



Jesus and Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10

It was a warm, sunny afternoon as Prince Lovesalot rode into the Garden on the back of his snow-white unicorn. "Whoa, whoa, Violet! He said as he led her to a patch of tasty clover. "This looks like a lovely place to rest." He had named her Violet because of her deep purple eyes that matched the violet highlights in her mane. "Oh Violet, does it not fill your heart with joy to be in His glorious kingdom? I so enjoy roaming the countryside, visiting the servants of the King and spreading the love to all whom I encounter! Ah, the only thing that could make this day better is if I had the Word of God in my hands. Wait just a little minute; I *can* have the Word of God! After all it is for everyone. Let me get it!" He reached into the stained glass window where the Bible always rested and was surprised to find it empty.

"Pardon moi, Mister Fancy Pants," a strange voice called from overhead. Prince Lovesalot looked up to see a small, strange man leaning over the parapet, holding the Bible. "Were you looking for this?"

"Is that the Word of God?" Prince Lovesalot asked.

"It looks like a book to me. But it does have a lot of words," the man spoke with a thick French accent. "I will toss it to you. Catch!"

"Thank you, kind sir," the prince replied. "Who are you and how did you find the Bible?"

"Who me? I am a...um, local businessman. I like to come here to this garden and listen to the stories in that book. So, I thought I would try reading it myself. But, it is so full of fancy English words. I can't understand a word."

Prince Lovesalot smiled and said, "It's really very simple to understand. Come down here and I will explain it."

"No, I think I'm safer up here," the Frenchman replied.

"Suit yourself," Prince Lovesalot said. "Do you know what? You remind me of Zacchaeus. He also liked high places."

The stranger wrinkled his nose. "Who is this Zucchini?" he asked.

"Zacchaeus! He's a little man from Bible Times," Prince Lovesalot explained as he stood up and took the Bible out of his saddlebag. He turned in the Bible to Luke 19: "Zacchaeus was a wealthy tax collector, but people hated him because he unfairly took other people's money."

"I know how he feels!" the strange man exclaimed. "Some people hate me just because I steal their...I mean, I earn a lot of money."

"They called him a sinner!" said Prince Lovesalot.

"I have been called that, too! But doesn't that Bible book say that everyone is a sinner?"

"It does, but they didn't all know that back then," said the prince. "Anyway, Zacchaeus heard Jesus was coming to Jericho, so he climbed a tree to get a look at Him."

"Wow, talk about going out on a limb! Why did he climb a tree?"

"Because he was very short," the prince replied, "He couldn't see above the crowd."

"I can also relate to that," said the tiny stranger. "I often feel shorter than people around me."

Prince Lovesalot grinned. "I told you, you have a lot in common!"

"So, what did Jesus say to him?"

"Come down!" Prince Lovesalot replied.

"Okay, I'm coming," the stranger said as he climbed down from the upper tower to stand near the prince. "Now, what did Jesus say?"

"Come down!" the Prince repeated.

"I did come down," said the stranger.

"No, that's what Jesus said! He said, 'Zacchaeus, come down! I'm going to your house today.'"

"How did Jesus know his name?"

"He's the Lord. He knows everything about everyone. And He cares about everyone," Prince Lovesalot explained.

"But why would Jesus care about one little old tax collector?"

"Because Jesus loves everyone - the small and the tall," answered the Prince.

"So, did Jesus go to his house?"

"Of course He did!" Prince Lovesalot replied.

The little man thought for a moment. "But wasn't Jesus worried that people would see Him hanging around with a sinner?"

"Jesus didn't mind. He loves sinners. He came to save them from their sins. That was the whole reason He came to earth." Prince Lovesalot found his place in the Bible and read, "Jesus said, 'For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.'"

"What was lost? What did He lose?" the stranger asked.

"The people were lost because they didn't know where or how to find life forever with God," the prince explained.

"I see, but this Jesus came to seek and to save those lost people?"

"Yes, He came to bring them back to God," said the prince. In fact, Zacchaeus was so changed after being with Jesus; he gave half his possessions to the poor and paid back anyone he had cheated four times more than the amount he had taken!"

"Sacre bleu! That's a lot of money? I don't think anything could make me want to give away that kind of money."

"You would be surprised how much the Word of God can change people's hearts."

"Are you telling me that all people have to do is hear the words in that book and they can be changed, just like Zacchaeus was?!" asked the small man.

"God's Word has the power to change even the biggest sinner."

"Oh, I don't know about that. Some of us are awfully big sinners. But thank you for sharing that story with me, Mister...?"

"The name is Prince Lovesalot."

"Thank you. I must be on my way. Au revoir, Prince Lovesalot," he said as he walked towards the woods.

"Au revoir, Robespierre," mumbled the prince under his breath. "Who knows, Violet," he said to his unicorn. "If God could reach a sinner like Zacchaeus, maybe someday Robespierre can learn to serve the King."