

Psalm 146 and Luke 19:1-10

15th Sunday after Pentecost. September 6, 2026.

Texts from the NRSVUE Bible. According with *Un giorno una parola* lectionary.

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Psalm 146

¹*Praise the Lord!*

Praise the Lord, O my soul!

²*I will praise the Lord as long as I live;*

I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

³*Do not put your trust in princes,*

in mortals, in whom there is no help.

⁴*When their breath departs, they return to the earth;*

on that very day their plans perish.

⁵*Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,*

whose hope is in the Lord their God,

⁶*who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them;*

who keeps faith forever;

⁷*who executes justice for the oppressed;*

who gives food to the hungry.

The Lord sets the prisoners free;

⁸*the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.*

The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;

the Lord loves the righteous.

⁹*The Lord watches over the strangers;*

he upholds the orphan and the widow,

but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

¹⁰*The Lord will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations.*

Praise the Lord!

Luke 19:1-10

¹*He entered Jericho and was passing through it. ²A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore*

tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵When 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.” ⁶So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷All who saw it began to grumble and said, “He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.” ⁸Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” ⁹Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”

Sermon notes

Let us read John Calvin commentary and a Yann Redaliè homily.

John Calvin's Harmony Commentary on Luke 19:1-10

1-4. This shows how little attention Luke paid to observing the order of dates; for, after having detailed the miracle, he now relates what happened in the city of Jericho. He tells us that, while Christ presented himself to the view of all, as he went along the streets, Zaccheus alone was very desirous to see him. For it was an evidence of intense desire that he climbed up a tree; since rich men are, for the most part, haughty, and plume themselves on affected gravity. It is possible, indeed, that others entertained the same wish, but this man was most properly singled out by Luke, both on account of his rank, and on account of his wonderful conversion, which took place suddenly. Now, though faith was not yet formed in Zaccheus, yet this was a sort of preparation for it; for it was not without a heavenly inspiration that he desired so earnestly to get a sight of Christ; I mean, in reference to that design which immediately appeared. Some were led, no doubt, by vain curiosity to run even from distant places, for the purpose of seeing Christ, but the event showed that the mind of Zaccheus contained some seed of piety. In this manner, before revealing himself to men, the Lord frequently communicates to them a secret desire, by which they are led to Him, while he is still concealed and unknown; and, though they have no fixed object in view, He does not disappoint them, but manifests himself in due time.

5. Zaccheus, make haste, and come down. It is a remarkable instance of favor, that the Lord anticipates Zaccheus, and does not wait for his invitation, but of his own accord asks lodging at his house. We know how hateful, nay, how detestable the name of publican at that time was; and we shall find that this is shortly afterwards mentioned by Luke. It is therefore astonishing kindness in the Son of God to approach a man, from whom the great body of men recoil, and that before he is requested to do so. But we need not wonder, if he bestows this honor on one who was already drawn to him by a secret movement of the Spirit; for it was a more valuable gift to dwell in his heart than to enter his house. But by this expression he made it evident, that he is never sought in vain by those who sincerely desire to know him; for Zaccheus obtained vastly more than he had expected. Besides, the great readiness of Zaccheus to obey, his hastening to come down from the tree, and his joy in receiving Christ, exhibit still more clearly the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit; for, though he did not yet possess a pure faith, yet this submissiveness and obedience must be regarded as the beginning of faith.

7. And when they saw it, they all murmured. The inhabitants of the town — and, perhaps, some of Christ's followers — murmur that he goes to lodge with a man who is looked upon as wicked and infamous, even though nobody invited him. It is thus that the world disregards the

offer of the grace of God, but complains bitterly when it is conveyed to others. But let us consider how unjust this murmuring was. They think it unreasonable that Christ should bestow so great an honor on a wicked man; for in this passage, as in many others, the word sinner is not taken in the ordinary sense, but denotes a man of disgraceful and scandalous life. Let us suppose that Zaccheus was a person of this description. Still, we ought first to inquire for what purpose Christ chose to become his guest; for, while out of doors men are murmuring, within the house God displays magnificently the glory of this name, and refutes their wicked calumny.

The conversion of Zaccheus was an astonishing work of God, and yet there was no good reason why Zaccheus should be marked with infamy. He had the charge of collecting the taxes. Now to collect taxes was no crime in itself, but men of that class were exceedingly despised and hated by the Jews, because they reckoned it to be in the highest degree unjust that they should pay tribute. But whatever might be the character of Zaccheus, still the kindness of Christ ought not to be blamed, but commended, in not refusing his assistance to a wretched man, to rescue him from destruction, and bring him to salvation. And therefore the offense which was wickedly taken did not hinder him from proceeding to execute his Father's command. With such magnanimity ought all his ministers to be endued, as to think more highly of the salvation of one soul than of the murmurs which all ignorant persons may utter, and not to desist from their duty, even though all their actions and words may expose them to reproaches.

8. And Zaccheus stood, and said. From this result they ought to have formed their opinion of what Christ did; but men are so hasty and precipitate, that they do not take time to wait for God. The conversion of Zaccheus is described by fruits and outward signs. As it was probable that he had enriched himself to the injury of others, if he had wronged any man, he was ready to restore fourfold. Besides, the half of his goods he dedicates to the poor. A man might indeed bestow all his goods on the poor (1 Corinthians 13:3), and yet his generosity might be of no value in the sight of God; but, though no mention is here made of inward repentance, yet Luke means that the godly zeal, which he commends in Zaccheus, proceeded from that living root. In like manner, Paul, when treating of repentance, exhorts us to those duties, by which men may learn that we are changed for the better: "Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labor with his hands, that he may assist the poor and needy" (Ephesians 4:28). We ought therefore to begin with the heart, but our repentance ought also to be evinced by works.

Now let us observe that Zaccheus does not make a present to God out of his extortions, as many rich men give to God a portion of what they have obtained by dishonesty, that they may the more freely pillage in future, and that they may be acquitted of the wrongs which they have formerly done. But Zaccheus devotes the half of his goods to God in such a manner, as to give, at the same time, compensation for whatever wrongs he has done; and hence we infer that the riches which he possessed were not the fruit of dishonest gain. Thus Zaccheus is not only ready to give satisfaction, if he has taken any thing by fraud, but shares his lawful possessions with the poor; by which he shows that he is changed from a wolf not only into a sheep, but even into a shepherd. And while he corrects the faults which had been formerly committed, he renounces wicked practices for the future, as God demands from his people, first of all, that they abstain from doing any act of injury. Zaccheus has not laid others under obligation, by his example, to strip themselves of the half of their goods; but we have only to observe the rule which the Lord prescribes, that we dedicate ourselves, and all that we have, to holy and lawful purposes.

9. Today is salvation come to this house. Christ, bearing testimony to Zaccheus, declares that his professions were not hypocritical. And yet he does not ascribe to the good works of

Zaccheus the cause of salvation; but, as that conversion was an undoubted pledge of the divine adoption, he justly concludes from it that this house is a possessor of salvation. Such, too, is the import of the words; for, since Zaccheus is one of the children of Abraham, he argues that his house is saved. In order that any man may be reckoned among the children of Abraham, it is necessary for him to imitate Abraham's faith; nay, Scripture expressly bestows on faith this commendation, that it distinguishes the genuine children of Abraham from strangers. Let us therefore know that in Zaccheus faith is chiefly commended, on account of which his good works were acceptable to God. Nor is there reason to doubt that the doctrine of Christ went before the conversion of Zaccheus; and, consequently, the commencement of his salvation was, to hear Christ discoursing on the undeserved mercy of God, and on the reconciliation of men to Him, and on the redemption of the Church, and to embrace this doctrine by faith.

In consequence of the Greek word *oikos* (house) being of the masculine gender, this passage is explained in two ways. The old translator has made the reference to be to Zaccheus, which I also prefer. Erasmus has chosen to render it, inasmuch as "the house, itself, is a daughter of Abraham"; and although I do not disapprove of this, I think it more natural to explain it as referring to Zaccheus. For, since God, when he adopts the head of a family, promises that He will be a God even to his whole house, salvation is, with propriety, extended from the head to the whole body. Now the particle *kai* (also) is emphatic; for Christ means that Zaccheus, not less than the other Jews who haughtily detested him, is a son of Abraham. And that his former life may not seem to have shut against him the gate of salvation, Christ argues from his own office, that there is nothing in this change at which any man ought to take offense, since he was sent by the Father to save those who were lost.

Source: John Calvin, Commentary on a Harmony of the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1845), on Luke 19:1-10. Public domain.

Yann Redalié on Luke 19:1-10

1. The gospel to Zacchaeus. The gospel to Zacchaeus is made of four gifts: a name, an identity; being set in motion; the present time; hospitality. We are invited — we, our synod, our communities — to live this gospel, to receive it, to proclaim it.

2. A Sunday-school image. Zacchaeus has always been a likeable sinner. Someone who climbs to the top of a tree cannot help being likeable. Perhaps there is even something comic in the scene. Zacchaeus is a chief tax collector, and tax collectors were hated and feared as collectors of tribute on behalf of the occupying power. Now, despite his professional status, his wealth, and his power, Zacchaeus behaves like a boy: he climbs a tree, even risking being mocked. When Jesus passes by, the situation is turned upside down: the voyeur is seen. It is a story of reversal. The voyeur who is seen is invited to invite. He is welcomed by Jesus so as to become, in turn, one who welcomes. Happy at the turn events have taken, Zacchaeus hastens to bring about the story's happy ending.

3. After the facts, the opinions. At this point the story moves from facts to opinions, from what happened to its interpretation. In the second part of the account, each of the three actors — the crowd, Zacchaeus, and Jesus — comments on what has happened, and all three agree on the fact: "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner!" Formally, all three say the same thing: "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner!" — shame! grumbles the crowd. "He has gone to stay

at the house of a sinner!” — wonderful! thinks Zacchaeus, and this is what changes everything, what sets everything back in motion. “He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner!” — he came on purpose for this, says Jesus; it is his job, and this is perhaps the hardest thing to accept.

4. A memory reread and meditated on within the community. Exegetes consider the account we read to be the fruit of several rereadings that preserve traces of the history of the first Christian communities: at its origin lies the memory of the conversion of the small but powerful chief tax collector. This memory was told among the first Christian groups alongside other episodes of the conversion of sinners, publicans, and tax collectors. The account then also developed out of tensions internal to the communities. Can the rich find a place in the community while remaining rich? The story of Zacchaeus answers the question positively. They can — but they must have a deep desire to meet the Lord and to put their goods at the service of the community. Finally, Luke gathers this episode into his account of Jesus’ ministry, and with his concluding words Jesus gives the encounter its full value as a story of salvation. In the 1970s, in the USA, this text was put forward forcefully by African American theologians as a manifesto of restitution.

5. Seeing! But who sees whom? Told only by Luke, the encounter with Zacchaeus immediately follows the account of Jesus’ encounter with the blind man of Jericho (Bartimaeus in Mark). The two stories have several points in common. Seeing, wanting to see, is the story’s red thread. The story of Zacchaeus, too, is a story of the healing of a hindered gaze. Indeed, all three actors in the story (Zacchaeus, Jesus, the crowd) will see something. The story takes off because Zacchaeus wants to see Jesus and is prevented from doing so by his short stature — that is, by the crowd, which forms a screen. Jesus’ gaze discovers Zacchaeus in his tree: “he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down, quickly.’” Jesus’ gaze is the reverse of the crowd’s, which blocks and screens. Jesus steps out from behind the screen and calls by name the Zacchaeus who was exiled up in his tree. “Seeing this, they all began to grumble.” Finally, the crowd too sees something — a judging kind of seeing. This is the perspective of the screening crowd. Seeing who Jesus is, and communicating it: this is a central, fundamental task of our church, whenever we tell this story to children in Sunday school, whenever we preach the word, whenever we teach in the Faculty, whenever we accompany sisters and brothers through the different moments of life, everyday moments or great moments (baptism, confirmation, marriage, funerals). Seeing who Jesus is and communicating it is also our vocation in the witness of public and social engagement, in the work of the media.

6. Seeing who Jesus was. Who is Jesus? The account also gives direct answers: a charismatic figure who gathers crowds, preceded by his fame, one who enters the house of sinners; he is the Lord, he is the salvation that comes, the Son of Man who seeks what was lost. And yet the important point is that these names and titles are made concrete — made visible, precisely — in a story that reinterprets them. In a certain sense the account gives their mode of use. In this story, Zacchaeus understands who Jesus is as he himself changes. There is a parallel unveiling of the two identities, Zacchaeus’ and Jesus’. And this is what challenges us, questions us, and confronts us. Jesus is the one who took a small tax collector — rich, certainly, but hated, impure, a sinner, excluded by everyone — and made him a man called by name, who, without prerequisites and without waiting, is made, today, an agent of hospitality. Jesus Christ is the one who breaks a voyeur’s gaze — one who wants to see without being seen — and restores real sight, a new gaze for new relationships: Zacchaeus sees and discovers the poor to whom he can give, the victims of wealth to whom he can restore what was wrongly taken. Who is Jesus? The one who asks us to

answer “present” to the present moment.

7. Who is Jesus Christ? This is the question of our text. It is the central question of the Christian faith — the question on which every synod, every ordination to the pastoral ministry, should be centered. The Son of Man came to seek and to save. The God of the Bible is a God who comes. The human being goes, sets out on the way.

In the encounter, Jesus does not moralize to Zacchaeus, does not formulate reproaches, does not even exhort him to change. Jesus expresses to Zacchaeus the trust of God. Who is Jesus Christ? The one who expresses to the human person the trust of God.

Now this communication of God’s trust takes on the concrete dimensions of the four gifts given to Zacchaeus: his own name — Jesus Christ is the one who gives a name back to the sinner, without regard to his qualities or faults, his affiliations or performance; Jesus Christ is the one who sets him in motion, out of isolation: come down!; the one who gives him a present, a today; the one who makes him the author of a space of intimate hospitality, a house of his own that is hospitable, a dwelling lived with joy, where one is not only welcomed but can become, oneself, an agent of welcome. “Zacchaeus, come down, quickly, because today I must stay at your house.” Now this name, spoken by Jesus Christ, is enough to set us walking, to make us come down from our trees, to leave isolation behind, to make us authors of our own lives, to renew our relationships.

He calls me by name, and does not identify me by, or fear me for, my power or my wealth, and does not despise me for being a sinner or for my incapacities. This is the trust of God. We too, in our own searches for identity, must be careful that they do not become screens. Identity, at its origin, is always a calling by name. There is no trial period — there is today. It gives me the possibility of living fully in the present, today, without being crushed by an unresolved past or by a future that frightens me — that is, to live the present fully. Today, trusting, without fear. This is the trust of God.

Perhaps for us the past is the temptation, dressed up in the fine name of history — all the more so since the future appears deeply uncertain. We are called today, for today itself. Jesus is not the one who hosts, but the one who allows himself to be hosted. Accepted hospitality gives trust its material form. It makes it possible to inhabit the world within the reciprocity of hospitality. In this way, the divided person recovers unity; the one who threatened others recovers a freedom that is no longer aggressive; the excluded one recovers a community. This is the trust of God.

For us, today, it is an invitation to rediscover ever more fully the reciprocity of welcome, to make our communities a space of mutual hospitality, where sisters and brothers who have come from far away (from Africa, from Asia, from South America) themselves become, together with us, agents of welcome, of invitation, and of proclamation, and not merely objects of concern for social services.

To the trust of God transmitted by Jesus, the trust of Zacchaeus responds (he hastened to come down and welcomed him with joy; I give half, I restore fourfold). This is faith in Jesus Christ: that is, to have trust in the trust of God — not so much the acceptance of a body of doctrine, but the faith-as-trust that transforms and renews relationships (with God, with oneself, with the world, and with others), trust in the trust that God places in us by wagering on us.

Trust in the trust of God sets in motion the dynamic of the gospel to Zacchaeus, a word that lives by being received and proclaimed. It is this dynamic that the story of Zacchaeus illustrates through its reversal of roles: the voyeur is seen and restored to a clear sight of God, of himself,

and of others; the one restored to himself restores to others what had been wrongly taken; the one welcomed becomes, this very day, one who welcomes; and we too receive the gospel from those to whom we proclaim it.

May the trust in the trust that God gives us, so that we may be welcomed by him this very day, illumine all the work of this synod; may it help us to make more truly lived who Jesus Christ is, and make our communities, our cities, our country, and the whole earth more habitable. Amen.

Source: Yann Redalié, homily on Luke 19:1-10, preached at the Synod of the Waldensian and Methodist Churches (Sinodo delle Chiese Valdesi e Metodiste), 2004. Original Italian: “Lc 19,1-10 di Yann Redalié, Sinodo 2004.” Translated from the Italian by G.P. and Claude.