

Zacchaeus

Promises were not something I held to very strongly. I'm Jewish, but I worked for the Roman government as a tax collector. I was hated by my people and seen as a traitor. And rightfully so since I stole as much money as I could from my Jewish brothers and sisters and from the Roman government.

Then, one day, one encounter changed everything. I had heard of Jesus, and when I heard he was coming through my area on His way into Jerusalem, I wanted to see what all the fascination in him was about. The crowd was so heavy that I couldn't see anything, so I ran ahead and climbed up a tree so I could see everything as they walked by.

I never expected to talk to Him. I was just a spectator. But Jesus had other plans. He stopped right under the tree where I was and looked directly at me. It was like he could see right through me into my heart. He called me by name and said, "Zacchaeus, I'm having dinner at your house tonight."

You should have heard the collective gasp from the crowd and from me! None of us could believe our ears! Jesus wanted to have dinner with me, at my house! My own townspeople didn't even want to eat with me.

I've met a lot of people in my life. I've met just about everyone in this region, but I've never met anyone like Jesus. He changed me that day. Before we even finished dinner, I promised to give half my possessions to the poor and to give back four times what I cheated from people. I couldn't help it. God changed me from selfish to selfless, from a thief to a giver, from lost to found, from dead to alive.

Jesus came to my house that day. Salvation came to my heart that day. I had read about God's promised Messiah, and when I met Jesus, I knew He is the Messiah, Savior, the Promised One.

That same day He went into Jerusalem. The celebrations continued as he rode into town on a donkey. Everyone praised Him and put palm branches and their cloaks in His path like a "red carpet" for a king's procession. It was a glorious day that I will never forget.