



DIFFICULT PEOPLE

August 2018

When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."

Luke 19:5

Do you have a difficult person in your life? Or—could you yourself be regarded as a difficult person?

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I myself live with mental health issues that are hard for some to accept. Many find me difficult to be around. But I always looked at myself as a gentle soul, and so it hurts to think of myself otherwise. I cringe to think that others see me as a difficult person. One to be avoided.

How it makes me despise myself at times! And yes—to be honest—there are times when I even wonder whether I should live. Because you see, I want to be thought well of. I want to be loved. Through most of my life I had thought myself worthy of these.

Yes. It hurts to be a difficult person.

I'm reminded of my mother, a person who might have been thought of as a difficult, unpleasant person. Even those close to her did not visit much. My heart goes out to her. She probably wasn't even aware of how others saw her. I do know that she needed love—probably more than the average person.

When I took her out to shop and have lunch, her response to me was what must have been one of happy relief. I was taking her from the loneliness of her room. She became kind and pleasant. Glad to receive my love.

Do you think you might be a difficult person? If so, what do you crave most from the people around you?

If you're anything like me you'd probably like to be forgiven for how you come across. You long to be accepted the way you are. You want people to know that you're not much different from others if they were to look inside you. You'd want others to be aware that you have needs like everyone does: needs to be loved and respected, needs to have friends with whom to spend time.

In Jesus' time, Zacchaeus, a tax collector who cheated people out of their money, must have been an unpleasant person. I doubt that he had many friends. But Jesus invited himself to his home. What a wonder that must have been for a man who probably did not experience much love. Hear his eager response: *"Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."* (Luke 19:8) Zacchaeus had become a different person—a more pleasant person. Finally accepted.

Look at what Jesus' love did to Zacchaeus! Can we help the difficult people around us feel cared for in this way? Can we carry God's love with us, ready to share with those who need it—those who might be different? We might very well be surprised at the results.

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