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Seeking and being Sought (Luke 19:1-10)

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We are nearing the end of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, almost there, when Luke slips in this story. It happens while Jesus is on his way, passing through Jericho. The story ends with Jesus' declaration: 'The Son of Man (ie Jesus) came to seek and to save the lost' (19:10), so that's what Luke thinks this story is about, seeking and saving the lost.

I like that, being a rather lost one myself at times, he comes to seek me out, and you. Not exactly sure what saved means but perhaps it is about restoring them/us to our true selves, a notion of wholeness?

Let's chew over the story a bit more :

Zacchaeus,

What did he want? What was he really looking for? Did he know? Pretty drastic to climb a tree.. He was rich, like the ruler in last week's reading, the one who found the demands too much, how can a rich person enter the kingdom of God? They usually just can't do it. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, a senior bureaucrat, a collaborator, an outsider, despised. How can an outsider become part of the kingdom of God?

Zacchaeus was also a seeker. Now there's something, 'those who seek, find'(Mt 7:7), we read.

So where is this narrative heading? Where is it going to land?

A rich despised seeker, who also happens to be short in stature, climbs a tree. *Short*, I understand can also be translated, *least*. Sounds more like a child than a responsible adult. Children, we know, are in. And we know we have to be *like* children.

In Luke 9:48, "Whoever welcomes this child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me; for the least among all of you is the greatest." And so there may be a sense in which Zacchaeus by climbing that tree like a child and embracing his littleness, so to speak, becomes one of the least of these. Perhaps it is precisely because he humbles himself in this way that he is in a position to welcome Jesus just two verses later.¹ Lost ones are often sought and found, think of the sheep, the coins, the son, and that's how our story ends.

¹ <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/ordinary-31-3/commentary-on-luke-191-10-3> accessed 19 October 2022

This despised seeker climbs a tree and looks and listens. He is looking for something, listening for something. He is trying to see Jesus.

The word translated *try* is elsewhere, including in this passage, translated seek or search or strive, and people who seek in Luke tend to find. In fact, as we hear in verse 10, people who seek Jesus tend to find that it was actually Jesus who was seeking them all along.²

Jesus stops right below Zacchaeus. Early listeners and readers might have expected him to berate the rich outsider. They are grumbling because, once again he appears to want to hang out with a 'sinner'.

What does Jesus do? He says something surprising, "get down, I'm coming to your place". This is not only a sinner, a rich sinner, a lost sinner, but a seeker, and for Jesus, that means he's open. The crowd is blown away, again. "What did he say?" "You have got to be joking, doesn't he know who this man is?"

He knows exactly who he is. This man is a seeker, he is one of the least. This man wants more than what his life is at the moment.

Can you identify with that, I wonder?

And, riches, he is giving half of his possessions to the poor and paying back those he has defrauded four times what he has taken. The use of the Greek present tense in Zacchaeus' statements means that this commitment is ongoing, not something he will do only once, and it may mean that he has already been doing these things.³

But Jesus adds: ". . . because he too is a son of Abraham." In other words, there is plenty of hope for the rich of the world as soon as they notice those in need and do something serious about that. Even the most marginalised and despised of the rich, the tax collectors, have a place in the bosom of Abraham, in the community of the blessed, if they are open to it.

Jesus' declaration that 'salvation' had come to Zacchaeus' house follows immediately after the report of his new 'financial management plan'. This is a fitting climax to Jesus' public ministry - at least Luke must have thought so. Did he, too, have many Christians in mind who saw salvation as a ticket to heaven or as a recipe for inner tranquillity with little or no thought for social justice, for distribution of resources, and especially for the poor? Conversion here means transformation which includes the budget,

says Bill Loader.⁴

And Zacchaeus, hopeful to be recognised for who he is, let go of everything, made reparation for what he had taken, let go and leaned in to Jesus, to the divine, to the ground of his being.

² *ibid*

³ *ibid.*

⁴ <https://billloader.com/LkPentecost24.htm>

What is it that you hunger for, I wonder?
Or who or what is it that you seek?

Our story is about a seeker, being found. Zacchaeus is ready. He puts himself out there. Climbs a tree to seek Jesus. He has already started sharing his income and returning what he has stolen. This senior bureaucrat is already on the road. There is something more for him, for his life than his job, than material possessions. He is determined, after all he's got to the top of his game, but now in midlife he is, perhaps, as Richard Rohr says, "falling upwards". He is addressing a deeper part of himself. He is seeking this figure of Jesus of Nazareth, a teacher of a different order, a man who is heading to Jerusalem, heading home. And Zacchaeus wants to find out more. The irony is, of course, that *Jesus finds him* and invites himself home to Zacchaeus' place, bringing with him, healing and wholeness. Zacchaeus will now have to offer *him* hospitality.

What is it that you are seeking, at this time in your life?

Some of us, perhaps many of us are in the third age. A time for focusing on what is real, on what satisfies us deep down.

Some are mid career, looking for life and how to serve.

Some are just starting out.

Who is it that you seek?

And, have *you* been found too?

In my 60s, my journey continues, and I continue to seek, and I continue to learn, and I continue to be sought by the one that I am seeking. Sought with the offer of restoration, wholeness.

Maybe Jesus just wants to hang out at your place, at my place, no seriousness just being. And if God is creator then there is a bit of God in every cell of our body and we are connected to every other cell in the world because God is in them as well and you, and maybe God is seeking me but I hardly I notice.

How do I see, how do I hear, how do I sense Divine presence? Each of us will see and hear differently I suspect but, for me it's in meditation, walking, and contemplating the natural world, in listening to others in spiritual direction, journaling, playing, and worship at times like this evening — all the spiritual practices open me.

What is daily Meditation all about? Perhaps you have more idea than I do, but my sense is, it is wordless sinking in to the divine. It is being found by the God we continue to seek. It is mystery. It is simple and difficult. It is for me, opening to this darkness this depth, this more, this love, this peace, the underneath, the divine. It is being cocooned, held, guided further in, then out.

I am just going about my daily life but with an open heart. Part of that of course is looking for, seeking those who are lost, and making a difference there.

Lawrence Freeman says:

to seek God is to find God.. St Gregory of Nyssa says if it is God we are finding then we never stop finding. And that means we never stop seeking. So we're on a journey that has

really a beginning perhaps, because we are mortal beings so we all have a beginning, but the journey itself is endless.⁵

Frederick Buechner invites:

Listen to your life.
See it for the fathomless mystery that it is.
In the boredom and pain of it
no less than in the excitement and gladness:
touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of it
because in the last analysis all moments are key moments,
and life itself is grace.⁶

⁵ **Breakthrough** by Laurence Freeman OSB
<https://firebasestorage.googleapis.com/v0/b/meditatio-cd.appspot.com/o/mt-5d98fuvek/Breakthrough-2022C.pdf?alt=media&token=cf1aff24-23af-47e2-909c-65bab5b7e284>

⁶ Frederick Buechner, Now and Then: A Memoir of Vocation accessed on October 2022 on:
<https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/1998318-now-and-then-a-memoir-of-vocation>