



AND Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.² And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.³ And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.⁴ And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.⁶ And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.⁷ And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.⁸ And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.⁹ And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.¹⁰ For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19:1-10)

Dr. D. James Kennedy wrote a book once entitled, *“What if Jesus Had not Come?”* Though I held Dr. Kennedy in the very highest esteem as a Christian minister, I believe such a book expresses a certain vanity. Such questions of the foreordained will of God are not subject to our speculation. Of course, Dr. Kennedy was trying to convey to us the great debt of sin we would still bear without hope of repayment among other things. But, if we believe God’s Word, we must know that neither we, nor the Creation itself would exist had Christ not come. The Word of prophecy is a more certain fact than any eyewitness report. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him*

was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:1-4)

But Christ DID, indeed, come as prophesied from before the Foundation of the World. There is not a single jot or tittle of past history, or future circumstance, of which He is not knowledgeable. He is the Author of both History and Future Promise.

It was doubtless a beautiful spring day when our Lord made His way through the dirty little streets of Jericho on that Palm Sunday before His Passion. The crowds were excited at His coming for much had been published abroad about His many miracles and wonderful teaching. His very name offered a promise that dimly tweaked the memories of the Hebrew people of the ancient prophecies they had heard.

As He continued toward His final journey to Jerusalem, He was thronged about by disciples and curiosity seekers. Little children ran along side. To get a glimpse of this figure of whom they had heard so much from parental conversation. But Jesus had a great purpose in mind as he progressed down that little avenue of dust road and adobe wall. There was a particular fellow He had known from before the stars were thrown into orbit, but one who had very little knowledge of the Lord. Like Blind Bartimaeus, the Lord had watched this little fellow grow from childhood to adulthood, and He was aware that not all of his business dealings as a tax collector were above board.

Zacchaeus had a strange curiosity regarding this Jesus who was coming into Jericho. He would not have been able to express the source of that curiosity, but it drove him to run toward the entourage as it wound its way down the street. Zacchaeus was short. There is no more politically correct way to describe his stature than that. But Zacchaeus was short in more ways than one. He was short on the knowledge of His Savior to be sure. He was not very honest either as a chief publican (tax collector) for the Roman government.

As Zacchaeus drew nearer the crowd, his curiosity mounted – a curiosity generated and nurtured by the Holy Spirit. He became quite desperate to get a glimpse of this very popular figure named Jesus. His desire to see our Lord mounted the nearer he came to His presence. The same is true of all whom the Holy Spirit draws, as a hook in the jaw, to Christ. The same was true of you, dear reader, in the moments before you heard His tender beckoning voice.

When I lived in the Middle East, I witnessed most boulevards lined with the same kind of sycamore trees that lined that street in Jericho that spring day. As Zacchaeus drew nearer, it became abundantly obvious that the crowd surrounding our Lord would preclude his line of sight in seeing Him. “But, wait! Here is this sycamore tree. If I can climb this tree, Jesus will pass directly beneath in my clear line of sight!”

So, Zacchaeus climbed the tree and waited. There are times that the sinner feels drawn to Christ but must wait patiently for His voice. Zacchaeus, too, waited patiently. Now the Master was in full view. He was approaching with great commotion being raised about Him. As He approached, He made no notice of Zacchaeus perched like a squirrel on the limb of the tree. Zacchaeus felt certain that the Lord would not even know that he was there looking on. But as Jesus past directly beneath, He suddenly stopped and looked up at Zacchaeus. Chills ran up the back of Zacchaeus to discover that he had been caught in an embarrassing situation. There is always a great power in the look of Christ. Peter can tell you assure you of that! When Peter denied the Lord the third time, Jesus turned and looked directly into the eyes of Peter. Peter went out and wept bitterly.

But this look was different. It was not a look acknowledging betrayal as in Peter’s case. There was an appealing warmth about that look. To the amazement of Zacchaeus, Jesus called him by name. How was it possible that such a great Teacher would know the

name of a lowly publican. *“And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, **Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.**”* How to respond to such a surprising invitation – not to the Master’s home (for He had none), but to the home of Zacchaeus himself. How did Zacchaeus respond? *“And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.”* He did not hesitate, but obeyed without delay!

When Jesus calls our name, there is a profound response of the soul just as in the case of Lazarus in the tomb at Bethany, and Mary Magdalene outside the Tomb in the Garden. There is power in any name the Lord calls that demands a response.

It was not mere coincidence that Zacchaeus was drawn into the streets of Jericho to see Jesus. It was not coincidence that the Sycamore tree stood at the ready to serve his curiosity to view the Lord. It is not coincidence that we, at seemingly random times, are confronted by a sinner who has realized his depravity and seeks counsel of a Christian believer. We can be that Sycamore tree to sinners to enable them to see Christ.

It is our responsibility, our privilege, and our joy to allow the sinner to see Christ from our vantage point which we can provide. If we are His, we shall always be standing beside the path He travels for such a time as is needful. As Sycamore trees of God, we must be accessible to the sinner as Christ was. We must be strong to share the burden of those who are short of the faith needed for repentance. And we must be planted by the Straight and Narrow Way that our Lord travels with us.

Are you a Sycamore tree with strong branches, or a mustard plant with weak and fibrous stalks?