

**THE SON OF MAN CAME TO SEEK AND TO SAVE THE LOST” – Biblical  
Commentary**

**by Father Alberto Maggi OSM**

***Luke 19,1-10***

***He entered Jericho and was passing through. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”***

Just before this Sunday's reading, Luke tells of the story of the rich and important man, that approaches Jesus to ask Him what he must do to enter into the Kingdom of heaven. Jesus replies reminding him of the commandments that referred to the behavior towards others, and , considering that he had observed all this since childhood – life eternal was already guaranteed - Jesus invites him to occupy himself with this life, following Him, giving all that he possessed to the poor.

This man was a perfect observer of the law, as indeed corresponded to being an important person, but he did not accept Jesus' invitation. His interest centered itself on eternal life, the afterlife, while Jesus wanted to asked him to collaborate to the transformation of this life, contributing to the happiness of all mankind.

But this man, as all the rich, wanted nothing to change, to maintain his privileged and important position . It was in that occasion that Jesus said that riches were an almost insurmountable obstacle for entering the Kingdom of God; Jesus' famous phrase , “*For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.*”(Luke 18,25)

Well, in this Sunday's reading, it is Zacchaeus, also a rich man. Being a tax collector he could not boast that he had observed all the commandments since childhood. As he recognizes himself as a thief having robbed the people of their money.

Zacchaeus is not interested in the eternal life and Jesus does not ask him to give all to the poor and follow Him. It is Zacchaeus that decides.

He welcomes Jesus into his house, into his life and all changes.

For a rich man he finds himself poor, saying *"Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold."*, therefore he that was rich finds himself poor, but finally he is happy.

The evangelist writes that that he does this full of joy. The tax collector has broken away from the injustice that ruined his life. And Jesus proclaims: *"Today.."*, therefore it is not a promise for the future..." *salvation has come to this house,.."*

Jesus' statement is important because we always think that the salvation of which Jesus speaks is in the afterlife. Salvation is already here, a salvation that refers to this life, not to the afterlife, a salvation seen through the eyes of the rich, is a ruin.

The rich man, to Jesus' words, the evangelist writes, *"..when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich."* (Luke 18,23) He was interested in the afterlife, projecting his salvation into the future world; Zacchaeus, who had broken away from injustice, has experienced the salvation of this world, in his earthly life. The salvation for Jesus is not a guarantee for a place in the afterlife, the rich man had secured it with observing the commandments, but freeing oneself of all that prevents us in this life to be fully free to collaborate with Christ in realizing the Kingdom of God.