Read scripture: Luke 19:1-10.

When you hear the word stature, do you hear this talking about a person's height or do you think of a person’s reputation or character or popularity or perhaps even the size of his or her heart?

Like many of you probably, when I hear that Zaccheus is small of stature, I think of his height. We even have a song about that . . . “Zaccheus was a wee little man, and a wee little man was he. Climbed up in the sycamore tree for the Lord he wanted to see,” and he couldn’t see Jesus because he was too short, which is why he climbed the tree.

What if “small in stature,” as the NKJV, the NLT, and NIV translate the word really means that Zaccheus was a “small person”? You know what that means, right? Someone who has a small heart or perhaps is petty or self-absorbed or unforgiving or seeks revenge or narrow minded or prejudiced or is not interested in new and different ideas.

Interestingly enough, the Greek word for “stature” about Zaccheus is the same Greek word used about Jesus in Luke 2:52: “And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.” I don’t know about you, but I never thought this meant that Jesus was short, even though Jesus was short because he was quite young in Luke 2:52. Instead, we think of Jesus’ growth as a human being . . . of his maturing . . . of his becoming a better God-follower himself.

What if Zaccheus couldn’t see Jesus because he was a “small person,” not literally but figuratively?

These oh so familiar stories can take us places we don’t anticipate. Last week, our American Baptist Region Executive Minister Joan Friesen shared another great book, Holy Currencies.

Again, probably like you, when I hear the word “currency,” I think of money, cold hard cash. Well, if you look at the front of your bulletin or the power-point screen, you will see that Holy Currency is about much more than money.

The six aspects of Holy Currency are as follows: Currency of Gracious Leadership, Currency of Relationship, Currency of Truth, Currency of Wellness, Currency of Money, Currency of Time and Place.

Each of the currencies is a ministry, and the idea is that these six currencies or ministries or acts of love interact and flow through one another. It is this interaction and relatedness of ministry currencies that produces the Cycle of Blessings, which then creates sustainable and missional ministry for the church.

So what do all these currencies mean, and how do these relate to the story of Zaccheus?

Eric Law is the author of *Holy* *Currencies*, and I am quoting him here.

**The Currency of Time and Place:** Paid and volunteer time that leaders and members offer to the church or to ministry. Properties from which a church and ministry operates, and other properties owned or which can be accessed by the church and ministry.

So all of you and our facilities are currencies of time and place. The cemetery property gets a bit trickier because although the church legally owns the cemetery, generally speaking, the church and ministry either cannot or does not have access to the cemetery.

Zacchaeus? He had a house, and Jesus knew that and invited himself over for supper. Additionally, by paying attention to where he was, Jesus noticed Zacchaeus and Jesus’ noticing Zaccaeus opens up time and place for Zacchaeus to be transformed, which is exactly what happens

**The Currency of Gracious Leadership:** The ability to use skills, tools, models, and processes to create gracious environments within which mutually respectful “relationships” and the discernment of the “truth” across differences can be built internally among existing members, and externally, with non-members. Differences can be racial/ethnic, age, gender, sexual orientation, class, political affiliation, or simply those existing between church members and other folks in the neighborhood.

Think biblical hospitality . . . anticipate a blessing from the other and anticipate blessing the other because we are gracious enough to both give to and receive from others despite any differences we may have.

Jesus did this, had this with Zacchaeus. Recall that Zacchaeus is a dreaded tax collector, scoundrel, and cheat. Jesus and Zacchaeus had a few differences wouldn’t you say? Nevertheless, Jesus had the Currency of Gracious Leadership and wasn’t afraid to use it.

**Currency of Relationships:** The internal and external networks of mutually respectful connections that leaders and members of a church and ministry have. Internal connections include constructive relationships among members and leaders, area churches or ministries of the same affiliation, area denominational organizations, and national and international denominational structures. External connections include constructive relationships with non-members, different racial, cultural and ethnic groups in the neighborhood, people with resources and people in need in the community, civic community leaders, ecumenical and inter-faith partners, community and civic organizations, and local businesses.

Again . . . Jesus had the Currency of Relationships . . . Zacchaeus, again, was an outcast and a non-member of the group that was following Jesus. Nevertheless, Jesus could connect with Zacchaeus.

 Are you starting to get the idea of how this works?

 **Currency of Truth:** The ability to articulate individually and corporately the global and wholistic truth, bother internally—the experiences of different individuals and groups with the church or ministry—and externally—the experiences of different individuals and groups in the community, the neighborhood, the city or town, the nation, and the earth.

Who had the currency of truth in this relationship between Jesus and Zacchaeus? Both, right? Jesus’ truth is that he “must stay at Zacchaeus’ house today,” even though Zacchaeus was understood to be a sinner by those who saw this exchange. Zacchaeus’ truth is that he has come clean about he has done his job as a tax collector and what he plans to do with his money.

And this leads us to the **Currency of Money,** which is defined by the author as “Something generally accepted as a medium of exchange, a measure of value, or as a means of payment.” Zacchaeus has the Currency of Money, and his viewpoint of it and how to use it.

Certainly this story of Jesus and Zacchaeus includes the **Currency of Wellness** on Jesus’ part, which is the sixth and final Currency. The **Currency of Wellness** is the state of being healthy physically, socially, economically, ecologically, and spiritually within a church or ministry, the neighborhood, the town and city, nation, or the earth, especially as the result of deliberate effort. Sustainable wellness requires regenerative and circulatory flow of material, human, financial, and natural resources. Jesus is well. Jesus deliberately engages with Zacchaeus. Jesus is well.

A few more points from author Law: “it is the flowing of these currencies that gives them value.” . . . “the flowing of the currencies needs to include all six currencies in order for the ministry to be sustainable and missional.”

And by the way, Law’s use of the word “missional” means the following shifts for the church: “from an internal to an external focus, from program development to people development, and from church-based to kingdom-based leadership,” all of which reminds me of our Engaging Young Adults Grant.

So Law is saying that a church can have all the money in the world, but money alone does not create sustainable missional ministries. You can have the most beautiful facility, but that alone does not produce sustainable churches or ministry. And even if you were to add the Currency of Money, there still would be no sustainable ministry. All six have to be engaged to get to the Cycle of Blessings.

Law adds that “the flowing of these currencies must recirculate back to replenish what was spent, so that ministry can be regenerative.” Law further contends that if all the currencies are used on Sunday’s only, there is no value during the rest of the week, and this is also not sustainable.

Together Jesus and Zacchaeus embody all six currencies, and Law calls that the Cycle of Blessings.

Law again: “The Cycle of Blessings is the dynamic exchanges of these six currencies, flowing inward to renew and strengthen internal relationships and increase gracious leadership capacity, and flowing outward to connect, discern the truth, and foster wellness in the wider community. Learning how to develop, access, and ‘flow’ these currencies are essential skills that members of the church must have . . . for the church to be sustainable and missional.”

I know this is a lot of new information. We could spend hours discussing all these ideas, brainstorm, and work in small and large groups with New Bethel’s current ministries in mind.

We don’t have time for a longer and larger exploration, but what if Law is right?

Can you think of other biblical stories that include the six currencies? Have you got one or two? I wondered about Jesus turning water into wine. I wondered about Jesus and the woman at the well.

How about our ministries here at New Bethel? Do they use all six currencies? How about our CHAT dinners? How about the Clothesline Ministry? How about . . . you fill in the blank.

If Law’s model of sustainable and missional church ministry and how the currencies work together to bring about a Cycle of Blessings just as they did for Zacchaeus and Jesus, too, I suspect—if Law’s model is right, then it just might do us some good to consider how our own ministries relate to the six currencies.

And if we discover that some of our ministries don’t use all six currencies, we might want to consider what currency we need to add to include all six or reconsider the vitality of a particular ministry to New Bethel being sustainable and missional.

That’s what I’m thinking. What are you thinking?

May all that we think and say and do lead to a cycle of blessings.

“I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.” Deut. 30:19

