

International Conversation Cafe

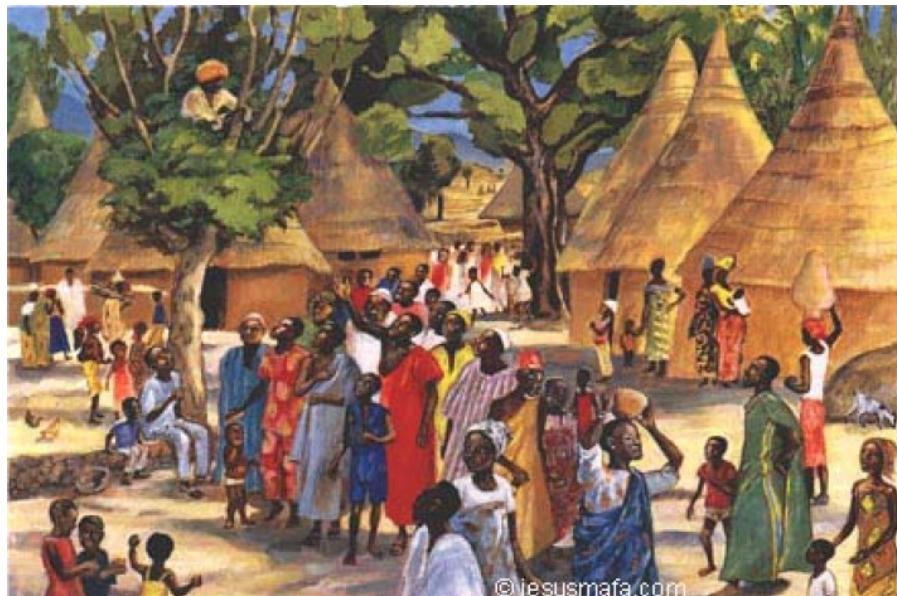
Community Group: The Most Important Thing in Life

There are so many choices in life. Often times, people have a hard time knowing what to do and how to live. For example, what is your dream job or place to live?

We will talk about how we can have a meaningful and purposeful life by understanding that God has a plan for us. The following is a story about a man who was also wondering how he should live. Before we read, let's consider the culture the story takes place in.

In the first century, the Roman government, which ruled over Israel, took Jewish people and made them tax collectors for their own nation. A Jewish tax collector was a traitor to his people. Basically the tax collector would collect money for the government, but anything over that amount they would keep for themselves. In this story, Zacchaeus, is called a "chief tax collector," which means he is very rich by cheating his own people. Naturally, his own countrymen hated him. He was considered the worst of the worst.

Luke 19:1-10



Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man named Zacchaeus lived there. He was a chief tax collector and was very rich. Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was. But he was a short man. He could not see Jesus because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree. He wanted to see Jesus, who was coming that way. Jesus reached the spot where Zacchaeus was. He looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down at once. I must stay at your house today." So Zacchaeus came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this. They began to whisper

among themselves. They said, "Jesus has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'" But Zacchaeus stood up. He said, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of what I own to those who are poor. And if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I

will pay it back. I will pay back four times the amount I took." Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "Today salvation has come to your house. You are a member of Abraham's family line. The Son of Man came to look for the lost and save them."

Re-tell the story in your own words.

Why do you think Zacchaeus was so interested in seeing Jesus?

What did Jesus do for Zacchaeus?

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Jesus calls Zachaeus by name, and invites himself over. Eating with people is an act of friendship. Remember, Zach doesn't have any friends and he is far from popular with people. How might have you felt if you were in the crowd and watched as Jesus offered friendship to Zaccchaeus, a cheat and thief who made life hard for so many in the community?

How did Zacchaeus respond after he encountered Jesus?

Why do you think Zacchaeus responded in this way?

Ephesians 2:8-10

God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is God's gift.⁹ It is not based on anything you have done. No one can brag about earning it.

¹⁰ God made us. He created us to belong to Christ Jesus. Now we can do good things. Long ago God prepared them for us to do.

Discussion

Explain what verse 8 and 9 are saying.

Tell about the role of good works as explained in verse 10?

What questions do these verses bring to mind?

What does this passage tell us about people?

What does this passage tell us about God?

How does this passage relate to the story about Zacchaeus?

The most important thing in life is our relationship with God. Maybe you feel like Zacchaeus. You are living your life one way, but you are curious about Jesus and how your life could change if you know him. Jesus is calling your name, and wants to forgive you and give you a new purpose, no matter what you have done.

How would your life change if you said "yes" to Jesus?