Lesson 30 Jan 2022: God's chosen messenger would care about the poor (Luke 19: 1-10)

While it is true that Jesus cared that poor people were treated properly, when he talks about the poor, he also cared about those who were 'poor' in trusting God.

The story of the rich man Zacchaeus shows what this means.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector. His job was to tax people and to hand the taxes over to the Roamns. Tax collectors were not paid a salary but were allowed to add on 'fees' to what they charged to make up their salary. This meant that they often overcharged so they could get rich. We don't know that Zacchaeus cheated like this, but it is likely as the people didn't like him at all.

For some reason, however, Zacchaeus was dead-keen to see Jesus. So when he heard Jesus was coming to town, he joined the crowd waiting to see him. But there was a problem: he was short and couldn't see over the crowd. Now, if he had been popular, they might have allowed him to wriggle to the front, but it seems they blocked him off and wouldn't let him through.

In desperation, he decided to forget about his dignity and climb a tree. Think of the amusement it must have created when he hitched up his clothes and climbed up the sycamore tree next to the road. He didn't care! He wanted to see this man!

Imagine his surprise when Jesus stopped near the tree and – over the noise of the crowd – Zacchaeus heard Jesus say his name. "Zacchaeus, come down for I want to stay at your house today." Zacchaeus was thrilled. He probably slid down the tree and grazed himself, he was so excited.

But the others who were on the road grumbled. It seemed to them that Jesus wasn't bothering about the poor because he was making friends with someone who had cheated the poor. But Jesus was helping both Zacchaeus who was poor in God's ways and also the poor without money on earth.

We don't know what Jesus said to Zacchaeus, but Zacchaeus realized that he had trusted his money more than God and decided to become a Jesus-follower. And to show that he was a changed man, he announced that he would give away half of everything he owned to the poor – carpets, furniture, pots and pans. And he showed that he was going to trust God because he agreed that he would refund anyone he had ever cheated, paying them four times what he had taken dishonestly.

In the days that followed, Zacchaeus became 'poorer' in things, but richer in God's friendship. And the poor were cared for.

And we should aim to become rich in God's blessing (to get treasure in heaven) Jesus is teaching that none of the things we can gather on earth make us 'rich' in God's ways.