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**Title: Zacchaeus**

**Beliefs: Christianity**

**Themes: Forgiveness, saying sorry, honesty**

Look at this special box

This box looks like a present.

It has the present of a story inside it.

Stories are very precious.

They have been given to people, as presents, to explain some of the wonders of life.

This story has been given to us.

Let's look inside and see what story is there.

This story is important to people because it teaches them something. It's a Christian story. A Christian story belongs to the Christian religion.

### **Open the box**

Take out the dull fabric and ask an 'I wonder' question:

'I wonder what this make you think of?' (Give time for thinking.)

(Children respond.)

In our story it represents a journey along a dusty road.

Take out the characters and explain who they are:

Jesus – a Christian teacher who helped people and Zacchaeus a mean man who stole money from his villagers – place centrally on the fabric

Place wooden blocks along the fabric, to represent their being a village, at the edge of the scene.

We are now going to listen to a Christian story:

It was so noisy. Everyone was shouting. Children were running up and down the streets shouting. What was all the fuss about?

The villagers were excited. Apparently, someone called Jesus was going to come and visit Jericho today. Why would he come here? What was he coming here for?

Everyone was delighted. They wanted to see Jesus. They wanted Jesus to speak to them. They wanted Jesus to make sick people better. They wanted to listen to one of Jesus' stories.

People were not going to be very busy doing their work today. A lot of work would be left unfinished.

One of the villagers was a man called Zacchaeus. He wasn't very popular in Jericho. No one liked him. Each villager had to pay some money called tax and Zacchaeus had the job of collecting this tax from every person in the village.

Zacchaeus was not a very fair man. He lied to the villagers. Most days he told people that they needed to pay him more money than they were supposed to!

Soon Zacchaeus became a very rich man and the villagers became very poor. Zacchaeus tried to listen to what the villagers were shouting. It was hard to hear the words. They were all making noise at the same time. He could hear something about Jesus telling people that money was not important in God's eyes. First the poor would enter God's kingdom and then many of the rich people would be left outside God's kingdom. This did not make Zacchaeus happy. Surely God would let the rich people in first. This news made him determined to go and see Jesus.

Zacchaeus was quite a short man. Crowds of people had gathered in the village wanting to see Jesus. He could not see over the other villagers, even on tip-toe!

Children were standing on top of the village walls to make sure that they saw Jesus, but there was no room on the walls for him to stand.

Zacchaeus ran down the dusty road and found a tree. He climbed the tree and sat on one of the branches and waited.

Jesus walked through the crowded streets and then he stopped. The crowds were wondering what had made Jesus stopped.

Jesus looked above him and saw the tree where Zacchaeus was sitting. The crowds looked up into the tree. Jesus told Zacchaeus to come down from the tree. He wanted to go to Zacchaeus's house. Zacchaeus was very surprised but climbed down from the tree. No one important had ever visited his house before. Zacchaeus walked with Jesus to his house. Zacchaeus was very pleased that Jesus wanted to visit him.

In the streets outside people started moaning and getting angry. They could not believe that Jesus had wanted to visit a man who told lies. They were honest people and Zacchaeus was a bad man. He did not deserve this special visitor.

Zacchaeus began to think about himself and felt guilty at how he had treated the people that lived in Jericho.

He told Jesus that he was very sorry for telling lies and for taking too much money from people. He said that he would give the poor people half of his money. He wanted to pay back the people who he had made pay too much money. He would give them four times more than what he had taken.

Jesus turned to Zacchaeus and smiled. Jesus was pleased with Zacchaeus. He told Zacchaeus that this was how to behave and that it was important to be honest.

Jesus told the crowds that God loved each person; even when they are bad.

Ask 'I wonder'... questions. You might want to choose from the list below:

- I wonder what you get excited about.
- I wonder who you would like to walk into your street.
- I wonder who you would try to listen to.
- I wonder what makes you angry.
- I wonder who you need to say sorry to.
- I wonder which aspect of your life you can change.

**Creativity time:**

You are now going to create a picture, a model or a poem about this story:  
you can choose.

(Children choose to paint, draw, glue, write etc with the resources prepared round the room.)

After 15-20 minutes come together to share what has been made and place in the centre of the circle.

Or, have a specific open-ended task in mind, such as asking children to contribute a 'leaf' to the forgiveness tree. Children write their 'sorry' notes on leaf templates and hang them on the tree, that symbolises forgiveness for doing something wrong.