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# Zacchaeus: For the Lord He Wanted to See

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Zacchaeus: For the Lord He Wanted to See  
A play based on the Gospel of Luke 19: 1-10  
By John Steven Paul and Soul Purpose,  
The liturgical drama troupe of Valparaiso University

Characters:

Zacchaeus, a tax collector  
Sarah, his wife  
Sirius, his servant  
Jesus of Nazareth  
A centurion  
A widow  
Her son  
A person cured of leprosy  
A beggar<sup>1</sup>  
A disciple of Jesus<sup>2</sup>  
Citizens of Jericho, followers of Jesus, and onlookers at the crucifixion

*Zacchaeus: For the Lord He Wanted to See* turns the old adage “seeing is believing” around to accord with the words of Jesus: “Believing is seeing.” The play tells the story of the “wee little man,” Zacchaeus, who climbs a sycamore tree to see Jesus (Luke 19:1-10). After the Lord greets him by name and announces that he will dine at his house, Zacchaeus’ life is forever changed. He makes a commitment to give half of his possessions to the poor and to pay back four times over anyone whom he may have defrauded. In our play, Zacchaeus escorts Jesus from his house to the Jerusalem road where Jesus tells the parable in which a nobleman divides ten pounds among his servants (Luke 19:11-27). He returns to his house where he tells this parable to his wife, Sarah, and his servant Sirius. Zacchaeus’ retelling of the story is interrupted by visits from a Roman centurion from Capernaum (Luke 7:2-10), a widow and her son from Nain (Luke 7:11-15), and a Samaritan leper (Luke 17:11-19). To each of these people in need, Zacchaeus gives some of his possessions. As he does so, he comes to understand the meaning of Jesus’ parable: to those who have, more will be given – more resources *and* more responsibility. He abruptly leaves his house to follow Jesus all the way to Calvary.

Two other characters are also important: Zacchaeus’ wife, Sarah, a woman afraid of many things, is embarrassed by the fact that the people of Jericho hate her husband and she is deeply suspicious of this “wandering Galilean preacher” who descends on their house and seems to entrance her husband. After Zacchaeus leaves for Jerusalem, a beggar whose sight Jesus has recently restored (Luke 18:35-43) comes to the house where Sarah is now alone and frightened. The beggar tells Sarah that he has come to see because he believed in Jesus – not the other way around. The Beggar’s story breaks Sarah’s resistance and now she too rushes to Jerusalem. Sirius

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<sup>1</sup> played by the actor who plays the Widow’s son

<sup>2</sup> played by the actor who plays the person cured of leprosy

is Zacchaeus' wily and impertinent servant. His name is a play on the homonym "serious." He adds a good deal of farcical humor to the play while always reminding us that this is all a very serious business. And, of course, Jesus is also a servant, a serious servant.

Zacchaeus, Sirius, Sarah, and all Zacchaeus' visitors arrive in Jerusalem just in time for the triumphal entry (Luke 19:29-38). The cast sings a rousing rendition of "The King of Glory." Zacchaeus has to climb a tree again to see the entry. But the triumphal procession quickly turns into the march to the cross.

The play now becomes metaphorical. The Centurion demands that Zacchaeus come down from his tree (actually a ladder), because "we're going to need it," and drag that cross over here. At the end of the play, it is Jesus who climbs the tree so that he can see all those who "would believe so that they might see." From the foot of the cross come a mixture of mocking cries and confessions of faith. The now believing Sarah asks Jesus to come down and stay at her house "as long as he likes." Jesus responds that one day she and all those who aided the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, the stranger, the ill-clothed, and the imprisoned will be with him in paradise. Jesus then dies. Zacchaeus and Sarah move slowly, soberly away from the cross back toward Jericho. Rushing up to them from behind is Sirius who announces, "Jesus is coming back!" "To our house," Sarah cries. "You can't be serious," says Zacchaeus. The last words of the play come from Jesus, high up on the ladder, "but I am serious!"

## I

*Scene: a six-foot step-ladder with a very large and elegantly styled Z affixed to it.*

*The play begins with the characters in a line across the chancel.  
Zacchaeus is at the far right (stage left).*

### WIDOW'S SON

This is a story about seeing.

### BEGGAR

And not being able to see.

### SARAH

For various reasons.

BEGGAR

But believing anyway.

JESUS

This is a story about seeing the way Jesus sees.

SARAH

To see like Jesus sees, you have to come out of your house.

CENTURION

Travel long distances

A PERSON CURED OF LEPROSY

Even when you don't feel like it.

ZACCHAEUS

*(Speaking as he climbs the ladder.)*

This is a story about going out on limbs, to see like Jesus sees. Jesus taught us that to see sometimes you have to climb a tree.

CHORUS

*(the sound of a pitch pipe, then singing; conducted, vigorously, by the SERVANT)*

Zacchaeus was a wee little man,  
And a wee little man was he  
He climbed up in a sycamore tree  
For the Lord he wanted to see

For the Lord he wanted to see  
For the Lord he wanted to see  
For the Lord he wanted to see  
For the Lord he wanted to see

## ZACCHAEUS

Know that song? Sure you do. I'll bet you've even sung it. At church camp, or Sunday school, or on a bus, or around the supper table. I hate that song. *(He sings mockingly)* "Zacchaeus was a wee little man, a wee little . . ." They're singing about me, "Zacchaeus was---" nice name, don't you think? My mother named me. "Zacchaeus" means pure, clean. You didn't know that did you. Now where is my servant, Sirius?<sup>3</sup> Sirius!

*(CHORUS sings "a wee little man . . ." as ZACCHAEUS comes down the ladder and is met by a fawning SERVANT, named Sirius, with arms full of expensive clothing.<sup>4</sup>)* That's *(referring to the "wee little man" line)* what you know about me. That's what they're singing about. *(The SERVANT begins to put on ZACCHAEUS'S clothing piece by piece: gown, jewelry, gloves, a hat, and, last, a fine robe.)*

Thanks to the sainted historian, Luke, you know three things about me. First--

## SERVANT

He's a wee little man.

## ZACCHAEUS

*(threatening)*

Sirius!

*[She runs off]*

*(sighs)* I'm short. I'm the most famous short guy in the Bible. Come to think of it, I'm the only short guy in the Bible, at least that I know of. So, now I have to hear about it, FOREVER. No one calls me by the name my mother gave me, Zacchaeus. No, it's "hey, Shorty!"

*(He imitates those who have called him this in the past.)*

Not to my face, mind you; no, to my face it's

## CHORUS

*(Obsequious)*

"your worship"

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<sup>3</sup> Pronounced SEER-ee-oos

<sup>4</sup> In the original productions, SIRIUS, the servant, has been played by a woman

ZACCHAEUS

or....

CHORUS

“ my Lord”

ZACCHAEUS

or....

CHORUS

“your Honor”

ZACCHAEUS

Why? Not because they worship, respect, or honor me. No--

SERVANT

They hate him; they detest him.

ZACCHAEUS

They address me so, because I'm the chief tax collector and I'm rich. And that's the second thing you know about me: I'm rich--especially at tax time. (*ZACCHAEUS is now completely dressed. He moves to the CHORUS and begins to demand money of them.*) And, it's always (*winks*) tax time. (*Collects money*).

*ZACCHAEUS completes the collection process and moves away from the CHORUS who begin to express their hatred for ZACCHAEUS in low tones at first that get louder and louder as he moves further away.*

Not to worry. I've learned to live with it. In fact, I built a big house, a mansion, (*the SERVANT now brings in an elaborate chair, like a throne, which is the emblem of ZACCHAEUS'S house*) on the edge of town, with walls so thick I can't hear 'em. (*When the SERVANT closes the door, the CHORUS becomes simultaneously silent, though they continue to mime their expressions of hatred. Finally, they give up and go away. SARAH enters with a goblet of wine, a pair of slippers and a newspaper for ZACCHAEUS.*)

SARAH

Husband . . .

ZACCHAEUS

Call me “Zacchaeus.”

SARAH

I shall no longer go to the market. At least not during tax time.

ZACCHAEUS

It’s always tax time. *(winks)*

SARAH

Exactly.

ZACCHAEUS

*(Putting down his newspaper. Patronizingly . . .)*

Sarah, what is upsetting you? What happened at the market?

SARAH

It’s too embarrassing. Even with my heavy veil. They know who I am, the tax collector’s wife. They say such vile things. They call you names. They accuse you of things that can’t . . . possibly be true. They sing this insipid song.

*(She begins to sing “Zacchaeus was a wee little man . . .”)*

ZACCHAEUS

I know the song. Sarah, never mind them. They can’t hurt us. Sticks and stones . . .? We’re safe here in our house.

SARAH

We have no friends. I have no one to talk to. And this house. The walls are so thick, I can’t breathe. Let’s move. Far away.

## ZACCHAEUS

You're not talking sense. Where would we move? This is the town of my father, and his father, and his father. Besides, the pickings--the percentages are so good here. We have everything we want. *(He comforts her; she flinches.)* Sarah, the paper says that the strange rabbi from Nazareth is coming to town today. I'm going out to see him. If you like, I'll stop at the market on the way home. Are we in need?

*(SARAH gives him a list. It is long. ZACCHAEUS and his SERVANT exit the house and come to the marketplace. The CHORUS OF NEIGHBORS now becomes the merchants and vendors in the marketplace. They ad lib. ZACCHAEUS speaks to the audience again.)*

## SERVANT

Now here's where this story about the everyday trials and tribulations of a tax collector and his wife becomes a lot more serious.

## CHORUS

And as the Savior passed his way,  
He looked up in a tree  
And said, "Zacchaeus, you come down,  
For I'm coming to your house today  
For I'm coming to your house today.

## ZACCHAEUS

And, this is why I hate this song so. Because, it makes a mockery of the most important day of my life. The Nazarene preacher had finally made it as far south as our fair city and

## JESUS

He entered Jericho and was passing through it.<sup>5</sup>

## CHORUS<sup>6</sup>

A man was there named Zacchaeus;

## CHORUS<sup>7</sup>

He was the chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was ,

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<sup>5</sup> These are the opening words of the Lectionary reading for Pentecost 24, Year C, (Luke 19: 1-10) in the New Revised Standard Version

<sup>6</sup> voiced by the actor who plays the CENTURION

<sup>7</sup> voiced by the actor who plays the LEPER



CHORUS<sup>8</sup>

but on account of the crowd he could not because he was short in stature.

ZACCHAEUS

So I ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him. [*ZACCHAEUS climbs back up the ladder*] because he was going to pass this way. And that's the third thing you know about me. I climbed a sycamore tree because I wanted to *see* Jesus. Well, who wouldn't? The man's reputation preceded him. And you know the saying, "seeing is believing."

SERVANT

*(Now on the other side of the stage, speaking to ZACCHAEUS'S wife in her house)*

When Jesus came to the place he looked up to him and said . . .

JESUS

Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.

SERVANT

“. . . for I must stay at your house today.”

SARAH

You can't be serious!

SERVANT

*(protesting)*

But I am Sirius!

SARAH

What? Oh, I-- Never mind. This Jesus is coming here?

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<sup>8</sup> voiced by the actor who plays the Widow's SON

SERVANT

Yes, today. This afternoon. For dinner.

*[In the meantime ZACCHAEUS has hurried down from the ladder and led Jesus to the very door of his house where ZACCHAEUS'S wife, SARAH, meets them.] NOW! [The SERVANT slips out of the house as JESUS, SARAH, AND ZACCHAEUS are greeting one another where . . . ]*

CHORUS OF NEIGHBORS

All who saw it began to grumble and said . . .

NEIGHBOR I<sup>9</sup>

*(ad lib.)*

Unbelievable! Of all the people in town how could the rabbi go to this man's house? This tells me plenty. You know the old question "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

NEIGHBOR II<sup>10</sup>

*(ad lib)*

The answer is "no." No good person would go into the house of that . . . extortionist. That collaborator. That . . . that . . . shmegegge.<sup>11</sup>

CHORUS OF NEIGHBORS

He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.

NEIGHBOR III<sup>12</sup>

*(ad lib)*

The word "sinner" is too mild for *Zzzzzzzz (can't bring himself to say the name and spits instead)*. I heard that when old Ezra asked for a loan of some of the money he paid for tax, Shorty offered to "borrow" Ezra's daughter in return.

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<sup>9</sup> Played by the actor who plays The CENTURION

<sup>10</sup> Played by the actor who plays the LEPER

<sup>11</sup> Pronounced *shmah-GAY-geh*. Yiddish for "sycophant."

<sup>12</sup> Played by the actor who plays the Widow's SON

CHORUS OF NEIGHBORS

*(together, ad lib. Then, to the SERVANT)*

How can you work in that house?

*THE SERVANT shrugs. The NEIGHBORS leave in disgust.*

JESUS

*(Coming out of the house with ZACCHAEUS)*

It has been good to be with you in your house, Zacchaeus. The food you have provided will sustain us on the journey to Jerusalem.

ZACCHAEUS

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. If you please, Lord, accept this of me.

*[ZACCHAEUS takes off his robe and puts it on JESUS.]*

JESUS

Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.<sup>13</sup>

*[JESUS exits with others. ZACCHAEUS follows.]*

SARAH

*(After Jesus has left)*

The lost?

*[The SERVANT returns to the house.]*

SERVANT

The neighbors are restless, m'lady. They are outraged that Jesus would dine with a rich tax collector.

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<sup>13</sup> The end of the Lectionary reading.

SARAH

He gave him his best robe, the one without any seams in it!<sup>14</sup>

ZACCHAEUS

*(coming in to the house)*

Well, he's off.

SARAH

Where?

ZACCHAEUS

I don't know. To Jerusalem, I think. *(beat)* Sarah, it was a wonderful dinner. You outdid yourself.

SARAH

*(skeptical, ironic)*

Well, how often does the "Messiah" come to supper?

ZACCHAEUS

You don't believe it, do you?

SARAH

I believe *you* believe it. That was your best robe you gave him, you know. The seamless one!

ZACCHAEUS

He said, "Today, salvation has come to this house."

SARAH

And why not, if I may ask. Are you not a son of Abraham? Isn't my name "Sarah"?

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<sup>14</sup> John 19:23

ZACCHAEUS

Of course it is. *(Realizing)* He called me by my name. “Zacchaeus,” he said, “Come down.” How did he know my name?

SARAH

Many people know your name-- *(she just can't say his name. )* You're famous as the most detested man in Jericho. You want to hear your name? Go to the marketplace -- disguised. Even you might be surprised at how many people spit it out of their mouths. But one day, a wandering Galilean preacher with a reputation for blasphemy drags himself into town, shouts out your precious name, and invites himself to our house. Embarrasses us in front of the whole town -- nothing new there, I suppose -- and you welcome him, call him “Lord,” and give him your best robe. What's gotten into you?

ZACCHAEUS

He called himself “the Son of Man.”

SARAH

Son of a--

ZACCHAEUS

Sarah! “To seek out and save . . . the lost,” yes that's what he said, “the lost.”

SARAH

And what's that supposed to mean? Who's lost? I know right where I am and so do you. You're at home, in our house, with me. Isn't that right? Answer me.

ZACCHAEUS

Yes.

*(pause, then a different tone: ZACCHAEUS has always liked nothing better than a good story after dinner)*

Jesus told a good story before he left. *[Sitting down and making himself comfortable.]*

A parable.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Luke 19: 12-27

SERVANT

And now you're going to tell it to us, aren't you?

[ZACCHAEUS shrugs his shoulders and begins.]

ZACCHAEUS

I thought I would, if you (*to SERVANT*) don't mind.

ZACCHAEUS

It seems that there was this "nobleman who went to a distant country to get royal power for himself and then return. He summoned ten of his slaves and gave them ten pounds—

SERVANT

Now *there's* an idea!

ZACCHAEUS

Ahem! "He said to the slaves, 'Do business with these until I come back--

[*a knock at the door*]

Who is it?

CENTURION

A Roman soldier. A centurion from Capernaum.

ZACCHAEUS

What are you doing way down here?

CENTURION

My hundred soldiers and I have been ordered to Jerusalem. I have heard that Jesus of Nazareth was at this house. [ZACCHAEUS motions to the SERVANT to open the door. The CENTURION enters.]

ZACCHAEUS

You have only just missed him. He dined with us today. In this very house.

CENTURION

You are fortunate.

ZACCHAEUS

Are you a follower of Jesus?

CENTURION

One of my slaves was afflicted with an illness from which no one has ever recovered. I asked the Jewish elders in Capernaum to approach this Jesus, who was reported to be a faith healer, to ask him to heal my slave.

SERVANT

Why would you go out of your way to save the life of a slave?

ZACCHAEUS

*(correcting the servant's impertinence)*

Sirius!

CENTURION

*[Indicating that he doesn't mind.]* He was a good worker. *(pause)* He was very dear to me.

SARAH

Why would the sons of Abraham do a favor for a Roman like you?

CENTURION

I had my men build a prayer house for them. *(ZACCHAEUS and SARAH look at him in disbelief).* It's good politics. You do for me and I do for you.

SARAH

*(recognizing a fellow sufferer)*

So Jesus *descended* on your house, too?

CENTURION

When Jesus and the other Jews were a little ways away, I asked some friends of mine to intercept them and prevent the healer from coming under my roof.

ZACCHAEUS

Why didn't you want him in your house?

SERVANT

Were you *afraid*?

ZACCHAEUS

Sirius!!!

CENTURION

It would have been politically . . . unwise for Jesus to have come into the house of a gentile. He was at the beginning of his journey with more important work to do than healing Roman slaves. I believed he could do the healing from afar by simply speaking the word.

SARAH

And . . . ?

CENTURION

My servant recovered his health completely. What is your name, sir?

ZACCHAEUS

My name is Zacchaeus. I am the chief tax collector in Jericho.

CENTURION

My men and I have been ordered to Jerusalem to undertake a most distasteful detail: crucifixion. It is hard work. Hard on the hands especially and I am without a good pair of gloves. Can you recommend a glover?

ZACCHAEUS

Officer, your story has moved me. Your visit has been a blessing. Please take my gloves. They are not only fine they are serviceable. (*Zacchaeus gives the CENTURION his own gloves.*)



CENTURION

Thank you. You are unusually kind. Perhaps I can repay you some day. Health to this house. Sir. Madam. *(He exits.)*

SARAH

“Unusually kind” is right. Where do you get off consorting with Romans now? And giving them gifts?

ZACCHAEUS

Good politics, as the man said. Sarah, they were inexpensive gloves. I’ll buy three more pair at the market tomorrow. Now where were we?

SERVANT

You were telling Jesus’ lovely story about the master who gave his servant a present of ten pounds.

ZACCHAEUS

He *divided* the pounds among his slaves and then went off to see the King. And when the nobleman returned, having received royal power, he ordered those slaves to whom he had given the money, to be summoned so that he might find out what they had gained by trading . . . *[a knock at the door]*

SARAH

Who is this now? *(She goes to the window and looks out.)* It is an old woman and a young man. What do you want here?

WIDOW

We are traveling from Nain to Jerusalem and have run short of food . . . .

*(SARAH is reluctant to open the door but ZACCHAEUS urges her to do so and the WIDOW and her SON enter.)*

SERVANT

*(dryly)*

This is *indeed* a busy day!

SON

We are bound for Jerusalem seeking Jesus of Nazareth. We hoped that in a house as magnificent as this we might find . . .

SERVANT

What could be so urgent that the two of you would travel alone on these roads?

WIDOW

Had it not been for Jesus I would have been completely alone.

SARAH

Why?

WIDOW

We were in funeral procession coming out of the town to bury this my son and we met the Lord. He had compassion for me and told me not to cry. Then, he approached the bier, touched it and said to my son, "Young man, I say to you, rise!"

SON

And they tell me that I sat straight up on the litter and began to speak.

WIDOW

We want to find Jesus to join his ministry. Do you have some food to share?

SARAH

I have nothing left. I served it all to Jesus and his disciples earlier today.

WIDOW

The Lord was here?

ZACCHAEUS

He dined with us today. In this very house.

SON

This house has been blessed by God.

ZACCHAEUS

*(taking a jeweled necklace from his neck)*

Good people, we have no food here. *(pause)* But, take these jewels to the pawn shop in the center of the city. The owner will give you enough money to buy oil, wine, and bread for a month.

*[The WIDOW and her SON weep for joy and throw their arms around ZACCHAEUS'S NECK. SARAH is appalled.]*

SARAH

Incredible!

*The couple leave and the main door to the house remains open behind them.*

SERVANT

Now how about that story in which a slave is given ten pounds by his master so that he may retire and live happily in retirement in a little cottage by the--

ZACCHAEUS

*(interrupting loudly)*

“When the master returned, he summoned his slaves. The first came forward and said, ‘Lord, your pound has made ten more pounds.’ He said to him, ‘Well done, good slave! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small thing, take charge of ten cities.’”

*A very thin woman comes in through the open door. Her sudden appearance startles ZACCHAEUS, SARAH, and the SERVANT.*

SARAH

*(with a cry)* Who are you? Where did you come from?

LEPER

Pardon me, your door was open and . . . I'm from Samaria. Traveling to--

SARAH

*(angry, now, for having been frightened)*

Get out, Samaritan. Go back where you came from. You're not welcome here.

LEPER

I'm going. *(Turns to leave. Then, with great courage, turns around again.)* I had heard that the Lord Jesus had visited the house of the tax collector Zacchaeus. Is this his house?

ZACCHAEUS

I am Zacchaeus. Yes. He dined with us today. In this very house.

LEPER

Then, sir, you and I have something in common. We have both been in the presence of the anointed of God. Which way has he gone?

ZACCHAEUS

Why do you seek him?

LEPER

I was one of ten lepers whom—*(THE SERVANT and SARAH throw their arms around one another, pull cloths up around their faces, and shrink back in fear.)* --Jesus cured while passing through Samaria. Unlike the others I stayed to speak with Jesus, to thank him. After he left, I realized that this man had given me new life. I believe he is making his way to Jerusalem. I must be with him. Please don't be afraid; I am whole and healthy now *[THE SERVANT and SARAH are taking no chances.]* but the disease has left me quite thin and I am so cold. Even in these hot temperatures. Do you know where I can find some old clothing?

ZACCHAEUS

Friend, take this gown of mine. And this hat. *(Gives them to the LEPER)* Perhaps they will warm you up a bit.

*(ZACCHAEUS is now dressed only in the neutral-colored pants and shirt in which he began the play.)*

LEPER

Thank you. I will wear them in the service of the Lord. I must be off now. I do not have much further to go. *(exits)*

SERVANT

I always liked that hat. And now you've given it away to a sickly Samaritan. *(To SARAH)* This is a most remarkable day! Strangers wined and dined, the front door left open, clothes and jewels given away to passers-by . . .

*SARAH is dumbfounded. Neither she nor the SERVANT object at all when ZACCHAEUS picks up the story again.*

ZACCHAEUS

“Then the other came, saying, ‘Lord, here is your pound. I wrapped it up in a piece of cloth, for I was afraid of you, because you are a harsh man; you take what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.’ He said to him, ‘I will judge you by your own words, you wicked slave! You knew, did you, that I was a harsh man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money in the bank? Then when I returned I could have collected it with interest.’ He said to the bystanders, ‘Take the pound from him and give it to the one who has ten pounds.’ (And they said to him ‘Lord, he has ten pounds!’ ) I tell you to all those who have more will be given; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away.” *[The meaning of the parable strikes ZACCHAEUS and he makes a decision.]*  
Sarah, I'm going with them.

SARAH

Dressed like that? Why?

ZACCHAEUS

I've got to see what happens. Come along?

SARAH

No. I've got plenty to do here. Look at this place. It hasn't been the same since he came. Besides you'll tell me all about it when you come back, won't you. You'll come back, won't you? I'm afraid. To be alone. Come back soon. Don't go.

ZACCHAEUS

I'll be back soon. It's only Jerusalem. Come, Sirius. *[Exit]*

SARAH

*(calling after him)*

Zacchaeus . . .

*But ZACCHAEUS has gone outside to saddle up his donkey, who, it turns out is the SERVANT dressed in donkey ears. There is a comic bit between ZACCHAEUS and the SERVANT. First, ZACCHAEUS puts a rope with a lead around SIRIUS' neck. Then, ZACCHAEUS shows SIRIUS the donkey ears or mask indicating the servant should put them on.*

SERVANT

You're not serious.

ZACCHAEUS

No, you are. *[SIRIUS sighs and reluctantly puts on the mask]* Now let's go.

*Finally the servant allows ZACCHAEUS to lead him to Jerusalem, which is of course, not very far away saying.*

SERVANT

*You are a harsh man. [They exit.]*

*Meanwhile, back at the house . . .*

SARAH

Zacchaeus . . . Zacchaeus . . . Za-- I said his name. I used his name. "Zacchaeus." A name I vowed I'd never say again. *(She looks up and standing in the door way is the BEGGAR whom Jesus healed on the way to Jericho.<sup>16</sup> She becomes frantic.)* I have no food; I have no clothing; I have no money; I have no gloves, or robes or gowns or hats; please go away now.

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<sup>16</sup> Luke 18: 35-43.

BEGGAR

I want none of these things from you. I'm sorry I have nothing to give you for you must be wretched to be alone without food, clothing, or money.

SARAH

What is it you want?

BEGGAR

Which is the way to Jerusalem?

SARAH

Everyone knows the way from Jericho to Jerusalem. Who are you that you do not know?

BEGGAR

Yesterday I was blind. I made my living sitting beside the Jericho road begging. I knew no other places or other roads. Then the Son of David healed me and now I can see.

SARAH

The son of David?

BEGGAR

The one they call Jesus of Nazareth. The Messiah.

SARAH

*(Dripping with irony)*

Yes, I've heard of him.

BEGGAR

As had I. In fact I'd heard so much about him that I wanted to see him, more than anything in the world.

SARAH

Seeing is believing.

BEGGAR

No, madam. Believing is seeing.

SARAH

What?

BEGGAR

If I hadn't *believed*, I wouldn't have *seen*. "Lord," I said, "let me see again." He said, "Receive your sight, your faith has saved you." Suddenly, I was looking into his eyes. And I began to glorify God. Then, I ran home to see my mother and father. And, now I want to see Jesus again. I know he was going to Jerusalem. Which is the road?

SARAH

It's this way. (*points*) Wait, let me come with you. I'll just get my hat and robe and gloves and a little money and a pouch of food for the (*realizes*) . . . . Come. This way. (*They exit.*)

*On the other side of the stage, ZACCHAEUS and the SERVANT (Donkey) have arrived on the edge of Jerusalem.*

Ah, Jerusalem. It's good to be in Jerusalem! Especially at Passover time. Jerusalem the Golden! The City on a Hill! Site of Solomon's Temple! Rebuilt with ten times more glory by King Herod. City of God! And, city of people. People from all over the world. The sights; the sounds; the smells. Yes, it's always good to be in Jerusalem! Now where's my servant?

*They are not there long when two of Jesus's DISCIPLES come up and, while ZACCHAEUS isn't looking begin to lead the SERVANT away.*

ZACCHAEUS

*protests*

Hey, where are you going with my donkey?

*(but one of the disciples says simply . . .)*

DISCIPLE

The Lord has need of it.



SERVANT

(to ZACCHAEUS)

I'm not exactly a colt.

ZACCHAEUS

Who is?

*ZACCHAEUS is struck by the simple authority of this statement and makes no effort to stop the DISCIPLE, who leads the SERVANT away to a place where the triumphal procession will form. ZACCHAEUS, looks after them, as if entranced. Just then the refrain verse of the song "The King of Glory" announces the approach of the triumphal procession. ZACCHAEUS is once again unable to see.*

Oh, Brother, here we go again.

*He scrambles up a tree -- the ladder of the earlier scene. From off stage, the company sings "The King of Glory." ZACCHAEUS continues these lines over the singing.*

There he is; I see him. And there's the widow and her son and the Samaritan leper and Jesus is riding on Sirius and there's--can it be?--yes it's Sarah. My own Sarah!

*The audience "sees" the triumphal entry into Jerusalem only through the eyes of ZACCHAEUS; it takes place far down stage behind the audience.*

ZACCHAEUS

What a parade! What a celebration! The palm branches, the dancing, the singing.

*The actors in the triumphal procession complete the singing of the song "The King of Glory." When they have finished, ZACCHAEUS continues.*

ZACCHAEUS

Yes, Jesus has finally *arrived*. Just like in the parable. He went away and returned with royal power. And soon he'll be asking me how I have invested the gifts I have been given. All this week, he's been the main event in Jerusalem. Crowds of people everywhere he went. I've spent

a lot of time up in trees this week. On Monday, he came to the Temple and demanded that all the merchants and money-changers clear out. And, they left!

*(The music stops abruptly.)*

CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES

*(male CHORUS voices only)*

We must find a way to put him to death.

CROWD

CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM!

ZACCHAEUS

. . . and I thought I had enemies.

CENTURION

*(entering)*

Hey, you. We're going to need that *(referring to the ladder)*. Come down from there. *(ZACCHAEUS comes down.)* Bring it along with you.

ZACCHAEUS

Say, don't I know you, officer? Where'd you get those gloves?

CENTURION

Never mind that now. Just drag that cross over here. *(ZACCHAEUS obeys bringing the ladder center stage)* Now, raise it up there. *(ZACCHAEUS struggles to do this)* C'mon now, little man. *(The CENTURION assists him.)* There we go.

ZACCHAEUS

Officer, who is being executed today?

CENTURION

Jesus of Nazareth, among others.

ZACCHAEUS

But, Officer, how--

CENTURION

I'm doing my job. It's best not to think beyond that. *(more human)* Try not to think about it. Run away; you won't want to be here.

*After a pause, the sound of a nail being pounded into wood.*

*A procession, to the rhythmic sound of nail pounding, enters leading toward the hill of Golgotha, site of Jesus's crucifixion. The crowd has become those who followed Jesus to his death.*

ZACCHAEUS

Jesus, Lord, it is your servant Zacchaeus.

JESUS

Zacchaeus? Zacchaeus, where are you? I am trying to see you, but I can't because of the crowd.

ZACCHAEUS

Lord, how may I help you?

CENTURION

I'll tell you how you can help. Hold on to this *(it is the seamless robe that Zacchaeus had given Jesus in Jericho)*. It's mine now. If you promise to return it to me in one piece, I'll make it easier on him.

*ZACCHAEUS recognizes it as his own robe and is stunned with grief. The sound of nailing continues in the background; a sign with the letters I N R I is attached to the ladder. When the sign has been posted the nailing abruptly stops. Now JESUS climbs up on the ladder where he can see ZACCHAEUS.*

JESUS

Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.

ONLOOKER

He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one.

ZACCHAEUS

Lord, it is I, Zacchaeus. Down here; can you see me Lord?

JESUS

Yes, Zacchaeus, I can see you now. And I can see all those who would believe so that they might see. That's why I climbed up here.

SOLDIER<sup>17</sup>

If you are the King of the Jews, come down from there and save yourself.

SARAH

Lord, come down if you can and stay at our house for as long as you like.

JESUS

Truly, I tell you today you will be with me in Paradise. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.

CROWD including ZACCHAEUS and SARAH

Lord, when did we see thee? (*quietly*) hungry . . . thirsty . . . a stranger . . . naked . . . sick . . . in prison?

JESUS

Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family -- a widow, a leper, a beggar, a soldier -- you did it to me.

CENTURION

This man was certainly innocent.

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<sup>17</sup> Voiced by the actor who plays the LEPER

*After a pause, SARAH comes away from the cross, sees ZACCHAEUS and crosses to him. She extends her hand and he takes it. They begin the long walk back to Jericho.*

SERVANT

*(rushing up to them)*

Jesus is coming back.

SARAH

To our house?

ZACCHAEUS

You're not serious!

JESUS

But I am serious!<sup>18</sup>

**THE END**

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<sup>18</sup> The serious/Sirius (servant) double meaning continues