Summary of Today’s Story
As Jesus comes into Jericho, a rich tax collector named Zacchaeus tries to take a look at Jesus, but the crowds keep him away, and he is also too short to see. So he runs ahead and climbs a tree on Jesus’ path. When Jesus gets to the tree, he looks up, sees Zacchaeus and invites himself to dinner at Zacchaeus’ house.

At dinner, Zacchaeus is so happy to be with Jesus that he promises to give half his possessions to the poor and to pay back anyone he might have cheated as tax collector. Jesus then proclaims salvation to the house of Zacchaeus.

Where You’ll Find Today’s Story
In the Bible
We recommend the New Revised Standard Version Bible.
Luke 19:1-10

In Children’s Bibles
If you plan to use a children’s Bible for storytelling, write the page numbers of today’s story in the space below.

In Our Sunday Lectionary
Today’s story is told in church on the following Sunday:
Year C: Proper 26
Weaving Our Story with the Biblical Story

In his mind, Zacchaeus has two strikes against him.

First, he is a tax collector, one of the most despised professions of his day. As tax collector, he is assumed to be a collaborator with the Roman Empire in collecting money from the people for the conquering power. He is also assumed to be a dishonest person who enriches his own household on the backs of the people.

Second, Zacchaeus is short. Maybe in his life he has compensated for being short by being a bully...or by being a tax collector—a legal bully. Now he is a person of political power even if he does not have the physical power of height.

On this day, something powerful compels him to see Jesus. Nothing will get in his way—not his reputation, nor his way of living, nor his shortness. He may even hear himself be the butt of jokes as he scampers up the tree, hangs onto the branches and waits for Jesus to come with the crowd surrounding him. What a silly sight he must be, this rich tax collector sitting in a tree!

Zacchaeus’ sudden decision to give half his belongings to the poor and to give back any money he has taken unfairly was surely not a transaction in exchange for salvation. Jesus does not have us do good works in order to obtain salvation. Rather, Zacchaeus is so grateful to Jesus that he responds with his outpouring of generous spirit born out of is repentance and joy. Therein lies his salvation.

What draws you to come to church, to seek God? And what lets you hear Jesus’ words, “Today salvation has come to this house!”

The Episcopal Thread

The sign on the street corner says, “THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH WELCOMES YOU.”

This is true whether “you” have a tall or a short stature—in looks or in reputation.

It is true whether “you” give a hefty pledge each year or are totally destitute and can give only a few pennies.

“THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH WELCOMES YOU” whether you have a Ph.D. or are illiterate.

“THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH WELCOMES YOU” whether “you” are a winner or a loser.

“THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH WELCOMES YOU” whether you are a hospice worker or a tax collector.

The Episcopal Church welcomes all Zacchaeuses through its doors.
Gathering
As the children enter the room, engage them in a simple activity that relates to today’s lesson. On pages 7-8, you’ll find Gathering Activity handouts to use if you wish. Below are other suggestions.

You might set out a few hints about today’s story: a branch or leaves from a tree, a climbing rope, a mite box or offering box. Has anyone ever climbed a tree before?

Older children may want simply to socialize for a few minutes. Set out some paper and pencils or markers, though, to allow restless hands to be creative. A conversation starter: If you climbed a tall tree, what would be your view, looking down?

After all the children have arrived and had a few minutes of activity or fellowship time, gather them together and say a simple opening prayer:
- Thank you, God, for bringing us together today. Bless our time together, bless us all, as we listen to a story about your Son Jesus and his friends. Amen.

Telling the Story
Read today’s story aloud from a children’s Bible, showing the pictures, or tell the story in your own words. The story about Zacchaeus is a charmer for children: A story about a grown man who climbs a tree so that he can see better. Children know about being too short. It is all right if they laugh about this story; it would be a laughter of familiarity.

You may embellish the story. Describe the scene in detail, how Jesus is coming up the street, how the crowds are jostling around him. Describe poor short Zacchaeus, who jumps up and down trying to see. Describe how he finds just the right tree to climb—the one with a branch just low enough for him to swing up on—and how he huffs and puffs up that tree as people watch him.

Bring the story to life—how Jesus sees Zacchaeus (is Zacchaeus embarrassed?), how Jesus congenially invites himself to dinner (with a smile), how Zacchaeus scrambles down the tree, skinning his knee on his way down. And what about the dinner? Did Zacchaeus come alive when Jesus talks to him? What a story!

See “Storytelling Enhancements” in the Appendix (also downloadable) for additional ideas.

Let the children hear the story without analyzing it for them or discussing it. For now, simply let the story sink into their minds and hearts. Later, while having snacks, you can bring up the story again and invite the children to talk about it and explore its message.

When you have finished, it’s time to pray—to encounter the One who tells us, “Now salvation has come to you.”
Prayer

Set up a small worship center in your room.

Materials:
- small table with a cloth to cover it
- 2 candles or 1 large Christ candle
- matches
- Bible
- cross
- optional: flowers (real, artificial or handmade by the children)

Have the children set up a simple altar with the materials listed above. Invite them to place on the altar any drawings or crafts that they created during Gathering time. Then light the candles.

Read a verse or two of today’s scripture from a Bible so that the children connect the story they heard with the Bible, which is the word of God. If working mainly with older children, you might expand the reading to several verses.

Suggestions for the reading:

For younger children: Luke 19:3

For older children: Luke 19:3-5

Help the children become familiar with our liturgy by doing the reading as it is done in church. Read as follows:

Reader: A reading from the Gospel of Luke:
(Read the selected passage.)

Reader: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Invite the children to sit in a circle and join in prayer. Say a brief prayer yourself, then invite prayers from each child in the circle:

- Invite prayers of thanks for God’s work in our lives during the past week. Who or what are they thankful for?
- Welcome any prayers of concern or petition for anyone in any need or trouble, whether for themselves or for others. Ask God for compassion and help in your petitions.
- Ask if anyone has had a birthday or celebrated a special day during the past week and give thanks for these special times.

End the prayer time by praying together the Lord’s Prayer.

Carefully extinguish the candles.

Sharing

Pass out snacks and say a simple grace, like this one:

- Thank you, God, for giving us your love so that we may love you back and love others also. Thank you for giving us this food, so that we may be fed and feed others also. May be always be thankful to you. Amen.

This is an excellent time, while sharing a snack, to begin talking about the story that the children have just heard. Ask questions such as:

- Why do you think Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus so much that he would climb a tree to do so?
- What do you think he might have heard Jesus saying? Could it be Jesus’ message that God loves and forgives him?
- If you were Zacchaeus, what would you want to ask Jesus at dinner? What would you want to say to Jesus?
Activities: Arts, Crafts, Games, Drama, etc.

After Sharing, begin an activity to supplement and enhance today’s story. While the children are doing an activity, talk about the story so that they make the connection.

Suggested story-related activities are provided at the end of this lesson on pages 9-25.

Additional activity ideas can be found in the Appendix (also downloadable) where we’ve provided suggestions and directions for a variety of general activities that can be adapted to any lesson. Also included are outreach and service projects that can be done at any time.

Memorization

There is no particular passage to memorize today, from this lesson.

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS WEEK’S SESSION

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Weaving God’s Beloved Community

God’s beloved community is woven as our own stories connect to the story of God and to the stories of the people around us.

As your time together draws to a close, take a few minutes to help the children summarize the story and say what they learned today by asking questions such as:
• Who did we talk about today?
• What did Zacchaeus do to see Jesus?
• What did Jesus say to Zacchaeus?
• What did Zacchaeus promise?

Closing Prayer

Before the children leave, say a closing prayer to send them into the church worship service or back to their homes with God’s love and blessing. The prayer can be very simple, such as this one:
• Thank you, God, for sending us Jesus to teach us how to love each other better. Thank you for giving us your stories, so we do not have to climb trees to learn your lessons. Help us to keep listening to you, and doing what you want us to do, and loving as you want us to love. Amen.

End with a dismissal used in church, such as:
• Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

The children respond:
• Thanks be to God!
GATHERING ACTIVITY: IN A TREE!

A man wants to climb a tree to see Jesus. Find a tree in the picture and draw the man sitting in it.
GATHERING ACTIVITY: SEEING JESUS

Where are the places you can go to be able to see Jesus? Draw a picture of yourself in the place where you would find the best spot for seeing Jesus.
ZACCHAEUS IN A TREE
Primary, Elementary

Children use clay, pipe cleaners, and beads to make a miniature scene of the Luke 19 story.

Materials:
- brown pipe cleaners (chenille stems)
- green beads
- clay or Styrofoam®
- brown clay or air-drying clay
- fabric scraps
- scissors
- glue

Directions:
Invite each child to make a tree as follows:

1. Shape the pipe cleaners into a tree shape by twisting several together to make the tree trunk, then spreading one end out to make branches.

2. String beads through the “branches” to make leaves on the tree.

3. Press the bottom of the tree into a clay or Styrofoam base.

4. Take a bit of brown clay or air-drying clay and shape a man—Zacchaeus. Cut small pieces of fabric and glue it around him, for clothing.

5. Put your Zacchaeus into the tree.
Children decorate a can with a paper version of Zacchaeus’ tree and use it to collect coins for people in need. When full, they can give it to the church or to their favorite charity.

**Materials:**
- clean can, without the lid, 1 per child
- blue and brown construction paper
- green tissue or construction paper
- tape
- glue
- scissors
- black marker

**Directions:**
Invite each child to make a coin collector as follows:

1. Cover the outside of the can with blue paper. Tape or glue to secure.
2. Cut out a tree trunk with branches from the brown paper. Glue this to the can.
3. Cut pieces of green tissue or construction paper. Crumple them up and glue them to the tree branches. You may need to tape or staple the green paper to the tree.
4. Use black marker to write the words *My Money for the Poor.*
Children pretend to climb a tall tree like Zacchaeus did.

**Materials:**
- large sheet of butcher paper
- markers or paint

**Preparation:**
Ahead of time, draw a huge tree with branches. Put this picture on the floor.

**Directions:**
1. Retell the story of Zacchaeus climbing the tree to see Jesus.
2. As you do this, have one child at a time pretend to climb the tree, pretending that it is a tall, tall tree. When Jesus invites Zacchaeus to dinner, the child will climb back down the tree.
Children use pipe cleaners (chenille stems), beads and yarn to make a 3D scene of Zacchaeus in the tree.

**Materials:**
- brown pipe cleaners (chenille stems), 4 per person
- green yarn
- small red beads, 12 per child
- pipe cleaners, 2-3 per child, in various skin tones
- scissors
- ruler
- cardboard egg carton (enough so that each person can cut out 1 egg cup)

**Preparation:**
You may want to try this out at home to make sure you can explain it to the children, and to show them a sample.

**Directions:**
Invite each child to make Zacchaeus in the tree as follows:

1. Take three brown pipe cleaners and fold them in half. Twist them together near the fold to make a tree trunk, with the ends of the pipe cleaners fanning out to make the branches.
2. Cut the last brown pipe cleaner into 1” pieces.
3. Wrap the short pipe cleaner pieces around the branches to make small tree limbs.
4. Slip the beads onto the branches to look like fruit on the tree.
5. Cut a long piece of green yarn.
6. Tie one end of the yarn to a branch, then weave the yarn in and out and through the branches until the branches are all entwined with the green “leaves.” You can use extra yarn to make a fuller tree. When you are satisfied, cut off any extra yarn and tie the end to a branch.
7. Cut a cup from the egg carton and turn it upside down. Poke a hole in the center.
8. Slip the base of the tree through the hole, to make a stand for the tree.
9. Use the flesh-colored pipe cleaners to make Zacchaeus. Then put him in the tree.
CLIMBING “Z” MOBILE
Preschool, Primary

Children make tree parts from paper and use ribbon to assemble a moving mobile of Zacchaeus climbing the tree.

Materials:
- patterns of tree parts, leaf clusters (p. 15) and Zacchaeus (p. 14), 1 set per child
- scissors
- paper plate (salad size), 1 per child
- stapler
- tape
- thin brown ribbon
- glue
- hole punch

Preparation:
- Make copies of the tree trunks and Zacchaeus—several tree trunks and leaf clusters and one Zacchaeus for each child.
- If children are too young to cut, cut these out in advance.

Directions:
Invite each child to make a mobile as follows:

1. Cut plate in half. This will be the leafy part of the tree.
2. Lay the paper plate half on the table.
3. If needed, color the tree parts, leaf clusters and Zacchaeus.
4. Staple or glue the leaf clusters onto the plate.
5. Cut a length of ribbon around 12”-16” in length. Staple one end to the back of the plate, hanging down.
6. Set the plate half on the table, top down (backside up) with the string hanging down.
7. Lay down the tree trunks at various intervals down the ribbon. Staple and/or tape the trunks to the ribbon.
8. Punch a hole through the leafy part of the tree (the plate).
9. Cut another length of ribbon, around 12” long. Glue Zacchaeus to the bottom of the ribbon.
10. Thread the top of the ribbon through the hole, so that the ribbon comes out at the back of the tree. Zacchaeus should be positioned in front of the tree trunks.

11. To move Zacchaeus up and down the tree, pull the ribbon up and down.

12. To hang the mobile, punch a hole in the center top of the plate and attach a ribbon.
Z IN THE TREE
Preschool, Primary

Children cut out and color construction paper to make a picture of Zacchaeus in a tree.

Materials:
craft sticks, 1 per child
Zacchaeus figure (p. 14), 1 per child
tree pattern (p. 17), 1 per child
crayons or markers
 glue
 scissors

Preparation:
Copy a Zacchaeus figure and tree pattern for each child.

Directions:
Invite each child to make the figures as follows:

1. Cut out and color the tree.
2. Cut a slit in the middle of the tree.
3. Color Zacchaeus and glue to the top end of a craft stick.
4. Pull the craft stick through the slit in the tree, with the stick on the back and Zacchaeus in front of the tree.
5. Move the stick up and down to move “Z in the tree.”
Children make a collection box so that they can share what they have, as Zacchaeus did. When the box is full, the money may be given to the church or to an organization that serves the poor.

**Materials:**
- paper cups or clean 13-ounce cans, 1 per child
- brown paper
- markers
- scissors
- glue
- cotton balls
- green food coloring or paint, various shades
- lid to hold coloring liquid

**Directions:**
Invite each child to make a collection tree as follows:

1. Pour a little paint or food coloring onto a lid, for dipping.

2. Wrap brown paper around the cup or can and cut to size. Glue paper to cup or can.

3. Dip cotton balls into the food coloring or paint. Set the cotton balls on paper to let them dry before handling them again. There is no need to saturate the cotton balls. They may be mixed green and white.

4. Glue the cotton balls along the rim of the cup to make the leafy part of the tree.

5. Use this collection tree to collect change.
HOW TO GET
JESUS’ ATTENTION
Primary, Elementary

In this game, children show how they would get Jesus’ attention in a big crowd.

Directions:
1. Invite the children to stand together in a circle.
2. Point to one child and say, “You want Jesus to notice you. What will you do so he sees you in the crowd?”
3. The child chosen will make motions that might attract Jesus’ attention. You might make some suggestions ahead of time:
   — hop
   — raise your hand
   — wave your arms
   — jump and wave at the same time
4. Then that child points to another child, who must pick a different way to attract Jesus’ attention.
5. Children keep doing their motions until all are moving at the same time!
GIVING AWAY
Intermediate

In this game, children pass cards along faster than they can collect them—but they need to keep the Forgiveness cards!

Materials:
- index cards, 3” x 5”
- tax money, corn, donkey and forgiveness picture (p. 21)

Preparation:
For a group of four children, you will need around 52 cards, or around 10-12 cards per each child. Out of 52 cards, have 15 each of the tax money, the corn and the donkey, and seven of forgiveness. For more children, increase the number of cards accordingly.

Directions:
Deal all cards face down. The following instructions are for the players.

1. Put one card down to your right, face down. Then pick up the one that your neighbor to your left put down. So all players will put down one card for the person to their right to pick up.

2. Put down cards one at a time—but try to put down faster than you pick up. But you must pick up when a card is placed before you.

3. Keep any Forgiveness cards that you get. (When players move fast, they may unintentionally pass Forgiveness cards, and so astute players will be careful not to pass Forgiveness cards and may then collect them.)

4. If you collect three Forgiveness cards or if you get rid of all your cards except any Forgiveness cards you hold in your hand, put your cards face down and yell “Salvation!”
ZACCHAEUS COMES DOWN FROM THE (MONEY) TREE

WEAVING GOD'S BELOVED COMMUNITY, YEAR 3

ACTIVITY CONTINUED
EMOTION DOLLS
Primary

Children decorate paper dolls to show how Jesus makes us feel.

Materials:
white paper
scissors
crayons
strings of paper dolls as illustrated at the bottom of this page, 1 set per child. Note: In other words, fold the plain, white paper into about 8 layers, accordion-style. Draw one paper doll on the top layer, and cut it out so multiple dolls are all joined at the “hands.” Because of the thickness of the paper (when cutting through multiple layers), this will likely be too difficult for the children to cut out themselves.

Directions:
1. Distribute a set of connected dolls to each child. Invite children to write a word on each doll to describe how Jesus makes us feel. Some suggestions are: happy, joyful, thankful, secure, hopeful, loved, forgiven, glad, safe and protected. Are there others?

2. Then invite children to decorate their dolls with hair, face and clothing that show the emotion written on each doll.

3. Children can take their dolls home, or hang them in your classroom or a hallway and let them “dance” on the walls.
SOUND EFFECTS STORY
Preschool, Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

Children contribute sound effects to a retelling of the story of Zacchaeus.

Directions:
1. Assign each child a sound effect to go with the story, or let them choose. Here are some sounds they might make:
   — blowing wind
   — barking dog
   — honking car (chariot, cart)
   — cat
   — footsteps
   — people
   — animals taken to market: donkey, chicken, bird
   — other ideas that children might think of...

2. Retell the story of Zacchaeus using the story line below, which describes noises. Have fun—and for more fun, record your storytelling!
**Sound Effects Story Script**

Jesus walks along the road toward the city of Jericho. A crowd is following him, talking and shouting. They are shouting, “Praise God! Glory to God!”

He walks along a busy street lined with trees. It is spring, and the wind is blowing through the trees, whistling in the leaves.

In the street, the chariot wheels are rumbling. You can hear the cart drivers yelling, “Move on! Get out of the way!”

One cart is taking a hundred chickens to market. Another cart is carrying pigeons in a cage, to take them to the temple. Donkeys are pulling the carts.

A man named Zacchaeus is in the crowd. He is chief tax collector and he’s rich. No one likes him. He is trying to push his way to see Jesus, but he can’t. He is too short, and the crowd is noisy and pushes him back.

He runs ahead and climbs a sycamore tree. A dog barks underneath him. He huffs and puffs to get up onto the first big branch. The tree sways and groans under his weight.

Jesus comes to the tree. The crowd is laughing at Zacchaeus. The dog barks again. A cat is hissing at the dog. Jesus looks up and sees Zacchaeus sitting in the tree. He says, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down. I’ll meet you at your house later.”

Zacchaeus shimmies down the tree. He skins his knees on the way down. The dog barks again. The cat hisses again. Zacchaeus runs back to his own house, and because he runs, he is out of breath. But he is happy to welcome Jesus.

The crowd grumbles when they see Jesus with Zacchaeus. They say, “Look, he’s the guest of someone bad.”
Zacchaeus hears them grumbling and he says to Jesus, “Look, I am going to give half my possessions to the poor. And if I have cheated anyone, I will pay back four times as much. That’s how happy I am to be with you.”

Jesus says to Zacchaeus, “Today salvation has come to this house!” The crowd hears Jesus and gets very quiet. There is a hush. Then someone says, “Praise the Lord! Glory to God!” And all the crowd repeats, “Praise the Lord! Glory to God!”