

Weekly Gospel Readings 3rd Sunday of Thoout

Zacchaeus Meets the Jesus

“Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” ([Luke 19:5](#))

On this Sunday, the Third Sunday of the blessed month of Thoout, the Church reads [Luke 19:1-10](#). In this reading, we hear about the story of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector in the city of Jericho, a man of short stature. He was wealthy but despised by the community due to his profession, as tax collectors were often seen as corrupt and dishonest. Upon hearing that Jesus was passing through Jericho, Zacchaeus was curious and eager to see him. However, being short, he couldn't see over the crowd, so he climbed a sycamore fig tree to get a better view.

As Jesus passed by the tree, He noticed Zacchaeus and called him by name, surprising and thrilling Zacchaeus. Jesus then invited Himself to Zacchaeus' home, despite the crowd's disapproval. In this passage, Christ reveals the essence of His mission, He came to save those who are lost, not only those who know Him. However, this salvation involves our cooperation with God's grace: we seek Him, and He works in us..

Zacchaeus was not afraid to seek the Lord despite his sin. Sometimes we make the excuse that we are too ashamed or embarrassed to seek the Lord. However, the only way we can rescue ourselves from a life of sin is through repentance, a real change of the heart. True repentance can only be accomplished when we seek the Lord. As St. Cyril the Great explains, “Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector, and he was totally given to covetousness. His only aim was to increase his gains.” Yet, despite his life of being a sinner, he still “was seeking to see who Jesus was...” ([Luke 19:3](#)).

Jesus notices that Zacchaeus is seeking after Him with a sincere heart, thus He calls to Him saying, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today” ([Luke 19:5](#)). As it is written in Proverbs, “I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me” ([Proverbs 8:17](#)). When we seek Him, there is no doubt that we will find Him. This truth is echoed by St. James: “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you” ([James 4:8](#)). When we seek Him, there is no doubt that we will find Him.

Zacchaeus needed to climb a sycamore tree in order to see the Lord. In the same way, it is very difficult to see Christ when we are distracted by worldly things. We need to lift ourselves up above vain, worldly matters in order to truly see Christ. As Father Tadros Malaty explains, “Therefore, no one would be able to see the Lord Jesus unless he is exalted by faith above the temporal and vain matters.” Thus, seeing the Lord requires two actions: we must seek after Him and we must remove ourselves from the distractions of the world. As we are instructed by St. Paul, “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” ([Colossians 3:2](#)).

So, it is not an accident that the Church places this Gospel in the third week of Thoout! It is a reminder that the spiritual year begins with renewed repentance and vision. Just as Zacchaeus started a new life after encountering Christ, so we too are invited at the year's beginning to rise above worldly concerns and welcome Christ into the house of our hearts.

Lord, remind us to always seek after You with an earnest desire. Lift us up above worldly distractions so that we can see the glory of your salvation. Grant us, Lord, the zeal of Zacchaeus to seek You, the humility to climb above worldly cares, and the joy of receiving You into our hearts and homes.

Sources:

- Bible, English Standard Version
- Catena Bible, Church Father Commentaries
- Commentaries on the Gospel of St. Luke by Father Tadros Malaty
- St. Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on Luke, Homily 127