

April Week 1, 2025 Learning Together

Hello to the new month of April, hello to our new story, and hello to our learners who are participating! As always, you and your entire family are invited to read and listen and create and pray around our selected story.

There will be two additional online Learning Together lessons this month, one per week, and on the fourth Sunday of the month, Learning Together will gather in person on Sunday, April 23, 2025, at our church, Resurrection Lutheran Church in New Berlin.

This month's story is (drumroll please) titled "The Man Who Didn't Have any Friends (None)." It can be found on pages 264-271 of The Jesus Storybook Bible by Sally Lloyd-Jones. A free copy of this book is available at our church, Resurrection Lutheran Church, in New Berlin, or you can order a copy online.

Below you will find a Children section, an Adult section, and a wrap-up section for Children and Adults together.

If you have questions and/or comments, please use this blog to submit them to Pastor Matt, who welcomes discussion.

Children

To begin, please find yourself a comfortable spot to listen to our story being read to you aloud. Close your eyes, if you like, to imagine what the pictures would look like if you drew them yourself.

When I first read the title of our story, I said to myself "Hmmm, what kind of person would have absolutely NO friends? ... Hmmm, a person like that would have to WANT to have absolutely NO friends ... Hmmm, why would ANYBODY want to have NO friends?



The answer to my questions is this would have to be a person who only cared about himself. This person would have been **GREEDY** to make life richer for himself. Zacchaeus was busy not making friends because he was busy cheating the people of his town of Jericho out of their tax money. The Roman government ran Jericho and, just as our government does today, required that taxes **HAD** to be paid to them. Zacchaeus was the tax collector and would collect more taxes than he was supposed to and would keep the extra money for himself!

The townspeople had found out about his scheme, but he didn't care if they had or hadn't. He was only interested in himself and being rich.

However, he finally realized that he was not a happy man. He felt **LONELY**. He was tired of being alone and being yelled at and spit upon and pushed and called names. He had chosen to live a type of life that drove everyone away and made him a hated outcast. Now he wanted to change. How would a most hated man turn himself into someone everyone liked?

He knew about Jesus, and when he heard that Jesus was visiting Jericho, he suddenly wanted to see Jesus more than anything else.

Below you will find a **Children** section, an **Adult** section, and a wrap-up section for **Children and Adults** together.

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Adults

The Biblical reference is Luke 19.

Part A - The Guest of the Man Whom All Despised

Luke 19:1-10 *Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. And--look you--there was a man called Zacchaeus by name, and he was commissioner of taxes, and he was rich. He was seeking to see who Jesus was, and he could not for the crowd, because he was short in height. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree, for Jesus was to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus! Hurry and come down! for this very day I must stay at your house." So Zacchaeus hurried and came down, and welcomed Jesus gladly; and when they saw it they all murmured, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look you--half of my goods, Lord, I hereby give to the poor. If I have taken anything from any man by fraud I give it back to him four times over." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost."*

Jericho was a very wealthy and a very important town. It lay in the Jordan valley and commanded both the approach to Jerusalem and the crossings of the river which gave access to the lands east of the Jordan. It had a great palm forest and world-famous balsam groves which perfumed the air for miles around. Its gardens of roses were known far and wide. Men called it "The City of Palms." The Romans carried its dates and balsam to world-wide trade and fame.

All this combined to make Jericho one of the greatest taxation centers in Palestine, and Zacchaeus was a man who had reached the top of his profession in knowing how to scam the system; he was the most hated man in the district.

Zacchaeus was determined to see Jesus, and would let nothing stop him, which was very brave for this short man most, if not all, people hated. He took steps to show all the community that he was a changed man, and after speaking to Jesus, immediately announced to all that he would give half of his goods to the poor; the other half he did not intend to keep to himself, but to use to make restitution for the frauds of which he had been self-confessedly guilty.

Part B - The King's Trust in His Servants

Luke 19:11-27 *As they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell them a parable because he was near Jerusalem, and they were thinking that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately. So he said, "There was a noble man who went into a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself and then to return. He called ten of his own servants and gave them 5 pounds each and said to them, 'Trade with these until I come.' His citizens hated him, and they dispatched an embassy after him, saying, 'We do not wish this man to be king over us.' When he had received the kingdom and had returned, he ordered the servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had made by trading with it. The first came and said, 'Sir, your 5 pounds has produced 50 pounds.' So he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have shown yourself faithful in a little thing, you shall have authority over ten cities.' And the second came and said to him also, 'Sir, your 5 pounds has made 25 pounds.' He said to him also, 'You, too, are to be promoted over five cities.' Another came to him and said, 'Sir, here is your 5 pounds, which I was keeping laid away in a towel, for I was afraid of you, because I know that you are a hard man. You take up what you did not put down and you reap what you did not sow.' He said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I judge you, wicked servant. You knew that I am a hard man, taking up what I did not put down, and reaping what I did not sow. You ought, therefore, to have given my money to the bankers, so that when I came, I would have received it plus interest.' He said to those standing by, 'Take the 5 pounds from him and give it to him who has 50 pounds.' They said to him, 'Sir, he has 50 pounds.' I tell you, that to everyone who has it will be given; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. But as for these my enemies, who did not wish to have me as their king--bring them here and hew them to pieces in my presence."*

This is unique among the parables of Jesus because it is the only one whose story is in part based on an actual historical event. It tells of a king (actually Herod the Great) who went away to receive a kingdom and whose subjects did their best to stop him receiving it. Anyone in Judaea, on hearing the parable, would immediately remember the historical circumstances on which it was based.

The parable of the king and his servants illustrates certain facts of Christian life. The king referred to in the parable is God Himself. It tells of our God's trust in us, our God's test of us, and our God's rewards for us.

In the next two lessons, we will continue looking at Luke 19.

Children and Adults

April 27, 2025, will be the date of the next Learning Together Gather for Sunday schoolers at our church. All ages are welcome to attend. Mark it on your calendar! 😊

~This Week's Prayer~

Dear God, Thank you for Your great reward to us - heaven! Amen.

Enjoy spring,
Margo Greer