

- *Go, therefore, and make disciples.”*
 - We’ve been focused lately on the basics of our faith, what is truly important to us and to God and our relationship with God.
 - Week 1 – **God wants your heart.** The call of Jesus makes clear Christianity is not video game that you play for an hour a week, even if you think you’re good at it. **God wants your heart**, your whole being, not mere lip service on a Sunday.
 - Week 2 - **God gave us His Heart.** God can ask for our hearts because He has reigned down his love upon us. Nothing can take that from us, not even our own sinfulness. **God gave us His Heart.**
 - Week 3 - **God’s Heart opens us for others.** God’s love urges us forward, outside of ourselves to serve others, not because WE HAVE TO but because we want to please our Beloved. God demands nothing for His love but **God’s Heart opens us for others.**
 - (This)Week 4 - **A disciple searches for the heart of Jesus.** This week we’ll look at how we can be open for others, putting their heart before our own, even and especially for those who challenge us. **A disciple searches for the heart of Jesus.** We’ll get to that in a minute.
 - And just as a teaser, scenes from our next episode, the climatic finish: Week 5 – Spoiler Alert: **The disciple shares the heart of Jesus with others.** It brings us right back to the Great Commission.
- *Go, therefore, and make disciples*

- Now, let's meet my Buddy. *Now a man there named Zacchaeus...a **chief** tax collector...a **wealthy** man...seeking to see who Jesus was...could not because of the crowd, for he was **SHORT IN STATURE**.*
 - Be careful not to whitewash Zacchaeus, though.
 - Remember, last week, we talked about how tax collectors worked – using every trick in the book, including often the brute force of the Roman soldiers, to collect more than the required amount just to keep the rest
 - Zacchaeus is a tax collector, indeed the chief tax collector and he's darn good at it because he's a wealthy man, A Jew himself who made good by working over his own people.
- *So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus...When [Jesus]...reached the place, Jesus looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house."*
 - Zacchaeus takes a great risk, literally going out on a limb just to catch a glimpse of Jesus. Despite his sinfulness and the disregard he has for others, so willing he is to cheat them, He has heard of and wants to see Jesus. He also opens himself to the mockery of the crowd
 - Nothing else is open to him. He can't see over them and he can't very well ask those he has cheated to let him to the front.
 - He throws caution and dignity to the wind and climbs the tree. He takes a huge chance.
 - Jesus is just passing through, probably on an important mission somewhere. What makes Him stop is that Zacchaeus is looking for him. Jesus stops right there and looks up.
 - In fact, Jesus does more than Zacchaeus had ever hoped for or dreamed: *"Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house."*

- Jesus allows Zacchaeus more than the hoped-for glimpse. He offers Zacchaeus His forgiveness, His love, His friendship and His Presence.
 - *for today I must stay at your house...* Notice the imperative, “MUST.” Zacchaeus does not invite Jesus; he wouldn’t dare. Jesus comes simply because Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, and not just to visit but to stay. This was huge in the days of Jesus because you only ate with, let alone stayed over at the house of, your social equals. Riff-raff like tax collectors were completely unacceptable.
 - But Jesus says to Zacchaeus: Come down, Come to me. You were looking; you’ve found me.
 - *And Zacchaeus came down quickly and received Jesus 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.”*
 - Zacchaeus responds to the call of Jesus. He comes down QUICKLY and has Jesus over.
 - And the grumblers start. They’ve watched this whole thing, watched Zacchaeus make a spectacle, watched Jesus soil himself. And they were angry. Please note, though, that not one of them went out of their way to do anything for Jesus and no one invited Jesus home.
 - But Zacchaeus stands his ground. I imagine the scene with him taking the stance of a wrestler at the beginning of a meet, perhaps crouching low as if one of the grumblers would rush him.

- And Zacchaeus promises to be different, to repay those he has hurt and cheated and stole from, the very grumblers surrounding him right now.
- Notice that the tense of the verbs Zacchaeus uses are all future: I shall give half to the poor, I will repay four-fold. He had no intention of doing anything like that when he got up that morning and I bet his financial consultant wouldn't be happy at the quick disposal.
- Zacchaeus is changed by the encounter with Jesus and Jesus says that's enough, in fact it's more than enough. *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 & save what was lost.*"
- People often think that Jesus doesn't judge us. But He does, all of the time, just as He judged Zacchaeus in this Gospel.
- Jesus comes to those who search for Him those who search with an open heart looking for forgiveness and acceptance. And Jesus offers salvation to those who accept it by being willing to change and leave old ways behind.
- And that's what a **disciple is: someone who searches for Jesus.**
 - The word in Greek for "disciple" is *mathetes*, which, in turn, comes from the verb *manthanein*, meaning "to learn"
 - To be a disciple is to be a learner. To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to be engaged in a lifelong process of learning from and about Jesus the master, Jesus the teacher.
 - The English term "disciple" comes from the Latin *discipulus*, and provides the connotation that this learning process is not haphazard, but intentional and disciplined. To become a disciple is to commit to such a process of growth.

- The learning process of a disciple is not learning **FACTS about** Jesus. The disciple seeks to encounter Christ.
- But it's not enough to encounter Christ as it was not enough for Zacchaeus to climb the tree, even as risky as that was. He had to open his heart and learn the way of Jesus though his desire to make amends and offer restitution.
- Jesus makes clear that our call is to *go and make disciples*, to help others start or continue on this path towards Jesus, to seek Him, to learn of Him, to encounter Him, to LOVE HIM.
- To do that, we need to become disciples ourselves and that begins by searching for Jesus.
 - Let me give you a few simple tips to help you search for Jesus:
 1. Jesus wants to be found. He will not force Himself but all that you need to do is ask, to seek and to knock. Jesus promises to come.
 2. We need to go out on a limb to see Jesus.
 - There are so many things standing in our way: the busyness of the moment, my hurt and anger, even if it is justified, my selfishness, my smugness, my self-righteousness. (Remember the Pharisee of last week?)
 - We will find Jesus only if we are willing to move beyond those things, let them go and trust the One who calls us, even as we get further and further out on the limb, as the branch gets smaller and smaller, as the branch gets wobblier and wobblier.
 3. We need to stand up to the grumblers in our lives
 - We need to focus solely on finding Christ, not allowing ourselves to be distracted.

- Whether the grumblers are those around us, or more likely, if you're like me, inside us: the inertia, the lack of willingness to change, to shove it all off as another failed attempt rather than a new opportunity, even if I've failed before
4. We need to be practical about the search so that it can become a habit and the habit can grow in develop into a lifelong process. Pray. Read. Act.
- Pray. Many of you commented that you did not know how. At some of the Masses, I mentioned the 7/7 rule.
 - Take seven minutes for prayer for each of the next seven days. Set yourself apart from everything else. Even you can get away for only 7 minutes
 - Take the first minute to share with God what you're struggling with, what's in your mind and heart. Take the last minute to focus on what you need from God to get through the day.
 - But leave those five minutes in between for God to speak. You may be distracted, struggle to focus. It'll seem the longest 5 minutes of your life.
 - If you persevere, if you remain open, if you do not grow weary, you'll know better God's love and gain some confidence in God's will and desire to help.
 - Read the Bible. No better place to encounter Jesus than in the accounts God Himself has given to us.
 - Read the Gospels. Start with Mark – it's the shortest. Or start with Luke that we're reading right now at Mass. Or take the daily Mass readings.

- Read to encounter Jesus. Read just enough to do that. See what grabs you? What is God saying to you?
- Use the Word Among Us. It has great articles and great reflections. AND, get this it's **FREE** because of the generosity of the publisher.
- Act. Take time out to do something else in your search.
 - Try a bible study or faith sharing group. Encounter Christ outside of yourself and allow others to share your journey.
 - Come to Alpha which can guide you along the journey without judgement or commitment. We look forward to our next session.
 - Embark on a service project. So many of our young people being confirmed this week told me they encountered Jesus in those they served but also in themselves. Again, be open to change.
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- Pray. Read. Act. A disciple is one who searches for Jesus. Let's each start on the path to discipleship that we can, together, GO and MAKE DISCIPLES.