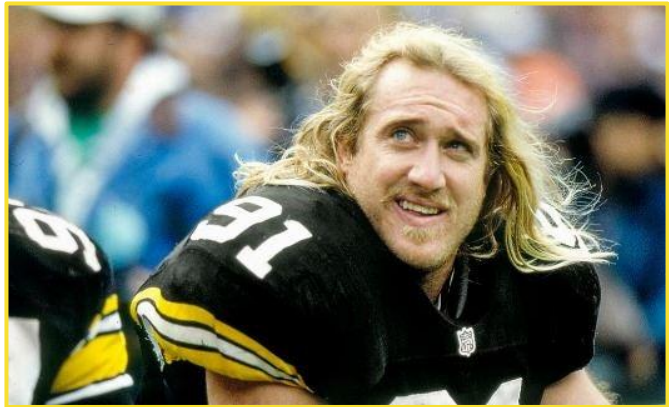


## The Linebacker's Greatest Fan

Kevin Greene is a former linebacker who played in the National Football League for 15 years. Greene retired after the 1999 NFL season, and ranks third among all-time sack leaders, leading the NFL twice in that category. As a result, he was elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2016.



Maybe one reason Greene was so successful was the support of his wife, Tara. From 1992 to 1996, while Greene was with the Pittsburgh Steelers, the story is told that 30 minutes before kickoff of each home game, Greene would seek out Tara at her usual seat at the 30-yard line for her to give him a quick beating – fists only – and her usual fight talk: “Rack ’em, sack ’em, crack ’em, frack ’em!” Only in professional sports would a wife show her support by beating her husband with her fists. Or maybe it was the “rack ’em, sack ’em, crack ’em, frack ’em” that did it.

How many of you would call yourself a fan of some kind? It could be a sports fan, a fan of some music group, or of an actor or actress. But you are enthusiastic enough about their activities that you could be labeled a fan. Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector in Jericho, might be labeled a fan of Jesus. His story is told in the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke. There had to be a reason that he climbed a sycamore tree to get a glimpse of Jesus.

Jesus was passing through Jericho on His way to Jerusalem. A large crowd gathered to see Him – this man who did miracles and healed diseases and taught with authority about the kingdom of God. Short in stature, Zacchaeus climbed the tree to be certain He got to see Jesus. By now, Jesus was accustomed to having crowds follow Him and stare at Him and ask Him for things. And the crowds would reach their peak when He got to Jerusalem. And then, within a week of His entry into Jerusalem, Jesus would be arrested, put on trial, tortured and crucified.

All the crowds then disappeared. All the fickle fans turned against Him. Even His disciples left Him alone at that point. This moment with Zacchaeus is the last moment of personal, face-to-face ministry we see Jesus do in the Book of Luke. What do we learn from this story? A couple of things:

1. You never know who is looking for Jesus. Sometimes, you will be surprised. Zacchaeus was a despised tax collector – the lowest of the low in the eyes of most Jews. Yet, there he was in a tree gazing at the Master. The most unlikely people may be searching for the hope only Jesus can provide.

(more)

2. You do know who Jesus is looking for, don't you? He's looking for you. And me. And him. And her. He is searching for every sinner you can possibly imagine. Jesus looked up into that tree and said, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house" (Luke 19:5 NKJV). Of all the people in the crowd that day, Zacchaeus was a flagrant sinner. And yet, the King of kings and Lord of lords must hang out with him. Why?

Jesus tells why: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10 NKJV).

Maybe you're reading this story about Zacchaeus and you're reflecting on your own life of mistakes, missteps and sins – all the ways you've messed up – and you think it's all too much for God to forgive and to love you.

Just as in the case with Zacchaeus, He wants to show you, to hang out with you. Believe in Jesus, make Him the Lord of your life and become His super-fan.

– Beecher Hunter