

A Surprise Visitor For Zacchaeus

LOWER ELEMENTARY LESSON PLAN

Theme: Taking on Higher Ground

Scripture: Luke 19:1-10

Memory Verse: For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. - Luke 19:10

The Children's Sermon

In this Sunday's gospel story, we read about the story of a man who was physically short in stature. Zacchaeus manages the tax collection in his town of Jericho. That time in Jericho there was a lot of fuss outside Zacchaeus' office. Jesus was in town. Zacchaeus heard about Jesus and would like to see Jesus himself. Zacchaeus can hear Jesus' voice amidst the crowd. It sounded far but was coming nearer. The crowd was now building up. Zacchaeus stepped out of his office and joined the crowd.

Since he was short in stature, it was not easy. He tiptoed and squeezed between shoulders to see Jesus but it was useless. He still couldn't see even the hair of Jesus. Zacchaeus stood on a rock beside the road. But it was too far to even matter. He saw some trees and attempted to climb them. Too high... too low...

Finally, he saw a sycamore tree that was just the right size and was strong enough to hold him. He quickly made his way up the sycamore tree. Jesus' voice and the crowd were closer now. Among the tree branches he saw an excellent cool spot from where he could see Jesus. Jesus was actually heading his direction. He was excited and stayed as quiet as he could so that he could hear Jesus. Jesus it seems has just healed a man. It looked like the man he healed was in fact his neighbor - the blind boy who

grew up and played games with him. Now his blind neighbor can see! Wow, how good is that! This is far out! No wonder everyone was excited. Jesus was now moving on. He walked with this group of men following him around. Look, there is Levi; he is also a tax collector who talked much about Jesus lately. Let's see, who else is with Jesus?

"Zacchaeus"... "Zacchaeus"... Someone was calling out his name. Zacchaeus looked in the direction of the sound. The sound came from Jesus! Jesus looked up at him straight from the crowd and called his name. Zacchaeus was surprised that Jesus would even know his name. Jesus continues, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, because today I must stay at your house." Zacchaeus was dumbfounded. He couldn't believe what he just heard. Jesus said with a smile, "Well, Zacchaeus please hurry and do come down, because today I must stay at your house." Zacchaeus did exactly as that. He quickly came down the sycamore tree and welcomed Jesus in his house.

He was so moved that Jesus knew him so well and so caringly that he wanted to be a better tax collector. He felt bad that he has been cheating people with the tax collections and now wanted to make things right. He promised Jesus to return them to those whom he have wrong, even giving them back four times as much.

This moment in Zacchaeus' life is what we call Zacchaeus Conversion. It's when Zacchaeus decided to change his ways and follow Jesus. Zacchaeus Conversion is a big deal because it shows us that anyone can change for the better if they really want to. It didn't matter that Zacchaeus was a tax collector who people didn't like very much. What mattered was his heart was open to change.

Let's think about the sycamore tree for a moment. That tree was a big part of Zacchaeus Conversion. Without that tree, Zacchaeus might not have been able to see

Jesus. It's like sometimes, we might need a little help to see Jesus better in our lives. It could be a friend, a family member, or something we read that lifts us up so we can see Jesus more clearly.

Zacchaeus Conversion teaches us that it's never too late to make a change. Zacchaeus was an adult when he decided to follow Jesus. He had made many mistakes, but Jesus still wanted to be his friend. This shows us that Jesus loves us no matter what, and He's always ready to welcome us just like He welcomed Zacchaeus.

After Zacchaeus welcomed Jesus into his house, something amazing happened. Not only did Zacchaeus change, but his actions also showed others that it's possible to change. Imagine how surprised the people in Jericho were when Zacchaeus started giving back the money he took unfairly. They saw Zacchaeus Conversion right before their eyes!

Zacchaeus Conversion is a reminder to us that when we let Jesus into our hearts, we can change for the better. We can be kinder, more honest, and more loving. And just like Zacchaeus, our actions can show others the way to Jesus too.

So, let's remember Zacchaeus and his sycamore tree. Let's remember that no matter how small we feel or how big our mistakes are, Jesus is always calling us. He knows our names just like He knew Zacchaeus' name. And He's inviting us to come down from whatever is keeping us away from Him, so He can come into our hearts and homes.

Zacchaeus Conversion wasn't just about money or being short; it was about his heart changing and opening up to Jesus. And that's what Jesus wants for all of us too. To open our hearts, to change for the better, and to follow Him. So, let's be like Zacchaeus

and say "Yes" to Jesus. Let's let Him into our lives and see how much better we can be with His love guiding us.

Remember, Zacchaeus Conversion is our story too. We all have things we can change to be better friends with Jesus. And just like Zacchaeus, we can all have our own special moment of conversion, where we choose to follow Jesus more closely. Let's be brave like Zacchaeus and climb our sycamore trees, whatever they may be, so we can see Jesus more clearly in our lives.

Bible Memory Verse

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. - Luke

19:10

You Will Need:

- Construction paper (various colors)
- Scissors
- Markers or crayons
- Stickers (optional)

Get Ready:

- Cut the construction paper into large leaf shapes ahead of time.
- Write 'Luke 19:10' on each leaf with a marker.

Do This:

1. Give each child a leaf and ask them to decorate it with markers or crayons, and stickers if they like. Encourage them to be creative!

2. While they work, talk to them about the story of Zacchaeus and how Jesus came to seek and save those who are lost, just like he did for Zacchaeus.
3. After they finish decorating, gather the leaves and create a 'tree' on a wall or bulletin board in your classroom. Place the leaves high up, symbolizing 'Taking on Higher Ground.' Explain that just like Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see Jesus, we can also reach higher ground in our lives by seeking Jesus and helping others.

Bible Interactive Experience

You'll Need:

- A small tree branch or a plant (to represent the sycamore tree)
- A cardboard box (to make a simple house)
- Small figures or paper cutouts of people (including one to represent Zacchaeus)
- Sticky notes and pens
- A step stool or ladder

Get Ready:

- Place the tree branch or plant in a visible area of the room to represent the sycamore tree Zacchaeus climbed.
- Use the cardboard box to create a simple model of a house and place it near the "tree." This represents the house Jesus visited.
- Prepare the small figures or paper cutouts, ensuring Zacchaeus is identifiable (maybe by writing his name on one).
- Set the step stool or ladder (safely) in the room to represent "taking higher ground."

Do this:

1. **Story Setup**: Begin by telling the story of Zacchaeus from Luke 19:1-10. Explain how Zacchaeus couldn't see Jesus because of the crowd and decided to climb a

sycamore tree for a better view. Highlight how Jesus noticed him and decided to visit his house, which changed Zacchaeus's life.

2. **Interactive Play**: Invite the children to reenact the story using the tree, house, and figures. Let one child be Zacchaeus, climbing the step stool to see Jesus (another child or a figure). Explain that Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus so much that he went to higher ground.

3. **Application Activity**: Give each child a sticky note and pen. Ask them to think about a way they can "reach higher ground" in their own lives, like being kinder, helping others, or learning more about Jesus. They can write or draw their idea on the sticky note. Then, have them place their notes on the tree or around the house model. Conclude by discussing how seeking Jesus and trying to be like Him can change us, just like it changed Zacchaeus.

Snack Activity: Zacchaeus' Tree Climbing Snack

You'll Need:

- Green grapes
- Pretzel sticks
- Cheese cubes
- Toothpicks
- Plate

Get Ready: Wash the grapes and set all your materials on a clean table.

Do this:

1. Create the base of your tree by stacking cheese cubes on the plate. This represents Zacchaeus taking the first steps to see Jesus by finding higher ground.
2. Insert pretzel sticks into the cheese cubes to make the tree's branches. Pretzel sticks are like the branches Zacchaeus climbed to see Jesus better.
3. Carefully place green grapes on the ends of the pretzel sticks using toothpicks to represent leaves. The grapes are like the leaves Zacchaeus saw as he climbed higher.
4. Share your snack with a friend while discussing how Zacchaeus went to great lengths to see Jesus, and how Jesus noticed him and called him by name, showing that we are never too small or insignificant for Jesus to love and notice us.

Game Activity: Zacchaeus' Tree Climb

You'll Need:

- A ladder or step stool (for demonstration only, not for climbing by children)
- Pictures of trees with branches at different heights (or drawn on a large piece of paper)
- Sticky notes or paper leaves
- Markers

Get Ready: Draw or print out large pictures of trees with branches. Label each branch with a step or action that brings us closer to Jesus, like 'praying', 'helping others', 'listening to parents', 'reading the Bible'. Place the tree pictures around the room at accessible heights for the children.

Do this:

1. Share the story of Zacchaeus from Luke 19:1-10, focusing on how Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus so much that he climbed a tree. Explain that we can also 'climb higher' in our faith by doing things that bring us closer to Jesus.

2. Give each child a sticky note or paper leaf and a marker. Ask them to write or draw something they can do to grow in their faith or get closer to Jesus.
3. Let the children place their leaves on the branches of the trees around the room, symbolizing their commitment to taking steps toward higher ground in their faith journey.

Prayer Activity: Climbing to Jesus Prayer Mountain

You'll Need:

- A small cardboard box or a stack of books
- Paper cutouts of leaves and branches
- Markers or crayons
- Sticky notes

Get Ready: Create a small 'mountain' by stacking the box or books on a table. Decorate it with the paper cutouts to resemble a tree. This represents Zacchaeus' sycamore tree that he climbed to see Jesus.

Do this:

1. Read Luke 19:1-10 together, focusing on how Zacchaeus took the higher ground, both physically by climbing a tree and spiritually by deciding to follow Jesus.
2. Ask the children to think of one way they can 'climb higher' to be closer to Jesus or to improve themselves, like being kinder, praying more, or helping others.
3. Have them write or draw that action on a sticky note and then 'climb' (with your help) to stick their note on the 'tree.' Finish by praying together, asking God to help them achieve their 'higher ground' goals.