

JESUS: COMMUNAL HEALER

Open



As South Africa's first black president, Nelson Mandela dismantled apartheid and brought healing to the divided nation. He wrote in his autobiography, "I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor alike are robbed of their humanity. When I walked out of prison, that was my mission, to liberate the oppressed and the oppressor both."¹

– Nelson Mandela; [Wikimedia Commons](#); Public Domain

- Do you agree that *the oppressed* and *the oppressor* both need freedom? Why or why not?

Leader Note	Frederick Douglass said, "No man can put a chain about the ankle of his fellow man without at last finding the other end fastened about his own neck."
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Context

Leader Note	Rome's tax system redistributed wealth from the poor to the rich, incentivizing compliance. The city delegated tax collection to the elders and landowners of Israel. Israel's elite hired collectors who extorted money from local peasants and workers, sharing the extra profits among themselves. Historians estimate that 80-90% of people in the Roman Empire lived in poverty as day laborers on feudal estates.
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¹ Nelson Mandela. [Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela](#), Back Bay Books, October 1995, 624.

Jericho's residents honor Jesus by walking out to greet and escort them into their city. Rome and their Jewish collaborators heavily taxed their city, renowned for its palm forests, balsam trees, and garden of roses, and as a central hub on a large international trade route.

Read Luke [18:35-43](#); [19:1-10](#) (NIV)

Discuss

1. How do you think those who greeted Jesus felt after Jesus ordered them to bring the beggar to him? How would you feel if you were one of those greeting Jesus?

Leader Note	The Greek term for "be quiet" (18:39) conveys strong rebuke and is better translated as "shut your mouth."
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2. Zacchaeus enforced exploitative taxation and stole from his own people. He was seen as a traitor and a tool of the oppressors.

What other facts do we find about Zacchaeus from 19:1-4?

Leader Note	Typically, Middle Eastern men did not run in public or climb trees. Otherwise, they must hitch up their tunic to avoid tripping and thus bare their legs. As a Roman collaborator, Zacchaeus would be reluctant to mix in crowds. A quick flash of a knife could end his life instantly. – Kenneth E. Bailey. Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes , InterVarsity Press, 2008, (p. 177).
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3. Typically, the community chooses a host to provide hospitality for a guest. However, Jesus looks up, calls Zacchaeus by name, and invites Himself to his home. What message does this send?
Why are people angry with Jesus' choice (19:7)? How might you respond?

Leader Note	"[The] public attention [Jesus received as the crowds escorted him into their city] signals to the reader that a banquet was prepared in Jericho, where the famous rabbi would be expected to spend the night" – Bailey (p. 172).
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Reflect

Leader Note	Jesus' work in Jericho fulfills his mission to liberate the oppressed and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:19). This reference is to the Jubilee Year, during which slaves were freed, debts were forgiven, and land was returned to its original owners (Leviticus 25:8-19). The early church practiced economic jubilee by distributing proceeds from sold property to the needy (Acts 4:34-35).
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Jesus heals by *seeing* people in their full humanity. After he gives sight to the blind man, the people join in praising God (18:43). In contrast, when Jesus accepts their oppressor, the crowd complains bitterly (19:7). By extending costly grace, Jesus liberates Zacchaeus. Indirectly, Jesus also helps free the Jericho community from economic oppression as Zacchaeus restores what he has stolen (19:8).

- In your field, who is “crying out” but being ignored?
- How can you learn to see people the way Jesus sees them?
- Are there people you tend to avoid, label, or judge rather than listen to?
- How can healing encompass social reintegration, in addition to physical care?

Pray

Sit in silence and allow God to speak to you. Pray for the eyes to see others as Jesus does, the humility to listen deeply, and the courage to bring healing that restores people to community and wholeness.