

Sunday, February 15, 2026 Sixth Sunday after Epiphany Worship Sermon
"To See Jesus" Pastor Takaaki Inoue
Genesis 3:8-13, Luke 19:1-10

① **【Zacchaeus Who Wanted to See Jesus】**

In the town of Jericho lived a tax collector named Zacchaeus. Tax collectors were people whose job was to collect taxes. They were despised by the Jews, called sinners, and excluded from society. Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector and a wealthy man. This Zacchaeus “wanted to see who Jesus was.” Even with money and high social status, that alone did not satisfy his heart. What truly satisfies a person is being loved, accepted, and acknowledged.

●When I was still a new pastor, I conducted the funeral service for a male church member. I was unfamiliar with funerals, felt nervous, and was utterly exhausted. After the sermon, Pastor K, whom I respected, came to me and said, “Inoue, I’ve never seen anyone deliver a sermon like yours. It was a good talk.” Those words made me think, “Ah, my mentor recognized me,” and I felt happy. Being recognized is truly important.

Zacchaeus heard rumors that someone had taken a tax collector like himself as a disciple, and he wanted to meet Jesus. But Zacchaeus tried to see Jesus and “was short in stature” (19:3), so the crowd blocked his view. So he ran ahead, climbed a sycamore fig tree, and saw Jesus. Jesus was pleased with Zacchaeus like this, entered his house, and became his friend. Zacchaeus’ short stature symbolizes our own lack of ability. Yet his strong desire overcame this limitation. We make various excuses (work is busy, someone is coming, I’m not feeling well) and don’t seek Christ. But if you earnestly seek Christ, you will overcome obstacles, and Christ will come to you immediately.

② **【What is conversion? = To see Christ, not this world】**

This story repeats the word “see” five times: “tried to see” (verse 3), “could not see” (verse 3), “in order to see” (verse 4), “looking up” (verse 5), and “those who saw it” (verse 7). Seeing is the theme of this story. Human senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch—were originally created as tools to know God and commune with Him. However, instead of being directed toward God, they were turned toward this world. In the passage about the Garden of Eden in Genesis, it is written, “When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eye, and desirable for gaining wisdom” (Genesis 3:6). That tree was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the tree God had forbidden them to eat from, saying, “You will surely die” (Genesis 2:17). This tree of the knowledge of good and evil symbolizes this world without God. This world appears more attractive than God and draws our eyes. It delights us and makes us believe life lies within it. The first fall was choosing to stop looking at God and instead look at this world. Thus, humanity began to

greedily pursue this world, not God. Reading Zacchaeus' story recalls Adam in the Garden of Eden. Long ago, Adam hid among the trees of the garden, avoiding God's face, but Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see that very face of God. Zacchaeus' eyes are drawn not to the world, but to Christ. He desperately seeks to see Christ, regardless of the cost. Here we see the beginning of life's restoration. Returning to church properly resets our five senses toward God. When we pray in church and stand before the altar, we feel restored to being human.

We take lightly the words, "You will surely die" (Genesis 2:17). No one reads them seriously. Like Adam, we think we won't die just because we seek this world. Those who don't take these words seriously won't take other words of Scripture seriously either. Even when Christ says, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live. Whoever lives and believes in me will never die." (John 11:25) Yet they only think, "Well, maybe that's true..." without any joy. When we truly hear the words of Scripture, they give us life. Christ is life. This world has no life. Let us fix our eyes on Christ and greedily seek Him.

③ [I am truly beautiful]

When Jesus came to the fig tree, He looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down. Today I must stay at your house." (19:5) Jesus not only knew his name, but also knew he was a sinner, yet He strongly desired fellowship with him. Zacchaeus realized that Jesus sought him more than he sought Jesus. Knowing God's thoughts and perceiving God's heart—this is actually repentance and faith. He hurried down from the tree and joyfully welcomed Jesus into his house. Zacchaeus stood up and declared, "I will give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone out of anything, I will repay them four times over." (verse 8) His encounter with Jesus had filled him to overflowing. Zacchaeus was transformed.

Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house, since this man too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (vv. 9-10) "The lost" refers to something that has strayed from its proper place and been placed where it does not belong. Humans were created to live with God. Therefore, returning to that place is called salvation. Jesus said, "This man is a son of Abraham." He declared that this man was also a child of God.

● The other day, when I went to a certain bank, an elderly woman sat down next to me and said to the bank clerk, "This is probably my last time coming here. I'll have to go into a nursing home. I'm too weak to stand anymore. Young man, do the calculations here. I can't make it over to the other counter." So the young male clerk accommodated her and did the calculations right there. Somehow, it felt like I'd seen the true face of this world.

As people grow old, they all become the same. Their legs fail them, their hearts ache, and they can no longer move. Days arrive when illness seems to consume

their entire existence. But is that truly the case? I don't believe so. Sin, death, and sickness are not our true nature. They are like habits acquired later in life. The sins people commit may distort what God created, but they can never destroy it. God's grace is that profound. The same holds true for illness. No matter how ill I become, I want to hold onto the shining part within me—it is not all that defines me. Within me lies a beautiful image of God, like a diamond created by Him. Let us declare: “Sin is a part of me, not my whole being. I am truly beautiful.” It is God Christ who causes this divine image to blossom and be resurrected. Only God can open it. If you truly hope in Christ and sincerely believe in His power, the Lord will surely cause the beautiful image of God within us to blossom, transforming us into His likeness.