

## Preparation For Lent Sunday Of Zacchaeus (Desire)

Long before the actual beginning of lent, the church invites us to enter into a period of pre-lent preparation. It is a feature of the Orthodox liturgical tradition that every major feast: Easter, Christmas, etc... is prepared in advance. Why? Because the deep psychological insight of the church into human nature.

The church knows that we cannot change rapidly from the life of the world to a spiritual world. Thus, before the beginning of lent, the church calls our attention to its seriousness and to mediate on its significance. Before we can **practice** lent we are given its **meaning**. This preparation includes five Sundays preceding lent, each one dedicated to some fundamental aspect of repentance.

The first Sunday is called Zacchaeus and the Gospel reading is from ST. Luke 19: 1-10. It is the story of a short man who desired so much to see Jesus. One day when Jesus was passing by, big crowd surrounding Him, he climbed up a tree. Jesus saw him, He responded to his **desire** by going to his house. The theme of the first announcement is "**Desire**". Man follows his desire. We can even say that "man is desire". Jesus said:" Where your treasure is, there shall your heart be".

Being short, Zacchaeus overcomes and transcends himself. The only question therefore is whether we desire the right thing, whether the power of desire in us is aimed at the right goal.

Zacchaeus desired the "Right Thing". He wanted to see Jesus.

He is the first symbol of repentance, for repentance begins as the rediscovery of the deep nature of all desire. Zacchaeus is "short, sinful and limited", yet his desire overcomes all this. It "forces" Christ attention, it brings Christ to his home. Ours is to desire that which is deepest and trust in ourselves, to acknowledge the hunger and thirst for the absolute which is in us. And if we desire deeply and strongly enough, Christ will respond.

+Paul

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