

Zak – A Story for Children and All

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Zak had climbed a tree.

“I would have pooped on him,” said Galah.

Zak didn’t want to be with the crowd milling about below. You can be in a crowd and feel like you’re all alone. That’s what Zak felt and he knew people didn’t like him.

“He’d been mean and selfish and ripped people off,” squawked Galah.

And he had. Some of them hated him, but he didn’t want to stay home because he knew Jesus was coming to Jericho, his town, so he did the next best thing: climbed a tree to get away from them and from there he could still see Jesus and hopefully not be seen by him – or anyone else.

“And you need to say he was very short,” added Galah.

Yes, he was very short. From up there he would have seen Jesus coming. He didn’t want to be told off again, so he made sure he was covered and peeped through the leaves.

“He didn’t do a very good job. We know how to hide in branches. He didn’t. He got seen,” muttered Galah.

Yes, it happened. Jesus looked up and saw him. “Zak, come on down. I want to come to your place,” he said.

Zak froze – for a moment – and then almost fell out of the tree. In an instant, there he was face to face with Jesus. And Jesus wasn’t frowning. He wasn’t growling. He was looking intently at Zak, like he cared about him, knew about him, but wasn’t prepared to hate him.

“Birds look intently,” chirped Galah. “We’ve got good eyes. We know things!”

Zak took a big deep breath and it’s like his brain did a reboot. “Look, he said, if I’ve swindled people, I’ll pay them back four times as much and ...,” he went on, “half my money I’ll give away to help poor people.”

“This keeps happening when Jesus is around,” commented Galah. “He changes people.”

Jesus smiled, as though he knew exactly what Galah was thinking, and said: “Yes, that’s why I’m doing what I’m doing.”



Home the two went to Zak's place. He didn't know if Jesus was hungry, but he had some flat bread and a bit of wine. That was enough. As they shared the bread and wine together it was like they were celebrating a new contract between Zak and God.

"That's communion. That's what they do at mass!" shouted Galah in a Galah kind of way.

Soon Jesus went on his way and Zak didn't see him again until the day he went up to Jerusalem for the festival. He was in the big crowd pushing up towards the gates when he heard someone say: Jesus is coming. No trees to climb. In fact, people started breaking off branches to celebrate his arrival. Very hard to see, but he was riding a donkey so you could see his head bobbing up and down. That was about all.

"I bet he saw the soldiers," chirped Galah. "They wouldn't let him climb any trees anyway. It's a wonder they didn't stop him. People from up north in Galilee have a bad reputation for being troublemakers. Lots of them get killed when they come down here or kill others."

Perhaps that's why Zak was quiet. It's true about Galileans. These days they'd probably ban them. The Romans didn't want trouble from anyone. They had enough of their own. They didn't want terrorists and they also didn't want people who said poor people mattered. Only the rich and powerful people mattered to them.

"Zak couldn't see," added Galah, "but that's where us birds have an advantage. We can fly. I saw a lot. Let me tell you what I saw."

"Not too much, Galah," I said because Galah can go on and on.

"The worst thing I saw was what they did to Jesus. They treated him like a terrorist and killed him along with two who really were terrorists. It was terrible." Galah was swallowing back Galah tears. "He talked about being kind, helping people, not hating people, even bad people like Zak and all they did was kill him and not listen and try to kill off his ideas and hopes."

No problems for Zak seeing Jesus this time – up there on the hill hanging on a cross.

Someone must have told Zak what happened next. Otherwise we wouldn't know the story.

"I know the story," insisted Galah. "Bird knowledge! People felt terrible and had gone back to Galilee when Peter, one of Jesus' followers, called them together for an urgent meeting and said: 'He's alive! He's with God!' You don't really think that God would just give up, do you," exclaimed Galah.

"Galah," I said, "God never gives up. Sometimes we have disappointments. Sometimes we are hurt and suffer pain. And one day we will all die, but there is always hope. There is always Easter. Love never ends even if we can't see, even after climbing trees."

Galah nodded, as galahs can. "As I fly around I see it all. I see rich. I see poor. I see hate. I see love. I see people being mean. I see people being generous. Sometimes my feathers get quite ruffled. I wish

you could all fly and see this, but the most you humans do is climb trees. Perhaps just try imagining how it might all change.”

Imagine? Yes. Do something? I wonder what Zak did.