

WHAT WE FOUND

We stood in the back of the temple with the tax collector, whose entire liturgy was distance, downcast eyes, a fist on the breast (the Confiteor's own gesture), and seven words: God, be merciful to me a sinner. He went home justified, and we learned to say gladly that his empty hands are common ground: the Church herself teaches that nothing before justification earns it. We set the children who can only receive beside the ruler whose one lack was lack itself, and heard the Gospel's whole hope: what is impossible with men is possible with God.

Then Jericho proved it. A blind beggar taught us the Jesus Prayer (Son of David, have mercy on me), and a chief tax collector climbed a tree like a boy, was called by name, and answered mercy with receipts: half to the poor, and, if he had defrauded anyone, fourfold restitution, the measure Exodus 22:1 sets for a stolen sheep, the justice the Church still asks of penitents (CCC 2412). Over his house fell the study's word, twice: I must stay at your house today; today salvation has come to this house. The tally stands at four: 2:11, 4:21, 19:5, 19:9. One remains.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

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St. Augustine of Hippo (*Sermon 115*)

The Pharisee went up to pray and preferred to praise himself; asking nothing, he received nothing. The tax collector dared not lift his eyes, and the one who made eyes looked upon him: the physician comes to the one who shows the wound.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Thérèse of Lisieux (*Story of a Soul*)

To remain little is to expect everything from the good God as a child expects everything from its father, glorying in one's poverty because it is precisely the empty hands that the Father delights to fill.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyril of Alexandria (*Commentary on Luke, on Zacchaeus*)

The man too small to see over the crowd was not too proud to climb like a boy. Christ summoned him by name and lodged with him before any amends were spoken, and grace so received became munificence.

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

- Pray the Jesus Prayer, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner, until the beggar's cry becomes your breath.
- Make one act of restitution this week: a debt repaid, an apology owed, something returned.
- Pray the tax collector's seven words for two full minutes, asking nothing else. Notice what it costs.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Luke 18:13 *God, be merciful to me a sinner!* (RSV2CE)

Before next session: read Luke 19:28–21:38, the entry into Jerusalem. Watch what the crowd shouts at the gates, and remember Session 8's closing verse.

Catechism this week: CCC 2559, 2613, 1987–1992, 2010, 2412, 2667.