

# Encountering the Christ

September 17th 2006

## Introduction:

*If you could spend a day with anyone from history who would it be?*

- Normally someone important historically or someone we were close to. Jesus fits both of those categories.

Ultimately we want to be with Jesus. On several occasions he promises his presence to us. Even in his last words to his disciples in Matthew 28:20 he promises that even after his departure he will be with us. We will be talking about what some of those we find in scripture found when they encountered Christ and how that can be reflected in our L.I.F.E. groups

## Text:

### **Luke 19:1-4**

Tax collectors were normally not well-liked individuals. They paid a price to the government and then recouped it through the people in an area, often overcharging for a profit. The people of Jericho had probably been cheated by Zacchaeus in the past and did not have much respect for him.

*What lengths was Zacchaeus willing to go through to get a look at Jesus?*

- He was willing to look a little silly by running through the streets and climbing a tree to see Jesus.

### **Luke 19:5-7**

*If Jesus came to Saint Petersburg, who would he probably spend time with? Why?*

- The down and out, the spiritual sick, even people we find objectionable.

*How would people today react to that?*

### **Luke 5:27-32**

*What request did Jesus make of Zacchaeus?*

*What seemed so objectionable about Jesus' request to Zacchaeus by the people of Jericho?*

- They were shocked Jesus would want to eat with such a "sinner"



**Responding to the Grumblers:**

- There were much more righteous people in town they probably thought Jesus would want to spend time with.

In the story of the calling of Levi, a tax-collector, Levi had a banquet Jesus attended. Again the people grumbled that Jesus would be in such company.

**Luke 19:8-9**

*What was Zacchaeus' response to those who grumbled?*

- Genuine repentance and reconciling any wrong he had done.

This response of repentance was what Jesus was after. He was willing to put up with grumbling and people complaining if it meant one of God's children would come home.

*When have we found ourselves grumbling about what was God was doing in the lives of others?*

*How did encountering Jesus turn Zacchaeus' life around?*

*Instead of grumbling, what can we do to support people who are turning their lives over to Jesus?*

**Affects of his presence:**

*What affect did the presence of Christ have on Zacchaeus' heart? How does that apply to us today?*

- Being in the presence of the holy makes us all the more aware of our own sinfulness.
- It inspires us to repent and make right the wrongs we have done.

There is a similar instance in the book of Isaiah.

**Isaiah 6:1-4**

Isaiah is confronted by an encounter with God in the temple. Just the hem of God's garment fills the temple. There is violent earth-shaking and worshipful angels praising God.

*If you were confronted with this sight what would your reaction be?*

- Terror, fear, reverence

**Isaiah 6:5-7**

*What was Isaiah's reaction to the holy presence of God?*

- He was made entirely aware of his own sinfulness and unwor-

thiness to be in the presence of God.

*What was God willing to do with Isaiah's "unclean lips"?*

- God was willing to provide the cleansing. Isaiah's guilt was removed.

### **Isaiah 6:8**

The presence of God in our lives comes with an obligation. For Isaiah it was a commission to go and be a spokesperson for God. Zacchaeus realized the obligation was to make restitution for the wrongs he had done.

As Christians, we have the presence of God in our lives.

*How can a person's reputation keep us from telling them about God or inviting them to church/L.I.F.E. group?*

- We often assume people with bad reputations or bad attitudes would have nothing to do with church.
- They are the ones who need it most and are often even the one who receive it the most because they realize their need for something better.
- They are also more receptive because not many people take the time to show them they care.

### **Application:**

*What can you do in response to God's presence to serve him more fully?*

*How can others experience Christ through our lives in our L.I.F.E. groups?*

- By loving them, serving them, and being genuinely interested in their wellbeing.

### **Put it into Practice:**

Spend a few minutes each day in God's Word. Remember as you read that he wants you to be in his presence.

### **Note to Leaders:**

You may want to take a moment and review and see what people have learned/how they have applied these to our groups:

L – Living the Commission

I – Impacting through Compassion

F – Finding Community

E – Encountering the Christ