

WGUMC March 17, 2013 Luke 19:1-10

We've been talking all during Lent about meeting God, but the people of the Hebrew Bible weren't so sure that that was something they wanted to do. After all, God tells Moses in the Book of Exodus: "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live." [33:20]

In one sense this is true. Jacob. Moses. Isaiah. They all met God face to face. They all had fateful—if not fatal—encounters with God. And after that, life as they had known it, didn't exist anymore. Jesus, the Son of God, had that same effect on people. Paul writes: "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" [2 Corinthians 5:17] It happened to the disciples. He called to them in their boats. They dropped their nets and followed him.

It happened to the tax collector, Zacchaeus. Jesus called to him and before you know it, he was giving half his wealth to the poor. You might call it One Great Moment of Sharing.

But before you write this off as just another one of those unbelievable stories in the Bible, think about this man, Zacchaeus. He's a tax collector. That means he's a Roman collaborator. That means that most people think that he's not only a thief but a traitor. Everyone hates this guy. And yet, out of all of the people in that crowd, Jesus chooses Zacchaeus to share a table with him that day.

Jesus passes by the mayor, the city council, the Chamber of Commerce, the local celebrities, all the most likely hosts for the dinner of the decade. He passes them all by, because they don't need him. They only want to use him, and so he has no use for them. No, Jesus goes to the one at the back of the bus, the one at the bottom of the pile, the one at the end of his

rope, or—in this case—the one out on a limb, because he instinctively goes where there is a real need.

All this man needs is to hear his name, "Zacchaeus," and the charge: "hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today!" That's all it takes. Zacchaeus comes down. Zacchaeus stands up. Zacchaeus hands over half of his wealth. Now, can you imagine anyone being so desperate for acknowledgment, so thirsty for acceptance, so hungry for love, that they will give anything, they will give everything to hear Jesus call their name? You don't know anyone that desperate? Look in the mirror. Who do you see there? I thought so.

What was it like when Jesus called your name? How did it feel? What did you do? Is there anything you wouldn't do for the Lord of Love and Life?

I don't think Zacchaeus' story is unbelievable at all. Wealth is nothing at all when you have the Pearl of Great Price. And when your heart has been this strangely warmed you can't help

but want to change the world. Jesus loved Zacchaeus when no one else would. Zacchaeus responded by loving the poor in a way no one else could. It was One Great Moment of Loving to inspire our One Great Hour of Sharing. Pat Farrow is going to share a story about the love of God in her life. And then I'm going to ask you to share the wealth so that we can bring God's love into hundreds of thousands of lives.