

## A Wee Little Person

Scripture: Luke 19:1 – 10 & 2 Thessalonian 1:1 – 4, 11 – 12

I started writing this message about a month ago when a wee little person passed away – Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the Notorious RBG! What a great lady of justice and compassion but yet she was a wee little person. She was grand in stature but wee little in size!

Ruth Bader Ginsburg also brought me to think of a wee little person in scripture – Zacchaeus.

Do you ever find yourself feeling like you have to justify your worth? Do you ever feel you need to do something to show others that you are vital to a process or job? It seems as if everywhere we turn, there is something or someone willing and ready to tear us down. We often get messages that remind us of our failures and inadequacies. The media does this through TV ads that tell us we are worthless unless we buy their product. We are told by our peers that we are worthless because we do not do what they wish us to do. We are even told by society our worthlessness when we buck the system or belong to the wrong political party. We are told we are not pretty enough or smart enough or fast enough or tall enough. By the world's standards, we are rarely ever enough!

Jesus, however, challenges this notion of not being good enough. In our passage from the Gospel of Luke, we find Jesus entering Jericho and we are introduced to Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus is *'a wee little man, a wee little man was he!'* Now let us listen to a YouTube video about Zacchaeus. (play video)

Zacchaeus was very short in stature but the scripture tells us of the many other things about Zacchaeus – Zacchaeus held power being described as a ruler amongst tax collectors; and Zacchaeus had status being described as rich.

It also appears that Zacchaeus had heard something about Jesus because he climbs a Sycamore tree. Why else would he put in the effort to climb a tree to simply see who Jesus was. Zacchaeus also appears to fit the stereotype of a tax collector. Tax collectors were look upon as people who cheat other people and are sinners. In fact, in Zacchaeus day, a tax collector could work just ten years and skim enough money of the top of the taxes they collected to retire and live well for the rest of their life. A tax collector was a lucrative job but the people looked at a tax collector as a cheater and sinner!

Jesus calls to Zacchaeus to climb down out of the tree so that Jesus can eat a meal at Zacchaeus' house. As he climbs down from the tree upon Jesus' beckoning, Zacchaeus is reminded of what the world thinks of him. The passage tells us that those who saw him walk with Jesus were grumbling and calling him a sinner. Zacchaeus, in an effort to justify himself, stops and appears to plead his case before the Lord.

While Zacchaeus focuses on his actions, he tries to deem himself worthy to be in Christ's presence. Jesus seems to ignore Zacchaeus resume. Jesus does not even address what Zacchaeus was saying, instead Jesus reminds him and all those in the crowd that salvation is not earned but freely given. It is in Zacchaeus's identity as an Israelite. It is in Zacchaeus as a child of the covenant with Abraham. These things make Zacchaeus worthy!

How might our lives be different if we did not hold ourselves to the standards of the world? How might our lives be different if we did not hold those around us by the standards of the world? But rather if we saw each person and ourselves as a sacred worth as a beloved child of God.

Would we sneer at Zacchaeus like those in the crowd? Would we call Zacchaeus a sinner? Would we feel the need to justify ourselves with a padded resume? Or could we be freed to live into the fullness of our identities as children of God, not stepping on each other or making ourselves appear worthy?

Oh, there is a lot to learn from the wee little person – Zacchaeus and there is a lot to admire in a wee little person – Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Let us dig a little deeper into our identity as children of God. Let us look at our second scripture reading from 2 Thessalonians. This passage portrays for us the response from the freedom that comes in affirmed identity as a child of God. The author of this letter to the Thessalonian church says it is right to give thanks to God because our faithfulness is growing by leaps and bounds, and the love that all of us have for each other is increasing. But the author also makes it clear that these reasons to give thanks are not because of the work done by the people of the Thessalonian church, rather it is by God's grace and power.

Salvation is not earned; it is freely given!

And so, we, too, might hear that God will make us worthy of the call. As we have been called beloved children of God, joined into a family of believers, much like the church in Thessalonica, we might also be encouraged and challenged to give thanks to God.

Salvation for us is not earned, it is freely given by our merciful God!

Let us pray:

O God, assure us of our identity as children of God. Let our lives be given to your glory and honor. May the One we call Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer be our Lord and Savior.

Let us trust that your grace is given freely to us. Let us acknowledge that your great love for us is found in your only son, Jesus Christ. And may the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit be by our side every step along our journey in this world. AMEN.