

*Read also Isaiah 61:1-3. Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).*

This is the fifth week of Lent and we are now one week from Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. In the Bible we read about Jesus going to Jerusalem; turning his face toward Jerusalem; on the road to Jerusalem. This means He feels a sense of mission. Jesus was born for this world-changing event.

Today's story took place two weeks before Jesus would enter Jerusalem. It would be the same week as this week. Jesus was walking eighteen miles from Jericho to Jerusalem. One week after this story Jesus rode on a colt from the Mount of Olives into Jerusalem to begin what we call Holy Week.

Jesus has been talking and ministering for three years. Some believed; to others he was just a celebrity. Do you have a friend or a child or a spouse whom you pray for, that you hope will get to know Jesus? Do you have a friend or a child or a spouse who needs help with some things? People at that time did, too, and they often sought Jesus out. He had become well-known. Yet at the same time, from our study of the temptations, we know Jesus was on a mission rather than living into the fame that arose as a result of his words and work.

The call Jesus felt was expressed in this way. Jesus took the twelve disciples aside and told them: "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be handed over to the Gentiles; and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon. After they have flogged him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again." (Lk 18:31-34)

The disciples understood nothing. They could not grasp it.

But, amazingly, even knowing all this was coming, that these terrible threats were looming, Jesus continued on doing what Jesus does.

What does Jesus do? He fulfills Isaiah's 700 year old prophecies:

- a. Preaches good news to the poor
- b. Binds up the brokenhearted
- c. Proclaims that captives are freed
- d. Releases prisoners from darkness
- e. Comforts all who grieve
- f. Gives a crown of beauty instead of ashes

Let's just say Jesus is the Lord of **ultimate Happy Endings**.

- If you are mourning would you like gladness?
- If you are despairing would you like praise?
- If you do not feel very strong spiritually, would you like to shine with his splendor?

That's what he promises to do. We have two very real examples here. Let's hear the story. TELL the story: Luke 18:35-19:10

Did you notice that both men expressed faith?

*“Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see” (Heb 11:1).*

The one man hoped to get Jesus’ attention; he hoped to get his eyesight back.

Can you concede that you have a little faith? Let’s see if you do. If notice had been given that Jesus was passing through, would you go out to see him? (if yes...)

Then you have enough faith to be curious. Bartimaeus gave it a shot.

What if there was a whole crowd out on Wheatland, like at the Christmas parade, if you had a physical need would you call out to him in front of the crowd? (if yes...)

Then you have faith.

If the crowd told you to be quiet, would you keep calling out to him? (If yes...)

Then you have more faith than you think you do.

If Jesus stopped and called you over and said to you, “What do you want?” would you tell him even with the crowd booing you? That’s what impressed Jesus.

Do you stand with Jesus even when others might think you are a fool?

That is really important to Jesus and thus he responded with compassion.

Does this passage say everything we need to know about prayer requests and healing? No. But it says something about faith.

One out of dozens of people dared to ask for something without embarrassment. Let’s say your need is smaller than that. Do you dare to ask for help? **Here’s permission to ask.** It is an expression of faith to ask. Jesus might surprise you!

Jesus had no intention of staying in Jericho. He was just passing through. So he walked through town and out the other end. People do crazy things around famous people.

- They race to see them.
- They pretend to take selfies but are really taking a pic of the celeb behind them.
- When the celeb signs an autograph and hands it back, they say, “Aren’t you going to write my name?”
- They spend 10 minutes telling them about their cousin who looks just like them.

Zacchaeus heard Jesus was coming to his town. He didn’t do any of those awkward things. He wasn’t self-obsessed. But he had two problems: he was short. And, nobody liked him.

But Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus. I don’t know why. Zacchaeus was unscrupulous. He didn’t have a righteous bone in his body. He had money, and in those days, people hated the rich.

What could he do? He knew the route. He must have known Jesus' itinerary because he ran ahead to the edge of town going toward Jerusalem. He got up in the tree.

I can't see most of you climbing a tree. Except Dick B. I can see Dick doing this.

Zacchaeus didn't want to be seen. But he wanted to see Jesus. He was short. So he got into a tree. That solved his two problems. He was able to see Jesus without any disturbances from either Jesus or the crowd.

Something in him is drawn to Jesus. Does Jesus have something that draws you? Do you pursue that dream regardless of your problems?

Zacchaeus' lifestyle isn't at all "Christian." His reputation for honesty and integrity stinks. What about you? Do you have problems you wish Jesus didn't know about? Is there something troubling you that you just can't fix right now? For Zacchaeus it:

Could have been money wasn't satisfying him.  
Maybe he had upsized and needed to downsize.  
Maybe he was having a mid-life crisis.  
Or his wife had left him.

Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was no matter what the complications were, having no intention of being *seen by Him*.

Yet Jesus noticed that tiny bit of faith that Zacchaeus exercised by trying to see Jesus. That was enough.

*Hey Zacchaeus! I'm changing my travel plans to go to your house today!*

If you need him; if you are seeking him, even if no one else knows—He'll change his plans for you! Jesus sought Zacchaeus when nobody else would have anything to do with him.

Jesus closed the deal over a tiny spec of faith and secured Zacchaeus as a disciple. His discipleship happened faster than imaginable—within minutes of being selected by Jesus the man was changing his financial ways.

Where are you exercising faith—even little bits?

Jesus does not play favorites, whether it is a poor homeless man on the street or a rich man on Wall Street. He will give you a crown of beauty for your ashes; praise instead of a spirit of despair. Are you seeking? Even just a little bit? Lift up your head and seek Jesus. He is called to seek and to save what is lost.

AMEN