**Zacchaeus & sycamore-fig tree**

Luke 19:1-10 (Key Verse: 3,4)

He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

Praises be to God who has given us an opportunity to attend the 2025 Spring Bible Conference! We have been praying, and preparing and therefore expecting to be blessed by life giving word of God. Dedicated servants have been assigned to really drill in the word of God in our hearts; from messengers to group bible study leaders, from prayer servants to presiders, from a kids’ ministry leaders to worship service music servants. Let me not forget the catering department who will be serving us with delicious food, as it is said, “man shall live not by bread alone…”. Indeed, we will be blessed, amen! However, let us be careful to know what it really means to be blessed in the conference. To be blessed is not the above mentioned, but rather, to be blessed is receiving deeply, at least one word of God, that has power to change one’s perspective and actions. Yes, to be blessed means to deeply receive the word of God through bible testimony writing, leading to repentance. Anything else, will make this conference one of those meetings, and unfortunately we will fall short. What a waste! Let us not fret. We believe God will work powerfully in our hearts through His word.

So, how can we position ourselves in order to be blessed by the word of God? Is it just a matter of me dragging my feet and getting myself to this conference that guarantees that I will be blessed by the conference? Absolutely not! To be blessed by God’s word, we all need to overcome all our shortcomings by faith, and then bring ourselves in contact with Jesus who will bless us. This, will be illustrated in the story of Zacchaeus who fought through his shortcomings, and climbed a sycamore fig tree in order to see Jesus. And guess what, when he did that, Jesus saw him and his broken heart, and blessed him with salvation.

Look at verse 1. Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. Jericho is one of the last few places Jesus would pass through before entering Jerusalem for His crucifixion. This is the same historical Jericho whose walls fell when the Israelites’ army circled the barred walls of Jericho once a day for 6 days; the 7 priests blowing their trumpets. On the seventh day, the circled again but this time, 7 times. Not only did they just blow their trumpets, but this time, they gave one long breath. Yes, they had to take in deep breaths for this long sound. What was different also is that after this long trumpet sound, the soldiers would then shout loudly. Can you imagine the amount of effort needed to circle the walls of Jericho for 7 days, giving loud shouts and trumpets sounds? God didn’t just give them victory, but let them put in their efforts by faith, and then could they experience this miraculous victory! Yes, when they put in their efforts, and obeyed by faith, the great walls of Jericho came crushing down! The soldiers entered and killed all to win over Jericho. Yes, this is the same Jericho.

Maybe not so much of a soldier, or with a loud voice holding a trumpet, but there was a man named Zacchaeus. Look at verse 2. **A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy**. So, what doe we know about Zacchaeus? Not much, but that he was a short, and quite wealthy tax collector. Not sure if you know, but tax collectors were wealthy because they misappropriated tax collectors into their own purse. They were regarded as public sinners, among the worst of all sinners in that not only did they serve the Roman government which colonised them, but that they went on to steal from their very own people by over-collecting taxes to enrich themselves with the excess of what was to be collected to the Roman treasury. Now Zacchaeus was not just a tax collector, but was a chief tax collector. We can understand why he was wealthy.

Zacchaeus was a broken man. Despite the high paying job, he was still broken inside because of sin. We might not be as short as he was, but we are all broken because of sin. Yes, I can be passing all my subjects, tests, doing well academically, however, we are all broken because of sin. I can have all the wealth the world produces, have all the titles, but deep inside, be broken because of sin. You see, sin has not respect, rich or poor, happy or sad, we are all broken because of sin. Such was the case of Zacchaeus. And for this reason, look at verse 3a. **He wanted to see who Jesus was.** He must have heard about Jesus, and perhaps thought to himself that He could help him. You see, it is only Jesus who can solve his sin problem. His wealth cannot buy him salvation, but only through the freely given grace of Jesus. Tell your neighbour; “I want to see who Jesus is”. Tell your neighbour again, “I want to see Jesus”.

You see, Zacchaeus was a short man. He so wanted to see Jesus, to see who He was. But because of his height disadvantage, he couldn’t see Jesus as the crowd were in front and blocking his view. He must have jumped several time but no success. But he didn’t let this obstacle ruin his chances of seeing Jesus. He didn’t lie in the pool of fatalism feeling sorry for himself as he missed Jesus. No! He didn’t give up but rather found a way on how to overcome this challenge that seemingly is about to rob him of seeing Jesus. What did he do? Let us all read together our key verses 3 & 4. **3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way**. What a brilliant plan! Despite how difficult it was to climb the fig tree, Zacchaeus endured all that, driven by the heart desire to see Jesus, all the challenges and impediments he had were nothing. There, he could get a clear view of Jesus walking on the road towards past his direction.

I believe we have all come to the conference to see Jesus, amen? Amen! I understand that there are challenges seemingly blocking us from seeing Jesus and being blessed. Ask your neighbour? “What are your challenges”? Maybe we are filled with all sorts of worries taking our attention from Jesus; worries about school work, the amount of work we still need to cover, the tests/exams we need to prepare for, how we are so behind. What about our health, maybe we are sick and it is really difficult to focus on Jesus and this conference. Above all, our biggest impediment is sin that we so secretly are struggling with. Let us be encouraged by the spirit of Zacchaeus, to overcome such by faith. Amen!

And now tell your neighbour “Climb the sycamore fig tree, by faith”! Yes, let us identify our sycamore fig trees to help us see and be blessed by Jesus. I believe we have started well in climbing this fig tree by registering for the Spiring Bible Conference, and coming to attend the programme. We need one last thing; to prepare our hearts now. Our hearts are prepared when we earnestly pray before God, with a heart of repentance, asking Him to help us through His Holy Spirit. Yes, our hearts are well prepared when we joyfully sing songs of worship and praise. Yes, our hearts are ready to be blessed when we complete diligently, all the bible study questions, and writing deep and sincere bible testimony; testifying about how God is speaking to you through the messages we are about to hear.

So what happens when overcome our obstacles and climb the sycamore fig tree by faith? Let us read verse 5. **5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.”** Jesus comes into our hearts, and stays with us! Look at verse 8. **8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”** Yes, we are given the grace and ability to repent, sincerely! Above all, look at verses 9, 10. **9 Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”** Yes, we are saved! No longer of the world, but are now called the sons and daughter of the Most High God.

In conclusion: Isn’t a blessing to be saved? Isn’t true blessing to repent from our filthy sins and receive the salvation of God? Isn’t a blessing to have a personal encounter with Jesus who is always with us in our heart? Yes, it is indeed a blessing. So, let us be encouraged to overcome whatever challenges and impediments we have by faith; to have a prepared heart for this conference. May this conference not be one of those conferences, but be a turning point in our personal lives. Amen!

Prayer topics:

* God help me overcome whatever challenges and impediments blocking my heart from meeting and seeing You.
* Give me the spirit of Zacchaeus to have a burning desire to see Jesus no matter what the obstacles are in this Spring Conference.