

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 26**  
**Lesson Plans for Younger Children**

**Scripture: Luke 19:1-10**

In the final 6 weeks of this Lectionary Year C, a firm and hopeful tone soars in Jesus' teachings in a rich symphony of themes. The background music of the Hebrew Scriptures holds the notes of the new covenant — a law written in our hearts rather than codified in legal structures — The Spirit poured out, a vision for the appointed time, God with us, a new heaven and a new earth, and a branch from the tree of David — the remnant gathered. We can believe that Jesus heard this cosmic music as he distilled his huge message to the disciples.

**A Notation for This Week's Gospel**

"I must stay at your house tonight." Would we climb down out of our safe trees if we heard Jesus call up to us, "Hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house tonight?"

**Theme: Jesus seeks to Find and Save the Lost**

**Before:** Look around for something to serve as a tree a child can climb. Perhaps it will be a sturdy step stool or a secure table. Either during class (if it is feasible), or before class, find some little sticks that can be a tree on a collage the children will make later. You will also need paper, white glue, crayons, and, if available, pieces of green tissue paper to tear into leaves for the tree.

**Beginning:** Ask the children to pretend there is going to be a parade in our town. Has anyone been to a parade? If there are lots of people standing on the sidewalk, how do we see what is going on? Have you ever been held on someone's shoulders so you could see? What if there was a tree there you could climb to see? Our story today is about a man who did get to see Jesus by climbing up in a tree.

**Praying:** Thank you, Jesus, for being with us and for calling to us when we need you. Be with us today as we explore your story. Amen.

**Story:** Jesus was coming to town. Everyone had heard that was coming. People were crowding to the street Jesus would take to get into town. A man named Zacchaeus also wanted to see who Jesus was. Zacchaeus was a very rich man who had gotten very rich by taking money from people. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but Zacchaeus was not very tall, and he could not see anything because there were so many people. "Ah ha!" said Zacchaeus. "I will climb up in that tree and I will be able to see Jesus. I will be able to see Jesus, and he will not be able to see me." Jesus came walking along until he got to the tree. Jesus stopped. Jesus looked up in the tree. "Zacchaeus!" called Jesus. "Come on down out of that tree. I need to come to your house today." "Oh, Wow" said Zacchaeus. "Come to my house and I will be a good man now. I will give half of everything I have to poor people, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay them back and give them even more." Zacchaeus now wanted to follow with Jesus.

**Activity:** Ask the children to help act out this story. Who should be Zacchaeus? Who wants to be Jesus? What will be our tree? Let the children help you figure out how to tell the story. Continue acting out the story until each child who wants to play a part has the opportunity.

**Activity:** Using the sticks you either found with the children or brought in yourself, let each child create this story on paper. They can make a tree with the stick, tear green tissue paper to make leaves, or just color leaves, and then draw Zacchaeus up in the tree with Jesus inviting Zacchaeus down. Then, together your group can make another tree with Zacchaeus in it to put on your class' cross.

**Getting Closure:** Standing in a circle, let's all pretend to be climbing up a tree. Let's climb higher and higher until we can see way down to the street. Hey! Jesus is right in the middle of our circle. Let's scramble on down from our imaginary trees, then come and sit in a circle with Jesus right in the middle. Then we can say our closing prayer.

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, Jesus, for being in the middle of our circle and for calling us to be with you. Amen.

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**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 26**  
**Lesson Plans for Older Children**

**Scripture: Luke 19:1-10**

In the final 6 weeks of this Lectionary Year C, a firm and hopeful tone soars in Jesus' teachings in a rich symphony of themes. The background music of the Hebrew Scriptures holds the notes of the new covenant — a law written in our hearts rather than codified in legal structures — The Spirit poured out, a vision for the appointed time, God with us, a new heaven and a new earth, and a branch from the tree of David — the remnant gathered. We can believe that Jesus heard this cosmic music as he distilled his huge message to the disciples.

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**Theme: Jesus seeks to Find and Save the Lost**

**Before Class:** You will need copies of the scripture for today and possibly some props like costumes for acting out retelling of the story. If you are using journals, make sure they are in the classroom.

**Beginning:** Tell the children that we have a story about a man named Zacchaeus who changes his ways. Ask them to be noticing the steps in his changing.

**Opening Prayer:** Loving God, be with us as we study scripture today and help us see where this story affects our lives and behavior. Help us to remember we are never truly lost. Amen.

**Scripture: Luke 19:1-10** Invite three readers to read the following sections: vs. 1-4, 5-7, and 8-10.

**Questions:**

- I wonder how you would describe Zacchaeus?
- Who is this Zacchaeus at the beginning of this story? (Verse 2: he was a tax collector and was very rich.)
- What happens to this comfortable rich man? (Verse 3: he was curious: who is this Jesus?)
- What does he do to see and (he thinks) not be seen? (Verse 4: he was clever: even though he was very short, he figured out how to see Jesus by climbing a tree)
- What happens to him when Jesus calls up to him? (Verse 6: he had his mind changed.)
- What does he promise to do? (Verse 8b-9: he was willing to change his ways and fix the bad stuff he had done.)

**Activity: Acting it out**

Ask the children to think about a place in our town where Jesus could show up (a football game, a sale at a big store, or the opening night of a new movie, for example). Then, decide who

Zacchaeus is and what bad stuff he might have done (school bully? gang leader?). Decide who will play the parts of Zacchaeus and of Jesus. Then act out the skit, producing it more than once if other children want to play the parts.

**Option:** If you are using journals, invite the children to write something, for their eyes only, of course, that they are sorry about.

**Option:** If you are not using journals, ask the children to sit quietly and comfortably (in chairs, on the floor, etc.). Tell them all of us are going to pretend we are Zacchaeus. We will think of something we have done that we are sorry about. We will not say it out loud, we will just think about it. We will wait a minute in silence until each of us has thought of something. Then we will picture Jesus coming to each of us and saying: "Come on with me. I want to stay at your house today."

**Getting Closure:** Tell the children they do not have to offer anything, but if they want to tell how they felt picturing Jesus, they may do so. (If you are comfortable with the idea, you, too, could offer something that came to you.)

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, God, that you are always ready for us to tell you we are sorry and for calling to us when we need you. Amen.

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### **Luke 19:1-10**

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. <sup>2</sup>A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. <sup>3</sup>He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. <sup>4</sup>So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way.

<sup>5</sup>When 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.' <sup>6</sup>So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. <sup>7</sup>All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.'

<sup>8</sup>Zacchaeus 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.' <sup>9</sup>Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup>For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

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**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year C – Season after Pentecost, Proper 26**  
**Lesson Plans for Adults**

**Scripture: Luke 19:1-10**

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**A Notation for This Week's Gospel**

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**Theme: Jesus Seeks to Find and Save the Lost**

**Beginning:** Tell the group that we have a story that is probably quite familiar: Zacchaeus, the little man who climbed a tree and ended up with a special guest for dinner. Suggest that they listen, in the story, for the stages in Zacchaeus' faith development.

**Opening Prayer:** Loving God, be with us as we study scripture today and help us see where this story impacts our lives and behavior. Help us to remember we are never truly lost. Amen.

**The Scripture: Luke 19:1-10** Invite someone to read the passage for today. After reading the passage, sit in a few moments of quiet before starting the discussion.

**Questions:**

- I wonder what stood out for you or struck you about today's reading?
- What would you say is the first stage of Zacchaeus in this story? (A man quite satisfied with himself: he has a great job, incredible benefits — all he can steal.)
- What comes next for Zacchaeus? (Curiosity. Who is this Jesus?)
- How does he show his resourcefulness? (Too short to see, so he climbs a tree where he can see without being seen; he thinks.)
- What is the Tipping Point, the place Zacchaeus begins to change? (Jesus not only sees him but tells him he is coming to his house.)
- What is the Turning Point for Zacchaeus? (He comes out of his safe hiding place and welcomes Jesus.)
- What is the Restitution? (Zacchaeus is not only going to give half of his riches to help the poor, he will make good and more than pay back those he may have cheated.)
- What may be the Resolution? (The lost is found. This is the first day of the rest of Zacchaeus' life.)
- What is the response of those who see all this? (Grousing and judging: How come Jesus will go to the house of a sinner instead of staying with all of us wonderful ones?)

**Option:** Guided meditation. Invite the group to consider a time they have been "Zacchaeus" and have been confronted and then been accepted by Jesus. Tell them we will not share the offense that comes to us, but will later offer reflections, if we choose, on how it felt. Tell the group you will be entering into this activity also, taking each step along with the group.

With eyes closed, let's each of us think of something we have done that we need to accept and then give back to Jesus. It could be the time we did not spend with a child who wanted our time, maybe it was a cutting remark to someone who works for us, perhaps it was a decision that skirted a bit too close to the unethical. [Pause.] Now let's find a place we think we can hide all this from Jesus. Maybe it is working late at the office, maybe it is scrubbing the kitchen floor. We will know when we find our "hiding place." [Pause.] Now, let's see Jesus coming from a distance, directly to our hideout. Imagine Jesus clearly aware of what we have done, clearly not judging us, clearly waiting for us to give him what we have been hiding. [Pause.] Now, let's imagine the relief, the clear sense that we have been forgiven, the opportunity to sit at supper in our own home with Jesus as our special guest. Let's hear Jesus telling us: You were lost, but you are not anymore. You are mine and I love you.

**Getting Closure:** Invite observations, if anyone wants to share. You might want to ask open questions such as: I wonder what it is like to hide away when we have done wrong? I wonder what it is like to be found and accepted? I wonder what it is like to be loved after hiding?

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, God for seeking us whenever we are lost, for finding us, and for restoring us. Guide us out of our hiding places so we may better walk with you. Amen.

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## Luke 19:1-10

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