

Thirty First Sunday in Ordinary Time – C – 2022
Wisdom 11.22-12,12//2Thess.1.11-2.2//Luke 19.1-10

→one day an elderly man was walking along the beach and discovers a magic lamp

→...now as everyone knows....when you find a magic lamp you rub it and out pops a genie...

→so this is what the man did...and according to script there appeared a genie...who said to the man.... “because you have released me from a thousand years of imprisonment in this lamp, I will grant you whatever wish that you desire.”

→so the man thought for a moment and then he replied, “My brother and I had a fight some thirty years ago, and he hasn’t spoken to me since. I forgave him a long time ago, but he never forgave me...and so my wish is that he would finally forgive me.”

→there was a sudden clap of thunder, a big puff of smoke, and the genie declared, “Your wish has been granted....your brother has forgiven you!” And then the genie said.... “you know, I have been around a long time...[and] most people would have wished for money or a palace to live in or jewelry to wear...

→but your wish...I am quite touched by...for you only wanted the love and forgiveness of your brother.....

→the genie then paused and looked at the man...and said.....is this because you are old and nearing the end of your life...do you want to die in peace?”

→and the man turned to the genie and said... “ it’s not me who’s dying...it’s my brother and he’s worth about 60 million!”

→now of course, the source of humor in stories like this is the **...the unexpected twist....some call it the “turn-a-round”**...[and that is why we often laugh at them...]

→but what is unique about the story of the genie...and the gospel story we hear today...is that they both contain a “turnaround...an unexpected twist”

→on the surface...we hear about this person named Zacchaeus, a tax collector.

→he’s considered a sinner and he is also a small man...both physically and morally

→he was so short that he climbs a sycamore tree in order to see and catch a glimpse of Jesus passing by

→however, Zacchaeus being “short” in this story--- pertains to more than just a physical limitation or quality

→...besides being short in stature, Zacchaeus was also short-sighted.....

→.....his entire life was focused on his work....in fact given the reaction of the gathered crowd...his whole identity was tied to his work....

→he was successful...he worked hard...and he was very focused

→he even says... “look Lord, I am very conscientious about what I do... I cheat no one, and I am sure of it because if I do, then I pay it four times over....I do my job and I do it well

PAUSE

→then we discover that in addition to being short in stature and being shortsighted ... Zacchaeus was also short on love and acceptance

→as a tax collector...Zacchaeus was considered an outcast...selfish and greedy.... and he was rejected by the community

→one can sense... that the townspeople really didn’t have anything to do with him...and nor did they want Jesus to have anything to do with him...

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→and yet, even though Zacchaeus was short...in so many ways.....

--in spite of his reputation

--and his rejection by the people

--and his admitted sinfulness

Jesus decides to go to his house and have dinner that night...PAUSE

→on that day **SALVATION...REDEMPTION** comes to Zacchaeus

→and as a result, Zacchaeus.....the tax collector..... changes

→he discovers a new and wonderful friend that comes to his houseand ...his life in changed and transformed forever...

→what he was...is now gone...and what he becomes...is now present

PAUSE

→now....the parallel to all this...is that at times,just like Zacchaeus... you and I are also just as short ...short-sighted ...and short on love and acceptance.....

→in the way we sometimes live out our lives

→in the way we sometimes treat one another

→in the way we sometimes act and speak and think

→....we can be just as short.....when we are centered on ourselves and our needs and desires.....without being concerned about others.

→AND just like Zacchaeus in today's gospel.....Christ also wants to come to our house...to be with us and change who we are...

→...Christ is knocking on the door of our life....asking us to open ourselves and let him in....

→to welcome [him] Christ into the house of our spirit...into the rooms of our lives

→today might just be the day ...that Christ is knocking to come into the dining room of our lives so that our appetites can be quenched with his mercy

→to come into the work room of our lives so that our talents and gifts can be shared

→into the family room of our lives so that our relationships may be rooted in his message

→and finally, maybe we are being called let CHRIST come into our hall closets...--/--...that secret...solitary place --/-- where no one else knows about us....so that he might shine forth in our hearts and souls

→because you see.....it is Jesus who wants to come to us...and sit across the table from us...

--to change and heal us from all that causes us distress and anxiety....just like the day Christ came to Zacchaeus' house and changed his life forever

PAUSE

→on the day of our baptism Christ came to us...and he continues to be with us...in the midst of all our uncertainty and insecurity....to give us comfort and courage.

PAUSE

→today's gospel is about opening the doors of our lives to Christ

---about accepting the invitation to sit down to dinner in our own lives with Christ and to let HIS love and HIS presence change us

---you see --- at times we may be short in so many ways...but not one of us has to climb a tree to see Jesus....because you see, HE right here before us...at this table...in the person next to you....and in our hearts

→wanting and waiting to change our lives

→and perhaps...just like Zacchaeus....it's time to let Him do just that!