

Everybody knows Curious George, an insatiably curious monkey. And I guess everybody who knows Curious George loves Curious George.

Because, let's be honest, we know that the stories we read about Curious George are really stories about us because we are a curious kind of creature, too.

Some would say that's because deep down in our DNA, we humans as primates have Curious George as a real-life ancestor.

Now, this is not a sermon about science and evolution, it's a sermon about spiritual evolution.

It's a sermon about monkey-like Curious George meeting a human Curious Zacchaeus.

Whether you agree or not about the development of our species, there has been a lot of research on primates. One of the theories is that all primates once lived in trees.

In the trees, primates were safe from the lions and tigers and bears. In the trees, there was an abundant supply of food that didn't have to be shared with the lions and tigers and bears and other creatures that roamed the jungle floor.

Then, the scientists say that something happened. The trees of the jungle began to disappear. The food supply became scarce. It was either stay in the trees and die or come down and live.

Our scripture lesson is a story about Jesus dealing with a man named Zacchaeus who had climbed back up in a tree.

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, just a few days to the cross, and he passes through Jericho. Jericho was not a good place for a rest-stop.

Let's put it this way, when you walked into the Jericho jungle, you kept both eyes open, one hand on your purse and the other on your sword.

So why did Jesus stop? He tells us why, he “came to seek out and save the lost.” And it didn't take our Lord long to find who he was looking for.

As he was walking along he looked up in the trees and saw a “wee little man” named Zacchaeus.

Even though the name ‘Zacchaeus’ in its root form means “pure”, Zacchaeus was considered by his brothers and sisters of the faith to be anything but pure.

Zacchaeus was one of the most despised of all the Jews in Jericho. He worked for Rome, the enemy, as a tax collector. This would be like working as an IRS agent and Taliban agent all at the same time.

There's no doubt that Zacchaeus lived as if he had no conscience, but through this story we see something good in this man: Zacchaeus' gift was his curiosity.

You see, curiosity is not always a bad thing. It doesn't always kill the cat! The Bible makes clear that there's a little bit of Curious George in all of us.

Because of curiosity about the promise from God, Abraham picked up his family and moved. Curiosity about a burning bush that never burned up caused Moses to turn aside and see how that could be!

Curiosity met Peter, James, and John by a lake and astounded them with the possibility of becoming fishers of people.

Were it not for human curiosity, there would be no airplanes taking you wherever you wanted to go; no cell phones connecting you to people all over the world. Were it not for curiosity, there would be no penicillin or heart transplants.

Were it not for curiosity, the people behind our Declaration of Independence would never have wondered what a society might be like if it were based upon justice for all people as created equal instead of tyranny by a few royal and rich.

Curiosity can be a good thing.

And this is where Curious Zacchaeus has it over us Curious Georges who are curious about the wrong thing.

Zacchaeus was curious about Jesus.

How much better would our faith be if we were as curious about how we can be personally involved in mission as we are about how our favorite sports team is doing...

If we were as curious about what God has to say in the Bible as we are about what some celebrity tweets or blogs about...

If we were as curious about the mystery of prayer as we are about the ups and downs of the stock market?

What would it be like in the lives of people around us if we were as curious about children getting a good education as we are about who dances with the stars...

If we were as curious about the homeless and hungry in our community as we are about whether there's enough doughnuts in the atrium...

If we were as curious about inviting people to worship with us as we are about who might be sitting in our pew?

How much better would our world be if we were as curious about reconciliation in the name of Jesus Christ as we are about retaliation in the name of pride and power...

If we were as curious about taking responsibility for the future of our world as we are about placing blame for the past?

Zacchaeus' curiosity about Jesus got him more than he ever bargained for, more than he ever expected.

Because when he went up into that tree looking for Jesus, what he found was that Jesus was on the ground looking for him.

What he heard from our Lord and Savior were two verses of the good news: *"Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today."*

The good news, first verse: Jesus called Zacchaeus by name.

Nowhere does the story tell us that Jesus had been introduced to Zacchaeus. But then, he didn't need an introduction.

For Scripture tells us that way back before there was even a tree to climb in was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and all things were created through him.

"Zacchaeus, I've known your name for a long time," says Jesus. And to you and me, "I know your name."

The good news is that we are known by God, all of us, all about us, by name, and in spite of us, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

And the good news, second verse: "I know where you are, and I know where you live. Zacchaeus, you don't live in that tree. That's just a temporary location. I'm not going to deal with you in that kind of place. Take me to your home."

Jesus calls us first and foremost to come down.

The trees in life that we've climbed up into are not where we find life. We might think it's home, but it's not home.

You may cheat to stay ahead, but cheating is not your home. You may rip and slice others with

what you say so that you feel better about yourself, but that kind of talk is not your home.

You can pile up a fortune and eat, drink, and be merry, but if it's at the expense of family and friends, you are simply cutting off the branch you're sitting on.

Jesus says to us, "I know where you are, what you do, and what you're all about, and I want you out of that tree and to be with you in your home."

Jesus brought Zacchaeus down to the real world where Jesus meets us in our home.

And Zacchaeus  
grew from curious to converted,  
grew from wanting to know who Jesus was to  
know that Jesus knew him,  
grew from seeking more for his treasure to  
giving his treasure to others,  
grew from being lost to being found.

Are you curious about Jesus? He is always looking for you.

He calls your name to come down and be at home in the reality of his love.

I'm curious to know just how curious you are about Jesus!

TO GOD BE THE GLORY.