

The gospel of Luke is written with a Gentile or Greek-speaking cultured people in mind. In writing the gospel account Luke focuses upon the role and importance of women and the poor, more than the other three gospels, and relates the most parable teachings of Jesus in his story of who Jesus is, how he was and is in the world, and how that changes even us.

Only Luke tells the story of Zacchaeus, a man of small stature whose story of radically turning around repentance challenges notions of family, faith and participation in the unfolding word of God. While ancient it continues to speak to our context, challenges and identity as followers of the Way of Jesus today.

we are going up to Jerusalem : This statement gives a geographical marker for these stories, and also a clue to the narrative progressive of Jesus' spiritual journey towards the radical cost of following his teachings: the cross. Jericho was the last town of significance before one left the Jordan Valley to ascend to the summit of Jerusalem, which is also the end game destination of Jesus' journey, and specifically the narrative journey we have taken reading through the gospel of Luke during the 6 weeks of Lent, to which Jesus points in Luke 9:51 "When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem" and discusses with the prophets Elijah and Moses in Luke 9:31. It's there that Jesus will be mocked, judged, flogged and crucified: killed to silence the radical dissent and revolutionary religious zeal he inspires in his word, actions and relationships. 18:31-33 is the third and final time that he tells the disciples exactly what is going to happen. The others are in 9:21-22 & 9:43-45.

[the disciples] understood nothing.. hidden from them: The disciples not only don't understand, but the truth is hidden from them, recalling the repeated formulas describing the stubborn blindness of Pharaoh when confronted by Moses to let the Israelites go. He is described as both having hardened his own heart, and that God hardened his heart.

the Son of Man: a Messianic title first used in Daniel to describe the one sent by God (the Ancient of Days) to rule over all the nations. See Daniel 7:13-14 Jesus repeatedly uses this perplexing Messianic & Eschatological title for himself which has connotations of the "last days" to come.

Jericho: (Hebrew: יְרִיחוֹ Yeriho meaning fragrant), believed to be one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world, was located at the bottom of an ascending road leading from the Jordan Valley to the Jerusalem. It's probably the road that the Good Samaritan traveled, and is the city first claimed by the Israelites in their conquest of the Promised Land in Joshua 6.

A BLIND MAN Jesus began his ministry saying he was "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me, to bring good news to the poor... and recovery of sight to the blind" Luke 4:18. This is an interpretation of Isaiah 4:6 in which God promises to come "to open the eyes that are blind"

Jesus, Son of David: We can easily miss the depth under this honorific title spoken by the beggar. Jesus is literally a descendent of David, issued from his lineage as we hear in Luke 2:4. And this title also conveys a messianic image, which was political and military in nature. For David's line was to sit on the throne. What words mean is tied to who says them and the context in which they are uttered. What do you hear here as the blind beggar calls Jesus the **Son of David**?

SCRIPTURES FOR SUNDAY 4.2.2017

Luke 18:31-19:10

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

³¹ Then [Jesus] took the twelve aside and said to them, "See, *we are going up to Jerusalem*, and everything that is written about **the Son of Man** by the prophets will be accomplished. ³² For he will be handed over to the Gentiles; and he will be mocked and insulted and spat upon. ³³ After they have flogged him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise again." ³⁴ But *[the disciples] understood nothing* about all these things; in fact, what he said was *hidden from them*, and they did not grasp what was said.

³⁵ As he approached **Jericho, A BLIND MAN** was sitting by the roadside begging. ³⁶ When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. ³⁷ They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." ³⁸ Then he shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ³⁹ Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" ⁴⁰ Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, ⁴¹ "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me see again." ⁴² Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has saved you." ⁴³ Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

19 ¹[Jesus] entered **Jericho** and was passing through it. ² A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a **chief tax collector** and was rich. ³ He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵ When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." ⁶ So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷ All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a **sinner**." ⁸ Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded

chief tax collector: meant being part of the Roman system put in place by the foreign occupiers of the land. They turned people like Zacchaeus into an agent of the state, a Jew turned oppressor of his own people. They collected what they were told to collect for Rome and then could charge a surcharge (whatever they deemed appropriate or could collect) which they could retain as their salary. They were seen as collaborating traitors by the people. Zacchaeus isn't just a tax collector, we're told he's a chief among them. In the Roman system, the higher the position one had the more one was deemed to be complicit in the corrupt system. We learn nothing of his private life. Yet one would naturally conclude that no one can be privately righteous and participate in (and profit from) a program that robs and crushes other people. Curiously while he's a great person in the societal system he is a man of small stature physically, needing extra height to see over the crowd.

I will pay back four times as much: according to Jewish law voluntary restitution called for a return of the original amount plus 20% (Leviticus 6:5 and Numbers 5:7) and elsewhere for compulsory restitution for doubling the original amount (Exodus 22:1-4, 2 Samuel 12:6). Is Zacchaeus responding with radical grace and conversion, or trying to "earn" or "pay for" his forgiveness and acceptance, in a way settling his debts?

he too is a son of Abraham: Whereas the term *Son of Man* indicated a specific family line or a military title, this term is broadly inclusive, covering all those who are part of the Jewish family. Zacchaeus is as much as child of Abraham as the crippled woman healed in Luke 13:16. We see this title used for all the people by John the Baptizer in Luke 3:8. Here Jesus implies an indelible connection between Zacchaeus and the crowd that judges him, and which he has most likely treated badly in the past: they are all children of God, chosen, loved by the Maker of the Heavens and the Earth. They may not see themselves as family, but they are. It calls into question their (and by extension *our*) definitions of who is lost and who isn't.

The story ends with a seemingly logical, yet radical, statement about lost and found – which harkens back to the three parables of lostness – the sheep, coin and sons in Luke 15, specifically the closing statement of the father in Luke 15:32: "But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found."

anyone of anything, I will *pay back* four times as much." ⁹ Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because **he too is a son of Abraham.**" ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

Questions for the practice of Examen & Contemplation

***What strikes you in this passage? How does it interact with what you're living these days, or thinking about?**

***While blind, the talkative beggar seems to see Jesus. How do you see Jesus these days....as a healer?; a friend?; a mystery?; an inactive presence or idea?; merely a figure in a beautiful story?**

***How do you experience faith as an invitation to a new sense of family?; a belonging that is tied in with our salvation and well-being? What is the connection for you between personal faith and communal belonging? How is God calling you – us – to be a community of the lost making room for the lost? How does that give you hope? How is that revolutionary in our bubble and wall divided post-election society?**