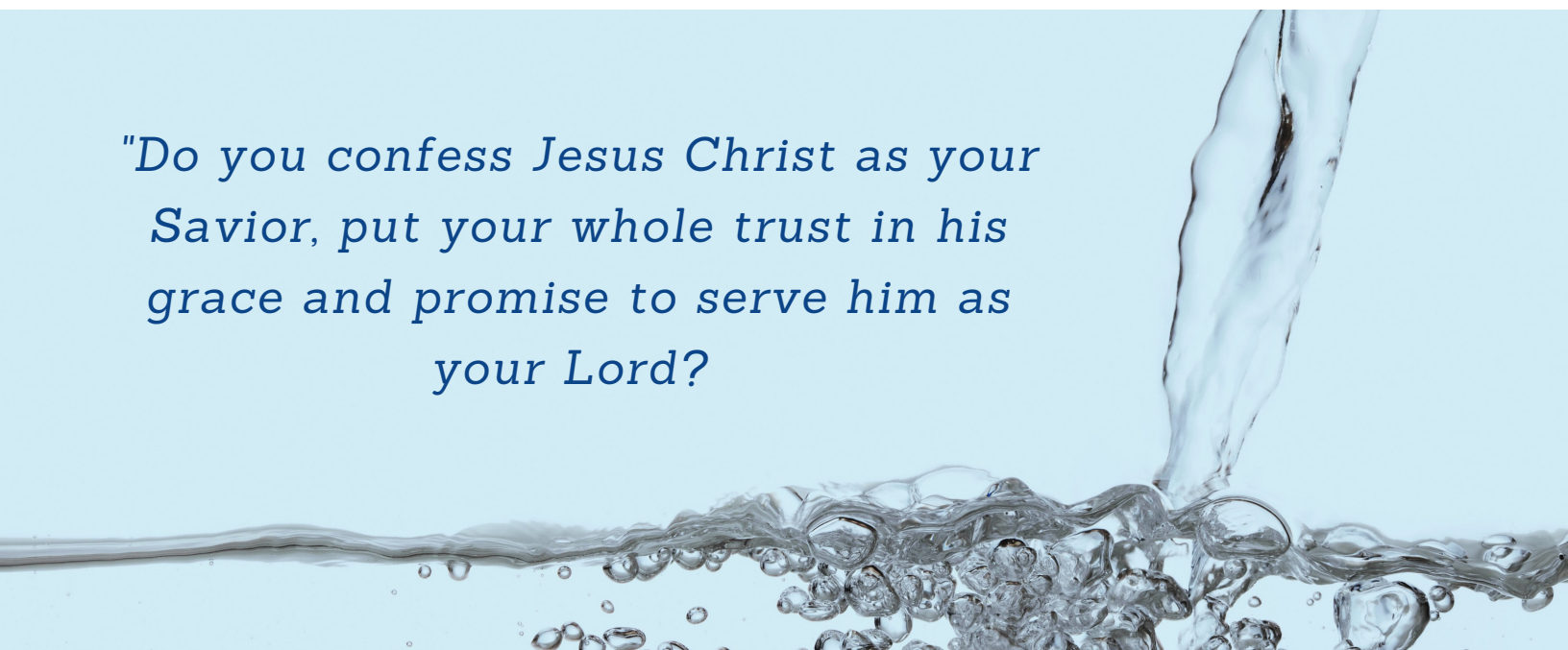
Scripture Reading: Luke 19: 1-10

1 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. 5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. 7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." 8 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." 9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Discussion:

- Zacchaeus had trouble seeing Jesus because he was short in stature. Have you ever felt small? What would you have done if you'd been in Zacchaeus position?
- Calling up to Zacchaeus, Jesus said "come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." Why do you think Jesus was so earnest to spend time with Zacchaeus right away?
- The text says people started to mumble to themselves, another translation says they grumbled about Jesus spending time with such an outright sinner. Why do you think the people were so threatened and bothered by Jesus spending time with Zacchaeus?
- Jesus declares that on that day, salvation had come to the house of Zacchaeus. What do you think salvation means in this instance?

*"Do you confess Jesus Christ as your
Savior, put your whole trust in his
grace and promise to serve him as
your Lord?"*



Pastoral Reflection:

When was the last time you climbed a tree? There is a small tree near the entrance to the greenway by our neighborhood that I've seen a few different children climb. When I pass it, I am tempted to climb it, especially if no one is looking; but, I fear that I will snap a branch or my neck or both, so I stay with both feet on the ground. The antagonist turned protagonist of our story is a tree climber. I love picturing all the people gathered to see Jesus (as they would for a parade or their favorite band) and spotting Zacchaeus up in a tree. Can you imagine the richest person you know climbing into a tree to get a better view?

Then as I scan across the crowd in my mind, I can see Jesus looking for something or for someone. He sees Zacchaeus in the tree and walks over to him and as if he is picking out his favorite ornament on a Christmas tree, and says, "hurry and come down." Then he invites himself over to his home.

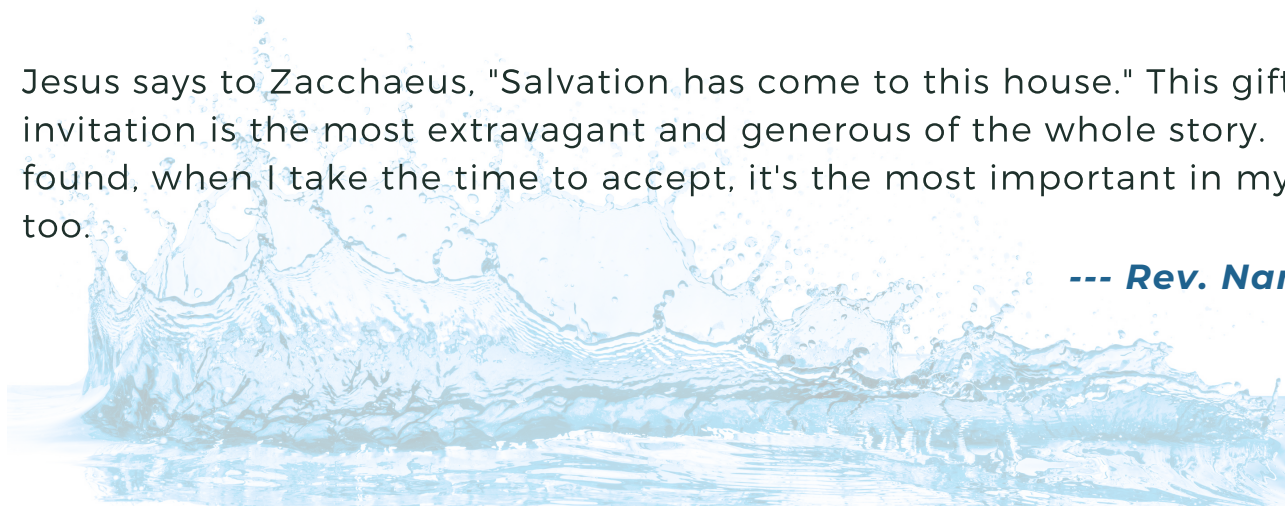
I like to think that Jesus was not impulsive about his lunch invite. More like, when I run into a friend I haven't seen in the last two years (I know that's hard to imagine) and saying, "Oh! It's you! Now that we've run into one another we should stop everything we are doing and have lunch." Just being together for a little while is more important than anything we've got going on.

Jesus seems so deliberate throughout the rest of the Gospels that I can't help but think that spending time with Zacchaeus was truly on his mind. I also believe Jesus would stop everything he's doing to spend time with each one of us. God is always looking for us and will find us -- even if we are the shortest or tallest, the richest or poorest person in the crowd.

The question I must ask myself is: "Where is my tree to climb?" Or, in other words, what's keeping me from seeing Jesus? This question births so many others: Have I left any space in my day, mind, week, or life to encounter Jesus? Am I willing to humble myself and face the fear of the climb? Am I willing to let go of my "to do list" and have lunch? And most of all, would I be willing to give generously and extravagantly of what's most important to me?

Jesus says to Zacchaeus, "Salvation has come to this house." This gift and invitation is the most extravagant and generous of the whole story. And I've found, when I take the time to accept, it's the most important in my story too.

--- Rev. Nancy Parker



Connection:

- Would you be willing to drop everything to have lunch with Jesus?'
- What does it mean to confess that Jesus is Savior? What makes someone a savior?
- Do you think its possible to put your full trust in Jesus' grace?
- If we confess Jesus as Savior and Lord, what does it mean to serve him?
- How does the story of Zacchaeus highlight these commitments?

Closing Ritual:

At the conclusion of class each week, invite everyone to stand, Then say aloud:

*Members of our Beloved Community,
Will you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior?
Will you put your whole trust in his grace?
Will you promise to serve Jesus as your Lord?*

In response, invite each person to touch the water on their way out the door, saying **I WILL!**



I WILL
CONFESS, TRUST, PROMISE