

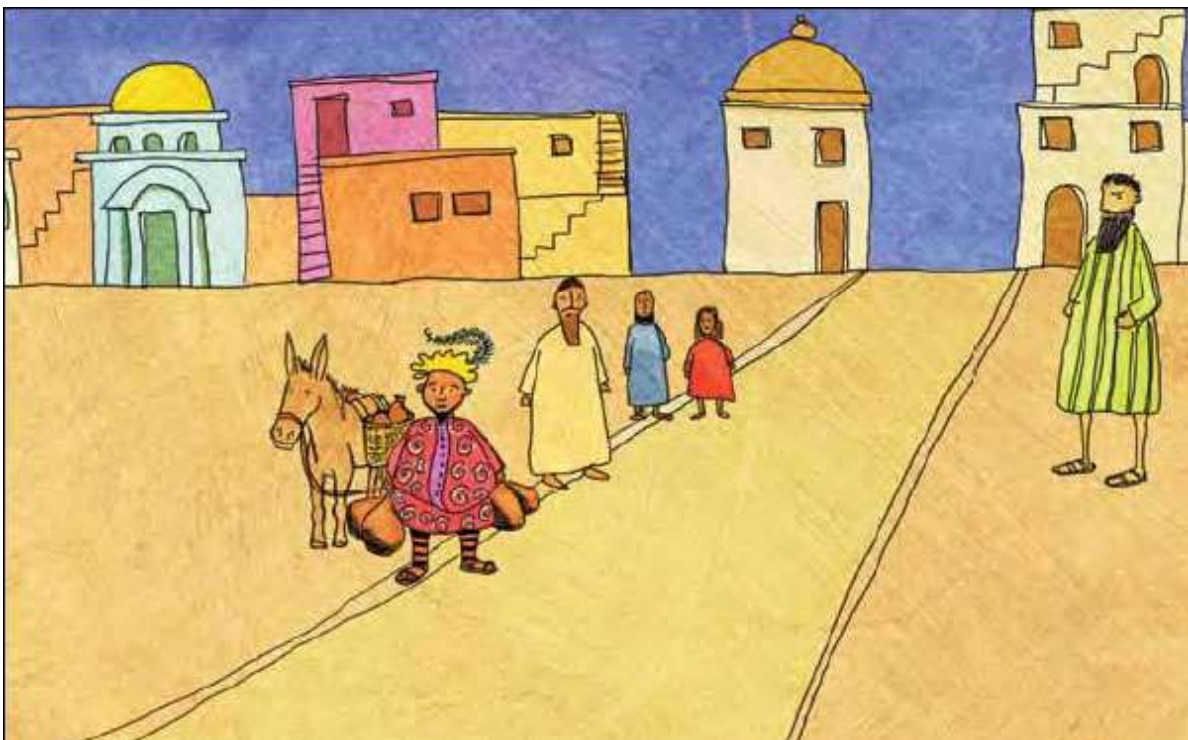
The man who didn't have any friends (none)

The story of Zacchaeus, from Luke 19

THERE WAS ONCE A MAN who didn't have any friends (none). Do you have any friends? Well, of course you do. But not Zacchaeus. Poor Zacchaeus didn't have any.

You're probably wondering why. Was it because he was so short? (That's not a reason not to like someone.) Was it because he had a name that was hard to say? (Well, neither is that.) Even though he was short and he did have a funny name, that wasn't it. No, people didn't like Zacchaeus because he stole their money.

Zacchaeus collected taxes (taxes were what people had to pay the king), but Zacchaeus took more than he was supposed to and kept the extra money for himself and made himself rich. Everyone knew what he was up to and it made them cross and grumpy. They didn't like Zacchaeus one bit.



So they made sure he knew it by doing things like avoiding him. And walking on the opposite side of the street. And pretending not to see him. And whispering things like, “There’s that nobody who thinks he’s a somebody!” loud enough so he could hear.

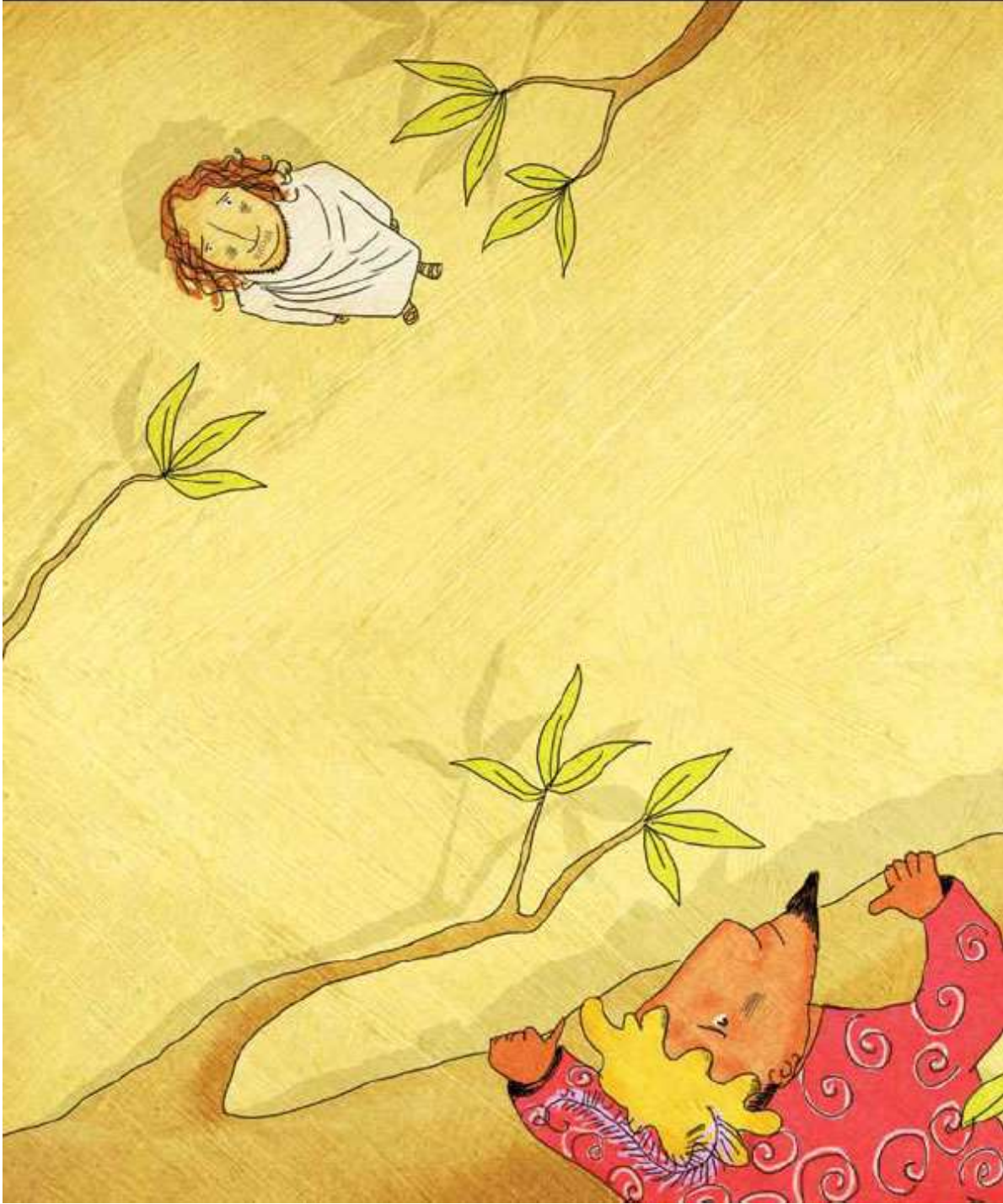
Anyway, one day, a huge crowd gathered by the road. Jesus was coming to their town and everyone wanted to see him.

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, too. But everyone was too tall. He tried jumping up and down, but that didn’t work. He couldn’t see a thing.



Luckily, Zacchaeus had a good idea. “I’ll climb that sycamore tree!” he said. So he did. (He was surprisingly good at climbing trees for a man who was so unusually short that he had to take a flying leap just to get into his chair in the morning.)





From the tree, Zacchaeus had the perfect view—all the way down the road.

Another minute and suddenly Jesus was at the tree. He stopped and looked up. Zacchaeus saw Jesus. And Jesus saw Zacchaeus.

“Zacchaeus,” Jesus said. “I’d like to come over to your house.”

Zacchaeus almost fell out of the tree! Come over to his house? No one ever wanted to come anywhere near his house, let alone inside it.



The people saw this and, needless to say, it made them even crosser and grumpier than usual. They mumbled and murmured and muttered, “Why is Jesus being kind to that big sinner? Doesn’t Jesus know about him?”

Zacchaeus scrambled down and took Jesus to his house. He was in a big hurry because he didn’t want Jesus to change his mind. Perhaps Jesus hadn’t heard about him. Perhaps Jesus didn’t know about how he had been stealing. And how no one liked him. And how he didn’t have any friends.

But Jesus knew—he knew all about Zacchaeus and the stealing and everything—and he still loved him.

Zacchaeus was ashamed. “Lord,” he said, turning pale, “what I’ve done is wrong. But now I want to do the right thing. I will give the money back to everyone—four times what I stole!” And that’s just what he did.

Jesus smiled. “My friend!” he said. “Today God has rescued you!”

Jesus loved Zacchaeus when nobody else did. He was Zacchaeus’ friend, even when no one else was. Because Jesus was showing people what God’s love was like—his wonderful, Never Stopping, Never Giving up, Unbreaking, Always and Forever Love.



