

Luke 19:1-10
Feilding Baptist
Renew Together 2026 Week 2
17.5.26

Call to Worship

Welcome to worship with Feilding Baptist Church!

We're in Week 2 of Renew Together, the annual national Baptist mission focus. Our theme of building moves from last week's focus on building lives to building homes. Our opening passage is John 14:1-4, where Jesus talks of going to prepare a place, a home, for us. This home is found with him and in him, for all eternity.

Let's read together this passage;

John 14:1-4 (NIV - UK)
Jesus comforts his disciples

1 'Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. 2 My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going.'

Let's pause in the quiet to give thanks.

Father, thank you for this hope, that despite trouble, despite challenges, you have our future sorted. Thank you for Jesus, who took on trouble, suffering because of it, to bring us life, bring us freedom, bring us hope. So Holy Spirit please help us to stay confident in hope, please help us to keep our hearts right with you. Please help us to continue to be grateful for what Jesus has done for us.

Father, please bless this time, please bless this place, please bless us as we worship this morning. Amen.

Message - Building Home

No matter who we are, or what we've done, Jesus offers us salvation, offering to come into our home, our heart. The question is, what will we build with this?

A map of the area around Jerusalem gives you an idea of the topography, lots of hills, and high country. The road that drops down to Jericho, only 20 km's away, falls 1000 metres, to 250 metres below sea level. Easy enough going down. Which is what the rich did in winter, having their baches down in Jericho. Even King Herod had a winter temple down there, much warmer in winter. But Jerusalem was the place to be in summer. With it's elevation, and ability to catch some wind, was a much cooler place to be.

Note Nazareth and Capernaum at the top of the map. While the Jewish people chose not to go through Samaria, because of the Samaritan people, coming along the flat of the Jordan Valley, was much easier going. And it was a rich area for food, figs, olives, and dates, all grow exceptionally well here.

In the Old Testament, the people of Israel were often, 'opposite Jericho'. This meant they were in the wilderness, on the wrong side of the Jordan River. Jericho was the way to the 'promised land'. And indeed it is on the way, because a major trade route went up from Jericho, to Jerusalem, and then on to the coast, or down to Egypt. This bottleneck made Jericho the perfect place to collect taxes from people passing through. And the Romans were clever enough to work this out.

But before we get to Luke 19, let's reflect quickly on a story Jesus told about this area. Only Luke, records this, in chapter 10.

Here, on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho is the setting for Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan. A priest and the other fella walked downhill on the other side, not wanting to know about an injured man, not wanting to become unclean. But a Samaritan stopped, put the injured man on his donkey, and helped

him down the hill, to Jericho, helping him towards wellness. And paying for the treatment he was going to need to receive.

We are challenged to think, would we ever be like that? Would we walk by on the other side? Well, what about the people at the time? How did they respond to Jesus' challenge? Well, we know. Because eight chapters later, in the very part of the world that the Good Samaritan story is told, Jesus is now walking the other way, up to Jerusalem. Matthew, Mark, and Luke record what happened to blind Bartimaeus.

Near Jericho, Jesus is passing a blind man who calls out to him. Knowing, or having heard the story of the Good Samaritan, what would you expect Jesus to do?

And what would you expect the crowd, that is us, to do about this blind guy?

Well, Luke 18:39 tells us that they told Bartimaeus to shut up, to stop disturbing the peace. All this teaching of Jesus, and we get to here, and we still don't get it. It goes over our heads, but not into our hearts. And that's exactly the point of the passage.

Jesus asks Bartimaeus a really strange question of- what would you like me to do for you? Well, to us it's obvious, isn't it, he wants to see! But we're coming from our background, and not realising how things were back then. We don't know the culture. For back then people did things to find favour with God. Giving alms, or giving to charity, brought God's favour. And if the giving was done publicly, it brought more favour! Giving to a beggar, especially one who was genuine, like blind, and not just putting it on, was a great look. The beggar would then rise and honour the person publicly, announcing, "here is a righteous and honourable person".

In this way, beggars were a useful part of society. They provided a way for people to give (Bailey, 174). But here's an interesting thing, those who were genuinely disabled, through this system, were able to do very nicely. It is highly likely that though Bartimaeus was blind, he was likely quite well off. Jesus' question then is a very good one. What would you like me to do for you?

The implications are huge. By healing Bartimaeus, he would lose his only income stream. He would become poor, but he could see. Or he could stay blind, but be rich. And what did Bartimaeus choose? He chose his sight, and Jesus said, your faith has saved you. He has taken Jesus into his heart. Bartimaeus would rather be a disciple of Jesus, than blind and not. What a challenge that is for us today!

It is this background, the Good Samaritan and the story of blind Bartimaeus, that sets up the story of Zacchaeus in chapter 19. Blind Bartimaeus, and Zacchaeus who couldn't see. Let's read;

Luke 19:1-10 (NIV - UK)
Zacchaeus the tax collector

1 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.' 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, 'He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.'

8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.'

9 Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.'

Well, did anything strike you? Did you see anything new, or were you reminded of something? Or is it just so familiar you just switched off because you know this one?!

Well, I have to say, I'm a little bit disappointed with how emotionless English is! In Greek there are a lot more exclamation marks! For example, the word 'behold' that came up last week with Mary, sneaks in here too. Twice. When Mary said 'Yes' to the angel, she was saying; Note! Pay attention! Look! All with exclamation marks. Here we have this behold again, with an exclamation mark at the start of verse two. Oh, no we don't, we have, And there was a man called Zacchaeus. No! This is what, What! Hang on! Here is a man called Zacchaeus, who was a tax collector!! Oh No!! Whatever is going to happen next?!

Exactly, and you would never guess! This is amazing!

The least expected guy to show any interest in Jesus, does. This is no nobody, this is someone very important in town. But because of his role, because of his job, and, because he hasn't lived with integrity, has been fleecing people in his role as a tax collector, he can't get too close to the crowd. Today if an important person wanted to get to the front of the crowd, think of our mayor or MP, people would make way for them. But here, not for Zach. And especially with his size, being small, if he did mingle, he would likely to be stabbed, and left to die. No one would have shown any remorse.

So Zach runs. Unusual. Jewish men didn't run. Oh, one did in another of Jesus' stories, to save the prodigal son. And Jewish men didn't climb trees. What's going on here?

Firstly, where was this tree? Trees were not allowed in the towns and cities. Trees beside the road would have been in the countryside. So it would appear that Jesus had in fact moved through Jericho, towards the setting of the Good Samaritan. Jesus had clearly decided not to stay in Jericho, but to push on to Jerusalem. He was now on the outskirts, about to begin the climb.

As a former nursery worker, I'm interested in trees. The one Zac climbed wasn't simply a sycamore. These are Acer Pseudoplatanus and I helped grow plenty of these at Millichamps Nursery 40 years ago. Acer is the name for maples. This wasn't a maple. Pseudo, is false, platanus is plane, a sycamore is a false plane tree. Not like the genuine plane trees that grow down the main street of Whanganui. But these didn't grow in Palestine. What did grow were what are called sycamore fig trees, that produced good quantities of fruit, had large leaves for hiding behind, and wide low branches for sitting. So a great place to hide.

The emotion continues, but not in English, as Jesus greets Zacchaeus and tells him to hurry and come down. Now, it isn't always a good thing to be hurrying down a tree. You might be interested that the word for hurry in Greek is speudo, which is quite appropriate! And I really wanted to say this this is where swimming sportswear brand name came from, because they do help you to Speedo, but it doesn't. In Sydney in 1928 a worker came up with the name. Anyway, the word is repeated as Zacchaeus does speudo, to welcome Jesus, what does the NIV say, 'gladly'. Hmm. 'Joyfully' says the NASB. But if you look at the footnote in some Bibles, it will say rejoicing! Again it's dumbed down. This is a celebration moment, not a simple nice to see you! This is like when you've been looked down on for years, suddenly someone accepts you! How good! What a feeling! It's a heaven like acceptance.

And this is where we need to pause. For according to the crowd, Zac was disqualified from being a follower of Jesus for three reasons; his physical appearance, he was short, because of who he worked for, and because he was rich. At a funeral on Wednesday they told the story about the person who arrived in heaven, surprised at some of the people who had made it in the door. But their surprise was nothing compared to the shock the people there at my turning up!

Zach in God's kingdom? It shouldn't be. But here, is evidence of the door being opened to all who will accept Jesus into not just their heads, but their hearts. Gladly, yes, joyfully, yes, but much more, rejoicing! For here is the delight in being forgiven, for discovering the grace of God.

As with the Good Samaritan story, as with the Bartimaeus incident, Luke is showing us that God's kingdom door is open to all. These three stories are to challenge us with who we might see in God's Kingdom. The crowd are turning away the socially insignificant and vulnerable. In welcoming Bartimaeus, and Zach, Jesus models how we should be too.

Bartimaeus' faith saved him, a verb, for Zach, salvation, the noun, came to his house. His house or his heart? Maybe it's the same thing, maybe it was both. For we see in his response, Behold, v8, I give half of this, and four times of that, far more than was expected by the Old Testament Law. Zacchaeus was a changed man.

The last verse says, For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. This is nothing new, this is a biblical principle. Even the Old Testament had this expectation. Joel 2:28-32 finishes with these words, And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Jesus matters.

The title of Building Home for today's message could have easily been Accepted. I believe Luke is challenging us about building in our hearts. This is about us, and our response to what Jesus has done - yes, but what Jesus expects of us. And if Jesus is working in our hearts, then there should be a response to others. We should not be walking by on the other side of the road when people are hurting. We should not be telling the poor or the people with disabilities to shut up. We should be helping and advocating for them. We should not be laughing and jeering at people who we think don't fit, especially when they are trying to catch a glimpse of Jesus.

These stories, are about the attitude of the heart. And that's what mission is about, and what Arotahi want to remind us of this week.

PRAYER

Week 2 | Renew Together 2026

God,

You are the builder of every home,
the creator of this whenua,
that gives us all a place to belong.

Christ, who called to Zacchaeus in the tree
and made Your home at his table,
Teach us to open our homes,
And to welcome others as you have welcomed us.

For many have no safe place,
No table to call their own,
And nowhere to rest.
For injustice so often feasts at the tables of the hungry,
And erodes the foundations of the poor.

Turn our hearts and homes toward You.
Help us to open our doors and make room,
to embrace your radical hospitality,
And to share freely from our table.
May strangers become friends,
And both host and guest
be transformed by one another's presence.

Wairua Tapu,
make Your home within us,
So that through our love and hospitality,
Others may find rest within You.
Amen