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The Invitation Lk 19:1-10



The Prophet Jeremiah complains to God: "You have seduced me, Lord, and I have let myself be seduced; you have overpowered me; you were the stronger" (Jer 20:7). Being 'seduced' could imply two aspects: to be attracted to something, and then being deceived. In fact, other translations of the same text from Jeremiah (20:7) say, "O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived" (RSV). We will have time to look at the meaning of 'deception', but let's focus on attraction.

That which is beautiful attracts us. Yes, God is beautiful. He attracts us. He draws us to Himself. The Hebrew Scripture is full of very concrete images of God who attracts human beings. A typical example is the call of Moses: "The angel of Yahweh appeared to him in a flame blazing from the middle of a bush. Moses looked; there was the bush blazing, but the bush was not being burnt up. Moses said, 'I must go across and see this strange sight, and why the bush is not being burnt up.' When Yahweh saw him going across to look, God called to him from the middle of the bush. 'Moses, Moses!' he said" (Ex 3:2-4).

Couldn't be possible that God attracts us – he invites us - but we are too busy with our own things and do not heed his call. In the Gospel of Luke (14:16-24) Jesus tells us a parable of the man who arranged a big banquet and invited many friends. But they all gave excuses. So the feast was thrown open to the commoners. St Augustine expresses this sentiment in his *Confessions* when he says, "Late have I loved Thee, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new. Late have I loved Thee" (Chapter 10).

In the Book of Revelations (3:20) the Lord says, "Look, I am standing at the door, knocking. If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share a meal at that person's side."

But when we do take one step towards God; when we do open the door to Him, He comes all the way. Zacchaeus has taken a step towards God/Jesus by climbing the tree. The God of surprises goes to Zacchaeus who is now on the tree: "Zacchaeus, come down. Hurry, because I am to stay at your house today" (Lk 19:5). Jesus invites himself. To the two disciples of John the Baptist (Jn 1:39) Jesus says, "Come and see." To the woman who comes to the well to draw water (Jn 4:7), it is Jesus – seated alone – who makes the 'seductive' proposition: "Give me something to drink."

Yes, wanting to pray is an act of free will on our part to respond to the inner thirst. But what happens during prayer is His grace. We realise that he is the one, after all, who has been searching for me. Again St Augustine continues:

Lo, you were within,
but I outside, seeking there for you,
and upon the shapely things you have made
I rushed headlong – I, misshapen.
You were with me, but I was not with you.