



# Red Bank United Methodist Church

*"A Diverse Body Unified by Christ"*

## BE A TREE

We were taught the story as children....hopefully we teach our children the same story....the story of Zacchaeus.

Remember the famous song?

*"Zacchaeus was a wee little man; a wee little man was he. He climbed up in a sycamore tree for the Lord he wanted to see. And when the Savior passed that way He looked up in the tree. And said, 'Zacchaeus, you come down! For I'm going to your house today! For I'm going to your house today!"*

We know Zacchaeus was short....we know that he was a tax collector .....we know he was rich by dishonest gain....we know Jesus went to his house that day....and we know Zacchaeus had a transformation, a change, a conversion of heart and life. So dramatic he gave back everything he illegally took from others....Zacchaeus met Jesus and Jesus changed his life.

We sometimes need reminding that is the purpose of the church. To help people see Jesus and all he is, offers, and gives. To help people see that no matter who they are or what they have done, Jesus loves them and wants a relationship with them. He wants to come to their house....he wants to come into their heart. He wants to transform them into abundant life body, soul, and spirit.

No doubt many of you have heard a lesson or a sermon on Zacchaeus. .... Have you ever heard a sermon on the tree?....that sycamore tree? The tree Zacchaeus climbed in order to see Jesus? Today is a sermon on that tree.

How would this story be different if there was no tree? Would we even have the story? Would Zacchaeus had seen Jesus? Would Zachueus had been changed?

Many people are in desperate need of a tree. Something they can climb upon and see Jesus in the midst of their current situation. For some it's not their height but it's life that has beaten them down and made them feel small...so small. For some, they can't see Jesus because they believe God does not love them. For some, broken dreams, broken relationships, just simply downright brokenness belittles them.....Many can't see Jesus because something is hindering them.

The Zaccaheus story all started with a tree.



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It's called a sycamore tree. Also known as the fig-mulberry. It bore fruit....figs. A very important tree in the middle east. It's branches were wide spreading and close to the ground. Easy for climbing (and hiding). It's leaves are heart-shaped and pleasant smelling. These trees were so important to the welfare of the nation King David hired people to tend and care for them.

It was the prophet Amos who said: *"I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and caretaker of sycamore trees. <sup>15</sup> But the LORD took me from those things to prophesy to God's people.*

This tree played an important role leading to the change in Zachaeus' life. It removed an obstacle for him. He was too little to see Jesus.

Jesus had a special place in his heart for people who feel small and are small....no matter their age. Even little ones to him belong....and He loves them dearly.

Today, we celebrate a ministry of this church....our preschool. And today, I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart each and every teacher, worker, parent. I also want to thank each child for being a part of our preschool this year.

Can I call you something? Can I call you a name? "Tree". You are a tree to these children. You are a resource to help these small and little ones see Jesus. You are removing obstacles that might exist in their young life that hinder them from knowing they are loved by God.

Our preschool is a ministry of this church. It's not some group using our building...it's a part; a vital part of us trying to fulfill our purpose of helping people see Jesus. Our preschool ministry is trying to convey to these little ones (and their parents) that Jesus wants to come to their house....he wants to come into their heart....he wants to bring abundant life to them body, soul, and spirit. Our preschool is a tree.

Preschool teachers.....You are a tree! Like a sycamore tree you are of great importance, your leaves are heart shaped...you've got the heart of God. You are bearing fruit and I thank you....we thank you for what you do.



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In the words of Joyce Kilmer:

### Trees

I think that I shall never see/ a poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed /against the sweet earth's flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,/ and lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in summer wear/ a nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain; /who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,/ but only God can make a tree.

You are a tree! God has made you a tree in the life of these who are so small.

And each of us can be a tree; God wants us to be a tree, to those who are small and feel small helping them see Jesus.

*"Zacchaeus was a wee little man; a wee little man was he.*

*He climbed up in a sycamore tree for the Lord he wanted to see.*

*And when the Savior passed that way He looked up in the tree.*

*And said, 'Zacchaeus, you come down!*

*For I'm going to your house today! For I'm going to your house today!"*

Be a tree! Be a tree! Be a tree!!!



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Matthew 19:13-15

*Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people; but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." And he laid his hands on them and went away.*

Luke 19: 1-6 New International Version (NIV)

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

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

That's what the church is to be about....that's why we exist. There's a very powerful quote from a Catholic priest, William Temple, that he spoke over 100 years ago:

*"The church is the only organization in the world that does not exist for its members but for those who are outside it".*

