

"Live as examples of Christ Jesus"

Devotions for Deacons

Title: Inspire Faithful Stewardship

Scripture: Luke 19:1-10

Text: Luke 12:48b

“Only the Holy Spirit will provide us with the opportunities to inspire people to serve and to give.”

Zacchaeus wants to see Jesus. He wants it so much that he goes to great lengths to make sure it happens—even if he looks ridiculous up there in that tree. He does not realize, though, that it is *Jesus* who will see *him*. Jesus will see Zacchaeus for who he really is and what is in his heart.

The people are crowding Jesus on all sides, and everyone wants to be near Him. But Jesus takes little notice of the crowds. He is focused on Zacchaeus—on being with a man who is despised by those crowds. Jesus calls him by name, and, what is more, tells Zacchaeus that He will stay at his house. Though Zacchaeus welcomes Him gladly, the crowds begin to mutter about Jesus taking special notice of such a sinner. A chief tax collector, no less!

Zacchaeus responds. He is eager to prove that he has already been touched by this encounter with Jesus. He stands up, making his words as emphatic as he can. But he does not address the muttering crowds. To Jesus alone, he declares that he will give away half of his wealth and pay back four times the amount he has cheated anyone.

Zacchaeus is a changed man. Jesus makes that clear. It is also clear that Zacchaeus was changed because he was touched and inspired by Jesus—the One who came to seek *him* out, who even wanted to stay at the house of this hated man.

What would it be like to inspire people like that?

Think of how our church's ministry in its community could be impacted if the congregation entrusted half of its wealth to the deacons. Or even a quarter! Although Jesus reminds His disciples in Luke 12 that "from everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded," we know that reminders are often not enough. We remind the congregation about offerings; we remind each other about stewardship. However, if we *inspire* each other, much like Jesus inspired Zacchaeus, amazing things will happen!

How does Jesus inspire? First of all, He communicates truth. People recognize His authority and the weight of His words. Even more, His life is living proof of the power of those words! Though He is distinctly different from those around Him, He does not maintain His distance from them. He cares deeply about everyone from His most loyal friends to the "chief of sinners"!

As deacons, we are placed in a position to inspire. We inspire with the truth. We inspire with our lives and with our words. By our actions. And by our love. But praise God that we do not do any of this on our own!

So pray constantly for the Holy Spirit to guide us to the opportunities that He alone will provide. Then, like Jesus, we will challenge and inspire those around us in the ways we have been equipped. And trust that the Holy Spirit will do the rest: changing hearts to serve and to give.