

Biblical Background

LUKE 19:1-10

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING: Jericho is in the Jordan River Valley. It is a tropical desert climate with palm trees and resorts. Travelers constantly pass through this area to go to many different places. For Jesus, it would be on the route from Galilee to Jerusalem.

TERMS: **Short in stature** Zacchaeus was a short man, but this term could also have been the gospel writer's play on words. Zacchaeus, like all tax collectors, were despised by the rest of the population.

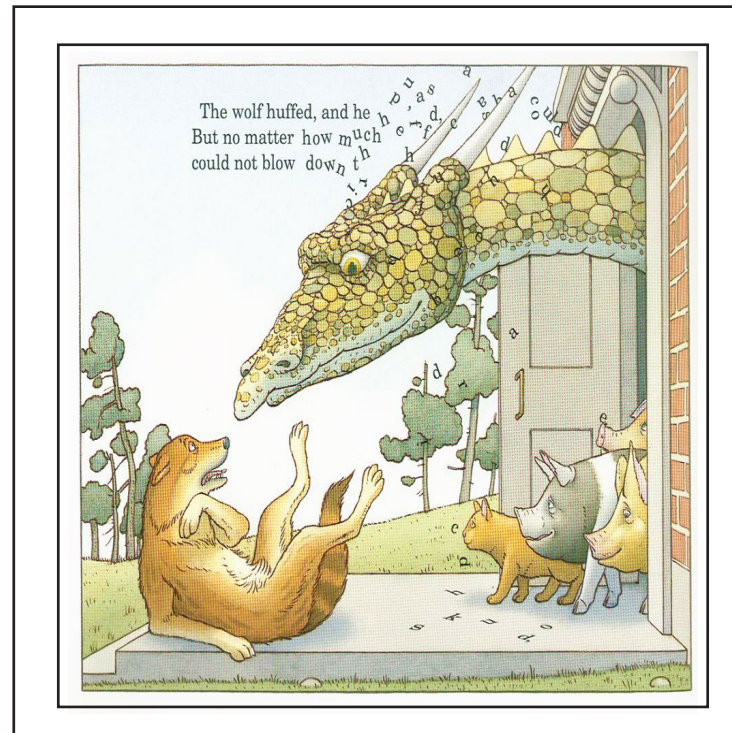
Tax collector In highly traveled areas like Jericho, Rome would enlist agents of tax collectors to collect tolls from travelers as they passed through. The tax collectors would collect tolls, and they were known to keep portions of the tax money for themselves. By making a profit off the poor, they were considered heartless and untrustworthy.

CULTURAL INSIGHTS: In biblical times, it was believed that people were born with inherent value. If one person had more of something, that meant someone else had less. This includes honor, wealth, blood, and any other valuable resources. If a person somehow gained additional valuable resources, it was presumed that they had been stolen. There were no honorable ways to increase one's goods.

INSIGHTS INTO MEANING: The name Zacchaeus, in Hebrew, means one who is pure, clean, and innocent. When Jesus arrived on the scene, he seemed to already know Zacchaeus. The Pharisees (the religious leaders of his day) protested, that as a despised tax collector, there was no way that Zacchaeus could be a person who honored God. Jesus, however, saw that his heart was filled with repentance. Jesus teaches the Pharisees a lesson - beware of one with a right heart. This Gospel infers that Zacchaeus was a "work in progress", just like all of us. This is what makes one righteous, not the prayers and superior religious status of the Pharisees.

Family Activities

SHARING THE MISSION AT HOME
AND IN THE WORLD



QUESTION OF THE WEEK: Are there people in your school that can be bullies like the Big Bad Wolf? Talk about it as a family. How can they be invited to stop bullying and be restored into the community?

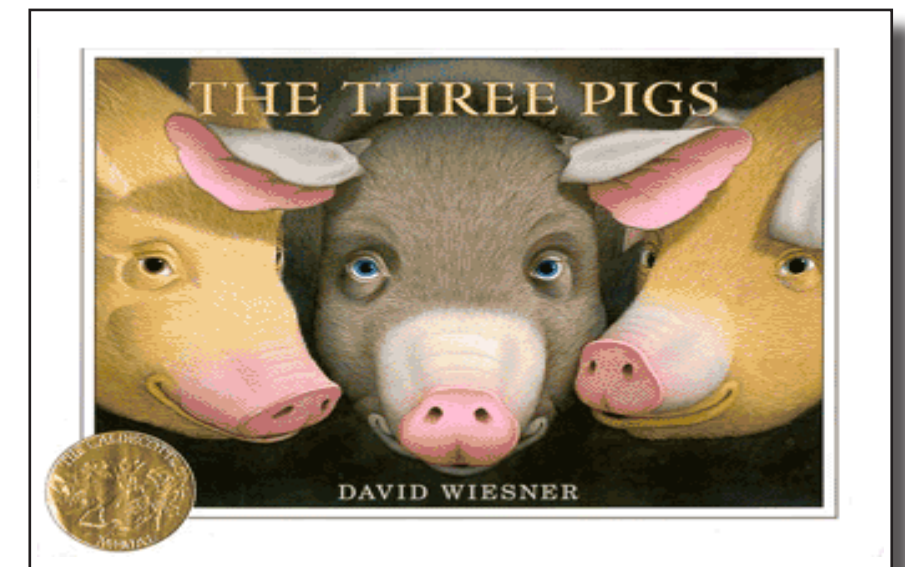
GOSPEL CHARACTER QUALITIES: **HUMILITY**
RESTORATION

ADDITIONAL FAMILY ACTIVITIES: Discuss the challenges of leadership styles in the world today, especially in our national politics. What would Jesus do today? What can we do when we are inspired by his example? Research U.S. presidents who had strong faith and character. How did their faith inspire their leadership? Make a collage of historical figures that relied on their faith and those that did not. Discuss how faith, and the example of Jesus, can make a difference in our leaders and their contributions to society. Can leaders change? Why might it be harder to change when holding a public office?

Cycle C 31st Sunday
Ordinary Time

Living Grace

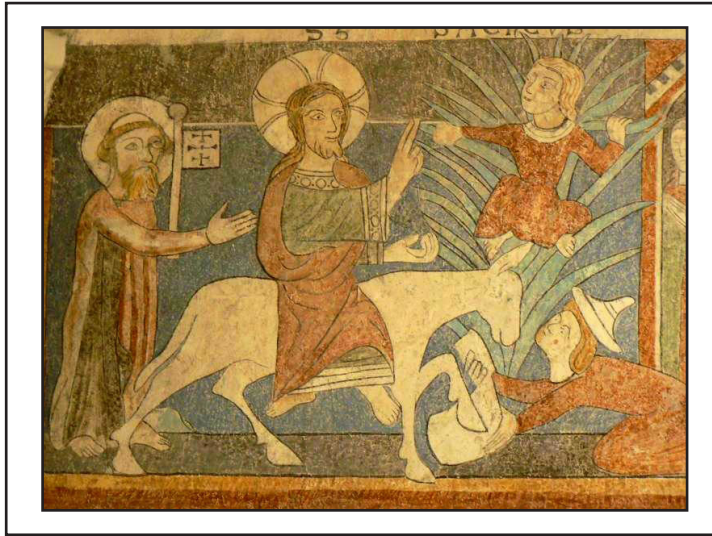
"RESTORING THE BIG BAD WOLF?"



This version of The Three Pigs, begins familiarly enough, with three pigs collecting materials and going off to build houses of straw, sticks, and bricks. But the wolf's huffing and puffing blows the first pig right out of the story...and into the realm of pure imagination. Together the pigs visit a book of nursery rhymes and save a dragon from death at the hands of a knight. When they get the dragon home, he returns their kindness by scaring the wolf off permanently.

Art & Faith

CELEBRATING THE BEAUTY & TRADITION
OF SACRED ART



THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN

Painting from *Vie de Jesus Mafa* created by Mafa Christian Communities
Cameroon, Africa ~ 1973

EXPLORING THE ART:

REFORMATION AND RESTORATION

Keldby Church in Denmark is famous for its frescoes. It is primarily decorated with frescoes from the end of the 15th century, but there are also earlier frescoes in the church dating back to 1275, one of which is an illustration of the story of Zacchaeus, pictured above.

Fresco is a technique of mural painting in which pigment is applied to freshly-laid or wet lime plaster. Water acts as a binding agent that allows the pigment to merge with the plaster. Once the plaster sets the painting actually becomes part of the wall.

Frescoes are found over 600 churches across Denmark, representing the highest concentration of surviving church murals anywhere in the world. The Protestant Reformation of the 16th century considered the artwork in Catholic churches to be a form of idolatry, and as a result, much of the art in Western Europe was destroyed. Since fresco paintings actually become part of the walls, they can not actually be destroyed, but they were covered with lime-wash for hundreds of years before finally being rediscovered and restored during the 19th and 20th centuries.

It is extremely challenging work to conserve and restore any ancient works of art, and frescoes are especially difficult due to their vulnerability to deterioration of the environmental elements inherent in the high volume of tourist traffic in cultural heritage sites. Pollutants, humidity, and bacteria interact with the chemicals and pigments that were used to create the frescoes, and add to the deterioration of the painted surface. New techniques have been perfected for the restoration of frescoes ranging from removing the layers of paint and plaster from the wall in order to keep them in controlled environments like museums, to injecting chemicals directly into the walls to reinvigorate the original underlying pigments, even injecting antibiotics (like amoxicillin) which destroys bacteria growing between the layers of paint and plaster.

Sunday Gospel

LUKE 19:1-10

At that time, Jesus came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town.

Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was;

but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature.

So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus,

who was about to pass that way.

When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said,

“Zacchaeus, come down quickly,

for today I must stay at your house.”

And he came down quickly and received him with joy.

When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying,

“He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner.”

But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord,

“Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to

the poor,

and if I have extorted anything from anyone

I shall repay it four times over.”

And Jesus said to him,

“Today salvation has come to this house

because this man too is a descendant of Abraham.

For the Son of Man has come to seek

and to save what was lost.”

Read-aloud video link:

THE THREE PIGS

Written & Illustrated by David Wiesner

Making the Connections

FOR ADULTS

JESUS TELLS US GOD'S LOVE CAN RESTORE EVEN THE BIG BAD WOLF?

We all know the original story of The Three Pigs and how it ends. Or do we? Do we ever take time to consider what happens to the Big Bad Wolf? In our children's story this week, we have a new version of the age-old tale. In this week's Gospel story, we find insight into Jesus' intentions as he reaches out to Zacchaeus, a head tax collector in the first century, would have been considered a “big bad wolf” of the time.

In the story of Zacchaeus, Jesus speaks to us about how we are called to relate to the wolves in our lives and in our society, and it is a challenging message to say the least! As we learned last week, tax collectors were despised because they were known to be greedy, selfish, and self-serving. They were cheated and stole money, especially from the disadvantaged. The crowd would have assumed that Zacchaeus would not want to have anything to do with Jesus, and that Jesus would not want to have anything to do with Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus had to do something undignified to see Jesus. For a public official to climb a tree would have been very undignified - something like that was just not done. In this act alone, Jesus learned a lot about Zacchaeus. He saw Zacchaeus' profound willingness to humble himself by doing something ridiculous in public just to catch a glimpse of him passing by. As Jesus called to Zacchaeus, he received Jesus into his home with joy. Because Jesus honored him by acknowledging him and staying at his house, his life had been renewed. Jesus proclaims that he has come to be an example of God's mercy, “to seek and save what was lost”. That day Zacchaeus became truly a “rich” man, all through an act of humility, when he swallowed his pride and took a risk to reach out to Jesus. This man was lost and despised due to his selfishness and wrong doing. Jesus restores him to his family, the family of the faith, the family of Abraham.

God extends this same hand of mercy to each one of us. When we humble ourselves, and ask for relationship with him, God jumps at the invitation to come and “feast” with us. Jesus came to seek and save everyone - even those who were despised by the rest of society. Jesus' heart of mercy also calls each one of us to reach out, even to the “big bad wolves” in our lives, and offer them a way of restoration.

Making the Connections

FOR CHILDREN

YOUR STORY: Are there people in your school that can be bullies like the Big Bad Wolf? Have you ever been caught up in bullying someone else? When we hurt others, are we able to mend the bridges that we have broken? How does Jesus help us? How are we called to show the change of our heart through our actions?

THE CHILDREN'S STORY: What is your favorite part of this story? What are the scary parts? How can we apply the idea of building a house out of straw or mud to other parts of our lives? How can we apply building a house out of bricks to the other parts of our lives?

THE GOSPEL STORY: Who is the big bad wolf in the Gospel story? Who does the dragon represent? How is Zacchaeus like the Big Bad Wolf? In Jesus' mission is there room for the big bad wolf or Zacchaeus? What is needed for big bad wolves to be restored to their communities?

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