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CHRIST IN MY FAMILY ROOM Michael B. Beough
Luke 19:1-10 May 10, 2009
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Christ came knocking at my door recently. I invited him in to visit every room in my heart and home. We went to my study and then to my dining room where I learned many things about myself and about my need for Christ.

While I was finishing up my pizza in the dining room, Christ went into my family room to wait for me. When I joined him there, I was surprised to find him sitting in a chair with the television on and remote in hand. He was flipping through the channels as I have seen others do. It actually amazed me he had gotten the T.V. on in the first place.

I thought he didn't notice I had come in, so I asked what program he was looking for on the television. He didn't respond. He just kept flipping channels.

I decided two could play this game so I picked up my ear buds and started listening to music. I acted like I was really in the groove, head back, eyes closed. This didn't go on long before I felt a tap on my knee. When I looked, Christ was saying something to me. I made a big show of taking out the ear buds and saying somewhat cryptically, "Sorry! Couldn't hear you. What did you say?"

He said, "What do you call this room?" When I told him it was the family room, he said, with a twinkle in his eye, "So, the other rooms aren't for your family?" I tried to explain. "Sometimes this is where my family gathers to take our mind off a long day. We might read a magazine, or even talk. Mostly we watch television or a movie."

He looked at the table covered with remote controls. "Does each person get one of these? You have more than enough for your family. Have you ever thought about sharing them with your neighbors?" There was that sly smile again. Was this supposed to be a joke or what?

"Lord, I think you already know. One is for the television. One for the cable box. One for the DVD player. One for the CD player. One for the tape player. One for the stereo."

"So it's kind of like each thing is unique and takes a special remote to communicate with it. Right?" "Yes, that's right." "Well, how do you remember which one does what?"

I said, "You learn. You get used to it. At least some of us get used to it. But I know this must be boring to you. **Don't you want to talk about spiritual things?**"

He said, "I thought we were." He looked at me like he hoped I would get it. I didn't, so he continued. "We, my Father and I, made you earth beings smart. We couldn't wait to see what you would come up with. Yet we are amazed at how much you earth-beings have advanced your technology in just the past 30 years. Did you know that the first CD player came out in 1982? Now you have iPods, iPhones, and HDTV's that cost more than your first car. We think it is just wonderful that you call this the communications revolution! Brilliant! Just brilliant!

"And yet it grieves us, my Father and me, that family members can't figure out how to communicate with each other." Christ got up and pulled a box from behind the stereo system. "See this?" He lifted a big tangled mess of wires left over from all the installations. "You earth beings want so desperately to connect. We made you that way. But this is how your communications end up. No wonder you can't hear each other. You're disconnected. You talk past each other. If you were all plugged into the same source, it would go a long way in making your life better."

I mumbled something like, "I wish it were that easy."

He said, "So who said it is supposed to be easy? We didn't design life to be easy. We designed it to be challenging. You earth beings are at your best when you rise to the challenge. I would say learning to communicate with each other is one of your biggest challenges. And one of the greatest rewards."

He looked straight at me. "For example, when was the last time you told your wife you love her? Or your children? When was the last time you thanked them? When was the last time you discussed big ideas, important ideas? When was the last time you prayed together? When was the last time you talked about me or shared how I have been working in your life?"

That was a lot of questions, so I figured they were rhetorical. "And I am not just being rhetorical," he said. "**What is a family room if it is not a place for families to experience my grace?** After all, we, my Father and I, made you to live in a family because you can't do this life business by yourself. It is our way of getting you into the world and giving you a home where you can grow into somebody unique. We like uniqueness. We thrive on it. We don't like copy cats. It's a lot of work making each earth being a unique creation, but it is worth it. But here is the key to achieving the uniqueness for which we made you. It takes all of you being plugged into the same Source. Connected, not just to each other, but to us, my Father in heaven and me. Like we say in heaven sometimes, "If you ain't talkin'

together, you ain't walkin' together. If you ain't sharin', you ain't carin'. Get my drift?"

I did notice the poor English. While I was trying to recover from it, Christ said, **"By the way, your family room is kind of small."**

I gave him a look like, "Well, that's a rude thing to say!"

He must have noticed the scowl on my face. He said, "I'm not talking about your square footage. I am talking about the family room in your heart. It's not very big. Not as big as I want to make it. I want to give you a Zacchaeus heart."

I asked, "Are you talking about that wee little man who climbed the sycamore tree?"

Christ said, "Yes, he's the one, 'for the Lord he wanted to see'. Remember how I invited myself to his home? I tell you, he set a great example. So many people hear me knocking at their door, and they just ignore me. Can't say I've ever gotten used to that. But not Zacchaeus. He came right down from that tree and jumped up and down like a little boy with a new puppy. Even jumping he didn't come up to my shoulder, but he was happy. He was laughing. He didn't even know that I was preparing to give my life on a cross for him. He was happy simply because I wanted to spend time with him in his home. That's what I want to do for you. I want to enlarge the family room of your heart and home with laughter.

"And I want to enlarge your family room with a giving heart. Remember what Zacchaeus did?"

I said, "He promised to give half of his wealth to the poor, and pay back all the people he had cheated by collecting too many taxes."

"Yes, Zacch was so happy he realized he didn't need wealth to make him happy. Some of the saddest families I know have the most of everything. You can have nothing and be sad, too, because of envy and jealousy."

I said, "You mean, you want me to give away half my stuff? My family would disown me if I did that."

"No, I am not telling you what to do. Look, I didn't tell Zacchaeus what to do. I didn't set any rules for good behavior. I invited myself into his heart, and he welcomed me in, and his heart got bigger and better. He decided what to do. He got plugged into the Source, call it the Force if you want to. He got plugged in, and it made a huge impact on his life and on the lives of many others. That's what I am talking about. It was no longer what he wanted. It was what my Father and I wanted for his life. Zacchaeus the wee

little man became a giant. He was talkin' and walkin', and sharin' and carin'." That's why I said to Zacchaeus, 'Today, salvation has come to this house.' Think of salvation as an expanded heart."

Christ looked even more intently at me. "I want to give you a Zacchaeus heart, a heart that is plugged into the Source. I want to expand your family room so that it becomes a place where your family experiences the grace of my Father in heaven. A place where you as a family can meet in my presence and just let me take over. I promise I will help each of you become the unique and beautiful creature we, my father and I, created you to become."

Christ picked up the remote and turned the television on again. Just as I reached for my ear buds, I saw that the program he was watching was ... "Mike, This Is Your Life." So much of it was like the tangled mess of leftover wires he had showed me. I slumped in my chair with shame and regret. I saw times when my children needed me and I was not available. I saw times when I had deeply hurt my wife by ignoring her needs. I saw times when I shut people out of my family room because they were different from me.

But I saw something else too. I saw those moments when miracles happened. When genuine love was shared. When laughter filled, not just our house, but our hearts. When forgiveness was given and received.

Then I noticed something else. As I watched television, I saw the face of Christ reflected in the television screen. And I knew in a way never known before that through it all Christ had been watching over us ... and wanting so much more for us.

The show ended and I said, "Lord, what about the future? Can you show me the future?"

He said, "That will be up to you. You will write the script day by day, and then when you join me in the Great Tomorrow, we will sit down again and watch 'The Rest of Your Life.'"

He got up and as he left the family room, he said, "I love tools. Where's your workshop?" Wait till you hear what happened there.