

# UNIFORM Sunday School Lesson

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Swannanoa, N. C.  
Swannanoa Methodist Church



Lesson for Sunday, February 19:  
Life's Greatest Choice.  
Lesson Text: Luke 19:1-10.  
Perhaps as a background for

This lesson it would help us to find out something about the system of collecting taxes throughout the Roman Empire during the time of Christ. It differed so much from our way of doing it that not to know that may lose for us the point of the story. So let me quote from the Standard Bible Dictionary: "Publican: a word originally meaning a contractor for public works or supplies, or a farmer of public lands, but later applied to Romans who bought from the government the right to collect taxes in a given territory. . . Provincial capitalists could not buy taxes, which were sold in Rome to the highest bidders, who to recoup themselves sublet their territory (at a great advance on the price paid the government) to the local (native) publicans, who in their turn had to make a profit on their purchase money, and being assessors of property as well as collectors of taxes, had abundant opportunity for oppressing the people, who hated them both for that reason and also because the tax itself was a mark of their subjection to foreigners."

How well that fits into the lesson: "And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, who was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich." Here he is—a Jew who had sold out to the Roman government, collecting taxes from his own people and making a fortune on the rake-off he gets from

the publicans under him. He gets rich off the poverty of his own people. No wonder they despised him. But his riches didn't make him happy. I wonder if riches that are not honestly made ever do bring happiness? Ill-gotten gains do not bring joy to human hearts. They cannot buy the things that make for happiness. Zacchaeus, in spite of his wealth, was shut out of the Synagogue; he could have no religious fellowship with the Jews in Jericho. They would not invite him and his family to their homes. He was to all intents and purposes an outcast. He was rich, but his riches did not satisfy the deep longings of his heart: the longing for the respect and esteem of his fellows, the affection and love that might have been his if he had not been a publican, the chief publican. Position is no substitute for popularity.

And then it is quite possible that his conscience hurt him. All that he had accumulated had come out of the pockets of his own countrymen, most of them his fellow church members. He could not walk the streets of Jericho without seeing the results of his greed in the wan faces of the children, the almost abject poverty of the people. The rich were very rich and the poor were very poor. How could a man with any heart at all go to bed and sleep peacefully when he knew that many of his townsmen were on the verge of starvation because he wanted to be rich "For they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of many kinds of evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." That was certainly true of this man. He was despised by his fellow countrymen; and I think he despised himself.

But there was hope for him; hope greater than he knew. "Jesus entered and passed through Jericho." The town and his position being what they were, he must have heard of Jesus long before Jesus came to Jericho. The town was a sort of port of entry for Jerusalem, twenty miles away. It was on one of the great highways. Travelers passed through the city gates from all the provinces and beyond. And Zacchaeus must have heard them talking as he sat at the receipt of custom, even as Matthew the publican had, of this Rabbi from Nazareth, who was not only amazing the people with his preaching and healing; but startling them with his attitude toward the common people, the sinners, and particularly toward the publican like himself. "He goes into their homes and eats with them!" "How outrageous," said the Jews. But the publicans and the sinners were saying, "How wonderful!"

And now the rumor comes that this Man of Galilee is going to pass through Jericho, right by the door of the custom house. "And Jesus entered — Jericho." Zacchaeus hears the murmur of the multitude, looks out to see the crowd following and surrounding this unmistakable Figure coming down the narrow street. "And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today.'"

How did Jesus know Zacchaeus? Did somebody say, "Look, Master, there's Zacchaeus, the chief publican, up there in that tree!" I don't know; but I doubt it. And it wasn't necessary. Jesus knew the man was up there; and he knew his name. I think the same thing happened to Zacchaeus that happened to Nathaniel. And when Jesus saw Nathaniel coming to him, he said to him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Nathaniel said to him, "Whence knowest thou me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." So Jesus looked up and saw Zacchaeus, one of the sheep whose name he knows; a sheep who had gone astray, but who hadn't lost his name. "Zacchaeus, come down; I must stay at your house today." He saw beyond the face of the man in the tree a hungry heart. "He needed not that any man should tell him, for he knew what was in man." So he does with all men. He looks beyond our faces, beyond the outward appearance; he looketh on the heart.

There was a kindness in the voice of Jesus as he invited himself to "be the guest of a man who was a sinner." Zacchaeus, despised by those who called him that, instinctively felt the friendship and sympathetic understanding of Jesus. And he responded to its warmth as the flower does to the sun. "And he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully." You have heard it said that "Zacchaeus was converted between the limb and the ground." In the very act of coming down, he went up—to a new manhood and a new outlook.

As Jesus went in to be a guest in the home of Zacchaeus, the door closed. On the outside was the curious, censorious crowd. Within Zacchaeus, Jesus, some of the disciples. We know what the crowd on the outside said; "He is gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And that condemned Jesus. The Jews would never forgive Jesus for that. What Jesus said, so far as the record tells us, we do not know until after Zacchaeus had spoken. "And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.' They tell us that word 'give' doesn't mean that he had been generous with his money, sharing it with the poor; but that now, since he had seen Jesus and his life had been changed, he will hunt up the poor for whose poverty he is largely responsible, and try to make right the wrong he has done them. 'Not 'I have given,' but 'I will give.' The compulsion comes out of conversion. And, of course, the same is true of the other thing he could be compelled to do: 'If—and he could have left that word 'if' out—I have defrauded any man of anything, I restore—I will restore—to him fourfold.' Restitution must follow repentance.

Here are evidences of conversion: the greedy, covetous heart of the tax collector is completely changed; he does the very opposite of what he had been doing. He has become a "new creation in Christ Jesus. Old things, old desires, have passed away; behold, all things are become new." That will happen to any man who will bring himself face to face with Jesus. Just as he is, to face Christ honestly, sincerely, humbly. Christ can and will make men over. "Thou art Simon—a pebble; thou shalt become Peter—the rock."

"And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this man, since he also is a son of Abraham.' He was a lost son until Christ found him and he found Christ. That relationship was restored as he confessed his sin and found forgiveness. That is what Jesus is still in the world to do: 'The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.'"

## Three Men Here Join Marines

S-Sgt. Carl W. Ripley, marine recruiter for Black Mountain, announced today that three men left here to join the ranks of the most elite service in the world, the U. S. Marine Corps.

These men, Vaughn Ray Greene and Garrett W. Greene, sons of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Greene, and Grady Swann, son of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Swann, were sent to Parris Island, S. C., where they will undergo their 10 weeks of boot training.

This 10 weeks of training will consist of military customs, military courtesy and discipline, health and hygiene drills and ceremonies, and qualification with the different weapons of the Marine Corps.

Pvts. Vaughn and Garrett Greene and Grady Swann will be given a 10-day leave after their first phase of training.

After this leave the men will be transferred to one of the many marine bases throughout the world to be given further training in one of the 470 job specialties offered to Marines in either the land sea, or air branch of service.

SWANNANOVA SCHOOL MENU  
Monday, Feb. 13—Bologna slices, hash brown potatoes, lettuce and sliced tomatoes, cherry pie.  
Tuesday, Feb. 14—Soup, egg salad sandwiches, cupcakes with peanut butter icing.  
Wednesday, Feb. 15—Meat loaf, mashed potatoes, slaw with red peppers, cookies.  
Thursday, Feb. 16—Baked ham, green beans, buttered corn, apple crisp, hot biscuits.  
Friday, Feb. 17—Baked beans, tossed green salad, potato chips, corn bread, cheese fudge.  
Bread, butter and milk are served with all meals.

This clipping will entitle T. E. McCall and one guest to free admission to see "Badman's Territory" at the Pix Theater.

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