

My Neighbor, Zacchaeus

Characters:

Narrator
Zacchaeus
Jesus

Crowd: *This play employs audience interaction, with the audience as the townspeople. You can think of the “Crowd” characters as that guy holding up signs saying things like “Applause” – they’re there to draw the audience into the action and cue their responses, and encourage them to be as loud as possible with them.*

Props:

Money bag
Coins
Chocolate coins

Narrator: I once had a neighbor named Zacchaeus

(Zacchaeus enters and poses.)

Crowd: Boo! *(encourage the audience to join in)*

Narrator: Our country had been invaded by Rome, the Romans were taking all our money in taxes, and whose side was he on? Theirs!

He got a job with them collecting taxes from his own countrymen!

(Zacchaeus begins trying to shake down the audience for taxes – holding out his hand, pointing into it demandingly, etc. The Crowd actors timidly put coins in his bag when confronted.)

But he did more.

If you owed 2 dollars, he charged you 4.

If you owed 5 dollars, he charged you 10.

And all of the extra, he kept!

Zacchaeus was greedy!

(Zacchaeus poses, not in the least ashamed.)

Crowd: Boo!

Narrator: Zacchaeus was rich!

(Zacchaeus takes another pose, still quite proud of his wealth.)

Crowd: Boo!

Narrator: Zacchaeus was powerful!

(Zacchaeus takes a “power” pose.)

Crowd: Boo!

Narrator: Zacchaeus was ugly!

(Zacchaeus almost poses, and then realizes what the narrator said.)

Zacchaeus: Hey!

Narrator: And Zacchaeus was short!

(Zacchaeus gets on his knees)

Narrator: And then one day –

Crowd: It's Jesus! It's Jesus!

(The Crowd excitedly looks out over audience – getting right in Zacchaeus' way and blocking his view. Jesus slowly makes his way through the audience towards the stage, greeting people, paying attention to people, being kind and polite and very careful not to step on fingers!)

Narrator: The Teacher came. Jesus was good.

(Zacchaeus tries to see out from behind the crowd, mostly unsuccessfully, through the following.)

Crowd: Hooray!

Narrator: Jesus was kind!

Crowd: Hooray!

Narrator: Jesus taught about God!

Crowd: Hooray!

Narrator: Jesus was ruggedly good looking!

(Jesus gives the Narrator a look, confused and a little embarrassed.)

Narrator: Sorry, I got carried away.

(Zacchaeus climbs up on a chair to see past the Crowd.)

Jesus: Zacchaeus!

Zacchaeus: *(pointing to himself)* Me?

Jesus: What are you doing in that tree?

Zacchaeus: *(pointing to himself)* Me?

Jesus: Yes, you. Get down here, we're having lunch together!

Zacchaeus: Wait, we are? Me?

(He climbs down and makes his way towards Jesus, who waits for him. The crowd goes wild – and not in a good way, looking to the audience for support.)

Crowd: What?! *(people begin grumbling, various things like “that’s not fair” “Zacchaeus is a jerk” “He should have lunch with me instead!”)*

Narrator: Jesus was crazy!

Crowd: Yeah!

Narrator: Jesus was wrong!

(Jesus looks straight at the Narrator, and does not stop.)

Crowd: Yeah!

Narrator: Jesus was hanging out with a wicked, greedy, ugly, short person!

Crowd: Yeah!

Narrator: Jesus had no right to ...

(The Narrator realizes that Jesus is looking at her, and stops. He keeps looking at her, and there is silence for a moment. She gets more and more uncomfortable while he looks at her.)

Jesus: We've got room for one more.

Narrator: ... Me?

(Jesus smiles.)

Zacchaeus: Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of everything I have to the poor! And if I cheated anybody, I'll pay them back four times what I took!

(Zacchaeus hands out chocolate coins to the crowd. The Narrator comes forward and helps him.)

Jesus: Today, salvation has come to this house, because even you belong in God's family. For I came to seek and save what was lost.