

April 24, 2016  
Luke 19:1-10  
Pastor Rosanna McFadden  
Creekside COB

## **“Goats and Pigs and Cows and Salvation”**

Good morning! What a great day to be together and worship, and to have Peggy here to share with us. I know you've been waiting for the past two weeks to hear the end of the Zacchaeus story. Betty just read Luke's account for us, but we have another version we've been following, too.

Here, from Ted & Co. and their DVD “What's So Funny About Money” are Zacchaeus and the poor sucker who Zacchaeus has been running up taxes for. Here is the conversation at their favorite café, the Burlap Monkey.

### **Track 12 At the Café from DVD “What's So Funny About Money?”**

The not-so-biblical conversation we just saw happened *after* Jesus left Zacchaeus' house. I want to backtrack a bit and consider what happened right after Zacchaeus came down from the sycamore tree. You'll remember Jesus said, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” And Zacchaeus hurried down and was happy to welcome him. If Zacchaeus was worried about what he had in the refrigerator or if the linens on the guest bed were clean, we're not told that -- only that he was happy to welcome Jesus.

But the people begin to grumble -- remember, Zacchaeus is a despised little man: the chief tax collector, employed by the occupying powers of the Roman government. Nobody else invites Jesus to *their* home, but they grumble because Jesus is going to be the guest of a sinner. What kind of rabbi would associate with someone like Zacchaeus? Doesn't Jesus know any better? Doesn't he even care what this looks like? Apparently not. But Zacchaeus hears the grumbling; there's probably grumbling everywhere he goes.

**Jesus doesn't even get to Zacchaeus' home; Zacchaeus stands right in the midst of this crowd who is grumbling about him, and speaks to Jesus. And he says, "Look, half 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." And Jesus replies -- do you know what Jesus replies? Not, Thank you, Zacchaeus! That's very generous. Or Be sure to put the right number on your offering envelope. Here's what Jesus says, "Today salvation has come to this house." What? What does salvation have to do with *money*?**

**Let me say unequivocally that salvation is not a commodity which can be bought or sold. The medieval Roman Catholic Church tried something very like that with the sale of religious relics and indulgences, and that was one of misuse of religious power which led to the Protestant Reformation, which fostered the Anabaptist movement, out of which came the Church of the Brethren. Brethren stand in the tradition which says that salvation is a free gift, offered to each one of us through Jesus Christ.**

**I have shared before, most recently at Vicki Lehman's service, about the relationship between salvation and healing: in Greek, it is the same word. Jesus came for the healing of body and spirit. I want to take you to Luke 4, where Jesus begins his ministry in his hometown of Nazareth, by reading these words from Isaiah 63 in the synagogue:**

**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
And recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,  
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.**

**There's a lot of different kinds of salvation going on here: economic salvation to the poor, societal salvation to the captives, physical salvation to the blind, political salvation to the oppressed, a year of the Lord's favor.**

**The church, or at least some churches, has increasingly made salvation an individual matter: that moment when a sinner becomes a believer, falls to her knees, confesses her sin and proclaims Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and the only way to everlasting life. That is**

a fine definition of salvation, but I believe the Bible gives us a broader vision than that. The witness of the Bible is that salvation is not just a moment in time; it is a *process* which forms us. Salvation may begin with an individual, but it doesn't stop there.

Let's go back to Zacchaeus: he doesn't confess that he defrauded anyone, he doesn't say that Jesus is Lord, but he does commit to economic justice: he will share what he has with the poor, and he will take responsibility for what he has done in the past. This is a genuine conversion, and it will affect how Zacchaeus lives his life and how he interacts with his neighbors. And it isn't conditional on them being nicer to him.

We are not saved by what we do with our money, but what we do with our money says a lot about our buy-in to God's plan of bringing healing to the world. Maybe money isn't even the resource which we have, or which will make the greatest impact. Maybe it's prayer or presence or vision. Maybe it's heifer cows. I believe that the effort to bring food and economic stability and hope to communities and families which were devastated by World War II was an expression of the saving love of Jesus Christ. It still is. Heifer International is the result of a vision which we celebrate because it was a wonderful idea, but also because it is close to our hearts as Brethren, and close to our neighborhood with Dan West and the initial group of people whom he gathered in Northern Indiana. How those men chose to use their resources was a direct result of their faith: a faith which included love of God and love of neighbor. The seagoing cowboys, as some of you know personally, were men who expressed their love for Jesus as love and service for others. We are not saved by what we do, but if we don't do anything for anyone else, how is our salvation expressed? My Anabaptist antennae get a little twitchy when people talk about Jesus as their personal Savior. That phrase "personal Savior" isn't found anywhere in the Bible. If it means that Jesus knows me intimately and personally, I'm fine with that. But if the implication is that salvation is between me and Jesus and it doesn't change how I relate to my family, my neighbors, my world, or my money -- my stuff is my stuff and Jesus has nothing to do with that -- then I don't think we've read our Bibles very carefully.

**I hope your conversations around the resources in “What’s So Funny About Money” have been engaging. This is the last week for those conversations; even if you haven’t been able to be a part of them before today, I encourage to join a Sunday School class or the group which Ted is leading in the Gathering Area. Peggy will be in the Gathering Area during our fellowship time. As you have a snack and look through your new *Seagoing Cowboy* book, I invite you to consider the modest or ambitious ways which you are being called to put your faith into action: to share the salvation and healing love of Christ with our neighbors and in our world. Amen.**