

Jesus the Troublemaker

Grace: Ask for the grace to better know and understand Jesus so that your love for Jesus will grow and your desire to imitate him will increase.

Introduction:

You have listened to Jesus speak to you as a friend. You know his voice and you have heard him preach. You know that Jesus can get excited as he goes about healing and preaching. You are now better able to reflect deeply upon and to understand not only Jesus' words but more importantly His motivation.



You may also have noticed that not everyone is as supportive of Jesus as you might hope. In fact, there seems to be a group that, like Herod, seems out to get Jesus. If you look back on your experiences with Jesus you can probably imagine at least one person being around who was somewhat resistant to Him.

Perhaps even you, at times, feel that Jesus goes too far in making his point. Jesus seems to get right in the middle of conflict. You may recognize that Jesus is heading towards trouble. How do you respond to Jesus getting in trouble with the authorities? Do you encourage Jesus? Do you ask him to be reasonable? Do you warn him about the trouble you see? More important now is how Jesus responds to what you tell him. As you have grown closer to understanding the heart of Jesus, it is easier to understand what motivates Jesus.

Listen to the murmurs of those who look at Jesus with contempt, anger, fear, and hatred. Do you hear them saying that Jesus is a troublemaker, a drunkard, evil, crazy, a cause of division, and one who eats with tax collectors, defends prostitutes, other known sinners without shame. Jesus fails to meet people's expectations of Him and instead remains committed to His Father's will.

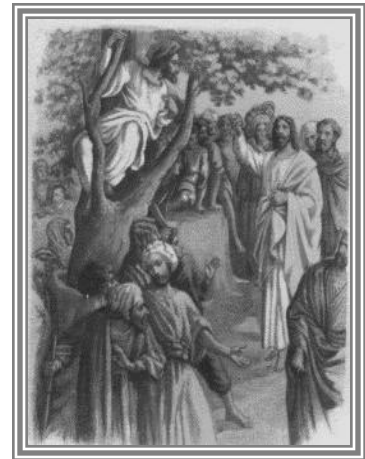
At times, you may even feel embarrassed being around Jesus. As you read the Scripture passage, allow yourself to be there with Jesus and to respond honestly. What concerns do you have? What happens when you bring those concerns to Jesus' attention? Discuss those concerns with Mary. What advice does she offer? Consult with God, the Eternal Creator, about how Jesus' words and actions fit into His plan to bring salvation.

John 8:3-11 -Woman in adultery - The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Luke 11: 37-54 Denunciation of the Pharisees and Scholars of the Law- When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table. But the Pharisee, noticing that Jesus did not first wash before the meal, was surprised. Then the Lord said to him, "Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? But give what is inside the dish to the poor, and everything will be clean for you. "Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone. "Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. "Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it." One of the experts in the law answered him, "Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also." Jesus replied, "And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them. "Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your forefathers who killed them. So you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. Because of this, God in his wisdom said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.' Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all. "Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering." When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, waiting to catch him in something he might say.

Luke 19: 1-10-- Zacchaeus the Tax Collector

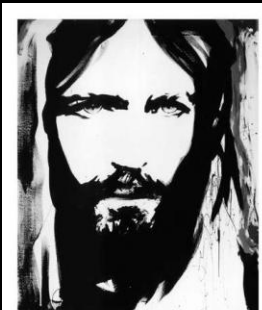
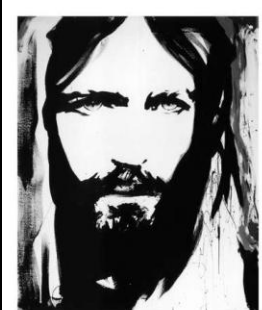
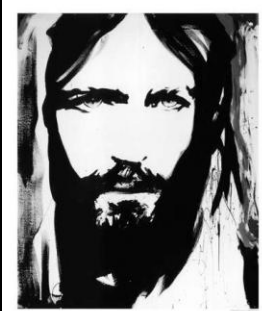
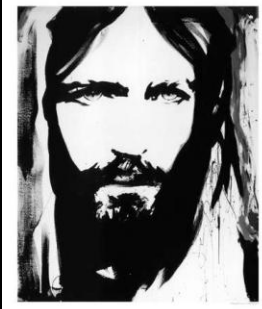
Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'" But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."



Luke 12: 49-53 Jesus a Cause of Division - "I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed! Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law."

John 4:5-42 Samaritan Woman - So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?" Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back." "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth." The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he." Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?" Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him. Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?" "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest?' I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor." Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."





In these or similar words ... As Jesus and I were walking through Jericho, we were talking about many things, including sin. He had different views of sin than I, and I was soon to find out what they were. As we were passing under a sycamore-fig, I see a man up there and I tell Jesus of his presence. Now the crowd that was around us heard me mention the man as well, and started whispering to each other, “It’s Zacchaeus, the tax collector.” And “He is a great sinner.” I warn Jesus of the whisperings, not wanting to cause any trouble. Jesus responds to me with a warm smile, and shouts up to the man, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” This caused the crowd to start asking questions, and I couldn’t help but join them. Why do you want to be in the company of this sinner? Why on earth do you want to stay at HIS house when there are so many other non-sinners you can choose from in this crowd? I was very confused and disagreed with Jesus. After hearing the whispers and questions, Zacchaeus spoke up and said, “Look Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times that amount!” I was enraged, who does he think he is? I shouted angrily, “Giving your money away doesn’t change what you are! It doesn’t change what you did!” But then Jesus, with his warm smile and words, repealed all of my doubts. He told the crowd and me that this man is the Son of Abraham as well as we are, he is one of us, he is a man and makes mistakes like any one of us. Jesus tells me that I must always give second chances, and that a person should not be judged by one fault in that person’s life. Many times in my life, I have witnessed teachers, and also my parents, displaying this same attitude, but also some that don’t. At home, when I was 11 and 12 years old, I was a major troublemaker. I always created trouble and argued with my mom. The thing is, I eventually stopped, and grew into a more mature person and stayed out of trouble. If my mom didn’t give me that chance to improve as a person in maturity, life would not be good for me right now. So I thank my mom for acting as an example for me like Jesus did that day under that tree. Don’t judge a person so fast, give him a chance to correct himself if he has done wrong.

Practicing What Your Preach ... To better understand and appreciate Jesus’ motivations for standing up for those who were defenseless, research a just cause and volunteer to help advocate for that cause. To start, visit the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops website at <http://www.usccb.org/> and click on the link for Social Justice Issues. Choose an issue that helps you to feel the attitude of Jesus in the Scripture passage you reflected on.