

Transcription of 20TS205

Luke 19:1-10

"Zacchaeus"

May 20, 2020

All right. Let's open our Bibles to Luke 19:1. We've been doing on Wednesday nights - in lieu of our through-the-Bible, and especially the historical books where we stopped in 2 Kings - these series of studies on biblical characters that hopefully can shape ours as God's people.

Tonight we're going to turn together to a man that the Lord will meet shortly before He will find His way to Calvary and to give His life for the sins of the world. He finds a rich man, a very powerful man; but this man is broken, and he is hurting, and he is living in Jericho. And as Jesus is passing through that town for the last time, headed up to Jerusalem with the crowds with Him and the cross, He now goes out of His way to minister to this individual.

If you have made it a habit to read through the gospels, you will find that there are lots of personal encounters that Jesus has one-on-one with folks. In fact, it's a great personal way to study. Go through the gospels and focus in on those one-on-one encounters between Jesus and others as He puts His love on display, His open-heartedness towards the rejected and towards the desperate, towards the hungry, the needy, those that just didn't have an answer.

Luke records three very specific encounters just in chapters 18 and 19 of his gospel, three that happened, all of them in the Jericho area. It begins in chapter 18 with that very famous encounter with the rich young ruler - I think you know the story - whose riches ultimately left him blind to his own sinfulness and his need for a Savior. And when the Lord confronted him that it was his covetousness, his trust in that wealth, and in his gain that was keeping him from the life that he had seen in the Lord but didn't have himself, rather than repenting, he went away sad. On the outskirts of town, according to the end of chapter 18, the Lord then met two blind beggars - Matthew covers that as well - who cried out at the top of their lungs, even the people around them trying to shush them, "Quiet down." But they had need. And so the Lord went, and He gave sight to them both. And then there is this story that we are looking at tonight, this encounter in town with yet another very wealthy man. But unlike the rich young ruler, this man is well aware of his sinfulness, he's very ashamed of his cruelty, he knows he's been deceptive and

wicked, and his heart is breaking although his actions outwardly, at least initially, might not have told you that. But the outcome certainly does.

So let's read the story. We'll begin in verse 1 of chapter 19 of Luke. "Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.' So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, 'He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.' Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.' "

We read, in verse 1, that Jesus was just passing through. This would have been the road that would really climb its way up from below sea level, there at Jericho, up to the passes into the city of Jerusalem. With Jesus were thousands of folks who were on that annual pilgrimage for the Passover Feast in Jerusalem. And so, as they were traveling with families and friends - a time of joy, vacation, worship, religious excursion, if you will - Jesus is in their midst. He was very popular with the crowds. They were headed for a feast. He was headed for His death. In fact, what they were coming to celebrate, He would become the Passover Lamb.

Jericho, in Jesus' day, was known for its balsam trees and its balm extract. The Jewish historian, Josephus, wrote that it was one of the wealthiest places in the region because of it. But Jericho has been around forever. I mean, you'll find it in the Scriptures for years and years and generations to come. It was always important because it was on the crossroads if you came down from the Galilee or from Jerusalem. It was the main trade route south to Egypt, where much of the trade took place. If you go on one of our Israel trips - and our next one planned for March is still a go so far; we'll have to see, but we think it'll be all right; we have lots of folks signed up; there's still time for you to join us if you'd like - if you go to Jericho, where we will stop, especially the old Jericho, you'll find palaces and gardens (at least the remnants of them), a hippodrome, a theater - all of the

things that the wealthy would surround themselves with because business was good in Jericho.

We read, in verse 2, that in that city there was a chief tax collector named Zacchaeus; a little guy, couldn't be too tall, he couldn't see over the crowd. But rest assured that Zacchaeus would have enjoyed the finer things in life. He would have rubbed elbows with important and powerful people. To say he was rich was probably an understatement because the way that tax collectors made their living, he would have been wealthy beyond belief. But in order to get that way, he would have to misuse his position - gouge the people, set exorbitant tax rates, oppress them, collect whatever Rome established was the amount they needed to collect from that area and then, additionally, add for himself whatever he could get. His name, Zacchaeus, means righteous one or innocent one. This guy was misnamed. Well, that would have been true for all of us, but in his lifestyle, that was certainly the case.

If you've read through the gospels enough times, you come away at least remembering that tax collectors are often mentioned in the Scriptures as sinful men that are in dire need of salvation. And they are really painted as the most corrupt, the greatest example of how far someone can go in sin. We find the tax collector in Luke 18 coming to the Temple, praying for mercy, and finding mercy with God; received by God's grace, sent home forgiven, made right with God because he confessed his sin, unlike the Pharisee who came to that Temple that day - that the Lord compared him to. The Pharisees were religious people. Everyone looked up to them. They had the finest reputation, in opposition to the tax collector. But the Pharisee was very self-confident in his religious ways. He saw no need for a Savior. He saw no sin in himself.

Well, Zacchaeus will fall into that line of tax collectors that will indeed come to Jesus because their sin has weighed them down. You might add Matthew the apostle to that list because he, too, came to the Lord and just, at some point, realized that the life he was leading - as successful as it was - isn't the life he wanted.

When Jesus was ministering to the people in Matthew 21, and He was telling them a parable about obedience to the Lord and how one of the sons to a father said, "I'll do it," but he didn't, and the other son said, "I'm not going to do it," but he ended up doing the will of his father, Jesus, in telling that story, said to the people, "Who

do you think did the father's will?" and they said, "The fellow who, though he said he wouldn't do it, would go and do it." And Jesus said, "That's exactly right. That's why I'm saying to you that the tax collectors and the harlots will get into the kingdom of God before you," in speaking to these Pharisees, "because you have a persona that says, 'Oh, I'm a religious man and love God,' but you don't serve God. And these, who everyone recognizes are dreadfully in sin, now come to their senses, turn to God for His mercy and find the kind of life that God has for them." The hardest people to reach, always, in the world are the righteous, the self-righteous, the worldly-righteous, those who can make a case for themselves. Tax collectors could not. And I guess when you get to the point where you realize you can't make a case for yourself, then you're in your best position to hear what God can do for you.

The job of a tax collector was to be assigned a region by the Romans, and it was oftentimes sold - this job - to the highest bidder. So you had to buy this position. Sometimes people buy political appointments and all, but so you can kind of get a feel for that. It was a heartless job. It was wealth through oppression. Tax collectors tended to be uncaring and callous. They were selfish, they were harsh. They were seen by the nation, Israel, as traitors. They were collaborators with their occupying Roman forces and powers. The people hated them. In fact, they were so hated that the enemies of Jesus would oftentimes try to put Jesus in league with them somehow to diminish His popularity. You might remember that section, there in Matthew 22, where the confrontation between Jesus and various groups took place in the Temple the week of the cross, the week of His passion, the week that would really follow what we're reading here. But one of the groups had come to Jesus, and they had said to Him, as they tried to plot to entangle Him in His words (in fact the Pharisees hooked up with the Herodians, who normally hated each other, but when you hate something together, I guess it makes for strange bedfellows, and it certainly did there), "We know that You're a man that tells the truth and that You teach the Word of God in truth and that You don't care for anybody, you don't regard the person of someone. So could you tell us, is it lawful to pay taxes?" Because, you see, that was everybody's rub. They realized they were being ripped off. They realized that they were being abused. And so they tried to catch Jesus in His words. And Jesus, you remember, said, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, but make sure you give to God, render to God, what belongs to Him." He knew what they were up to. His answer was just right on. But that was the attitude of the people towards the tax collector, if you will.

Notice, here in verse 2, that Zacchaeus is not just a tax collector. He's a chief tax collector. He had, maybe, many areas and regions under him. He had lesser tax collectors who answered to him. He was getting a little bit of money from every one of them who worked for him. He was an overseer crook. He was the "godfather," if you will, of the tax collectors in that region. He was well-connected and corrupt, and you can just imagine the kind of life that he led.

John the Baptist who, back in Luke 3, was baptizing there at the Jordan, had some tax collectors come to him, and they wanted to be baptized. And they said to John, "Teacher, what can we do?" and John said to them, "Collect no more than what has been appointed to you." So that was the big rub. The crookedness of these men was to just take more, extort more, gain more, hurt people in the process. Up until this point - as far as we know about Zacchaeus - he was only concerned for money and gain. It was his way of life. Self before patriotism. Gain before any kind of religion. Success before honesty. And you can assume that this was one man in this very wealthy town that everyone wanted to avoid, that even the decent people in town would not want to be having lunch with or hang out with or be seen with this man. Even in the rich region of Jericho, he would have been a hated man, held in contempt, the proverbial lost cause. That's the last person that God will ever have to deal with. I don't know if you know anyone like that. Maybe you feel like that was you, that it was just too late. Or maybe someone in your life, you just think, "Gosh, it's too late for them. Everyone agrees. This person is out of God's reach." But God sees far better than we do.

And I think that, if nothing else, one of the lessons you can learn from Zacchaeus tonight is that in the heart of this wicked man beat a broken heart. It didn't look like that on the outward, but God knew it long before we saw it. He had everything he would ever want, materialistically. He had been as successful in a business sense as he could have been, but he was empty within. And he was about to say so by his actions, though outwardly, if you were a citizen in Jericho, you might have just looked at him with contempt. Everyone hated him. Jesus loved him. And so He purposefully goes out of His way to come down this street at this time to help someone whose heart was ready. You didn't know it. I didn't know it. God knew it. And isn't that something?! Jesus specializes in reaching those who no one else thinks can be reached; everyone has written them off. This was going to be a big day for Zacchaeus, the day Jesus came to town looking for a man whose heart was in conflict but whose cries, internally maybe, had reached heaven. It's an amazing picture.

And if you're in that place tonight - where you don't know the Lord or you've been on the outskirts, and you present a good case outwardly, no one would know what you're going through, He does - and if the despair is there and the desire is there, God is readily available. No one else may applaud. Certainly in town for a while, here, they didn't. Just read a couple of verses down, there in verse 7. No one seemed to think this was a good idea. But God does. So, look, if you're listening tonight, you can be made right with God. He is willing. He's able. His arms are open. And if you're tuning in, and you're not used to being here, maybe this is the very reason God had you sit home tonight and tune in because, like Zacchaeus, He's been working in your heart. He knows you're ready to receive Him and be saved.

So, God knew his heart.

What we read in verse 3, knowing that Jesus was coming that way, Zacchaeus runs outside and tries to get a place where he can see Him, but the sides of the road are packed. And he's a short man, he can't see over the crowds, and so he makes a plan. He'll go ahead where the crowds haven't formed, and he'll climb up a tree, and he'll get a good view and a good vantage point to the Lord when He comes by. Outwardly it might have just looked like Zacchaeus was curious. Right? The big crowd was coming. Jesus was passing through. Everyone knew about Him. His fame was well known. His actions, though, if you look at Zacchaeus, tell us far more than that he just has curiosity. I think we rarely will reveal the conflicts that we harbor within. I'm always amazed when we sit in churches - and our church as well - that there are folks that sometimes sit for months, and then one day they come and say, "I gave my life to Jesus today." You go, "Wait a minute! You've been here six months!" "Well, yeah. I've been kind of sittin' over there." "I didn't know you were going through all that trouble." Well, you know, they don't carry on the surface of their hearts their struggles, even though their lives are in disarray. And I think you see that with Zacchaeus. Well, he is known by the Lord better than we know ourselves. And so if you watch Zacchaeus, the little guy, coming out - the guy that you didn't like at all - he might look like, "Gosh, I can't see, so I'm gonna get ahead." And, in many ways, he just looks like he's a curious guy. But the Lord knows our needs. And when we're unwilling to admit them, He continually comes to give us hope. So I think verse 3 gives us the look of the casual kind of observer.

But verse 4 kind of betrays his initial walk outside to see what all the fuss was about. In fact, because he was short, he ran ahead, and he climbed up a tree to

see Jesus. That's not exactly the picture of the rich and the powerful. Right? This isn't the guy with the three-piece suit and the shiny ring on his hand and the beautifully-taken-care-of hair, and he's shimmying up a sycamore tree. Look at Zacchaeus. That almost looks embarrassing, like he's a kid all of a sudden, like some juvenile. Maybe. But now you get to see the picture of what was going on within. He longed for some peace. And so he climbs up a tree, the opinions of others notwithstanding. Not that he probably cared much about their opinions anyway because the work he did would have caused him to be pretty hard-hearted. One thing for sure - if you're going to turn to Jesus and follow Him, you're going to have to, though, come to the end of yourself. All of that pride and all of that stature has to go away. And the casual approach of verse 3 usually quickly crumbles when your heart is revealed. I wrote in my Bible, years ago, "People will not soon turn away by ridicule when their need overwhelms their pride." And I think that's right. When your need is so great that what other people think of you doesn't matter, then you're in a position to hear from God. By contrast, in John 12:42, we read about the rulers who believed in Jesus, in the synagogue, but because of the Pharisees - their judgments, their hatred for the Lord, their animosity - they didn't confess Him. They didn't want to be put out of the synagogue. And then it says, "They loved the praises of men more than the praises of God." Well that's a problem. When you love the praises of men more than the praises of God - even if you believe in the Lord - you're not going to go very far.

Kind of different here in our picture, though, isn't it? Because here's Zacchaeus. And his love governed his behavior. And right now his love for deliverance, his desire for freedom of his sin, was far greater than any conscious awareness of what people might say. So he throws dignity to the wind. He wants to see Jesus. His inner turmoil humbled him. And that's really where you have to come. The short little man had to climb up to see Jesus. We have to humble ourselves and become short in our own estimation if we're going to see Him clearly. It's a great picture. I can just imagine how this must have looked.

Well, it gets a little bit more intriguing in verse 5 when we read that Jesus then came to that very place that Zacchaeus was kind of dangling in the branches overhead. And, rather than passing by, He looked up, and He saw him, and He spoke to him and said, "Zacchaeus, make haste. Hurry up. Come down. Today I must stay at your house." Like I said, I don't doubt - and from everything that we read and know - that the crowds were enormous. This was a huge celebration in Jerusalem. It was the feast of the year, in many regards. Jesus was extremely

popular. And the Passover Feast was demanded by law that you attend when you could. I just get this picture of Zacchaeus kind of hoping no one looks up, little guy, probably didn't attract much attention. He'd run ahead. Many of the crowds below, kind of shifting as Jesus came by. Among the locals, if anyone saw Zacchaeus up in the tree, I would suspect that their only hope was that he was going to fall out on his head and die because they didn't think much of him. And then, to make matters worse, Jesus stops dead right underneath where he is sitting, and He looks up; which I think would draw everybody's attention up as well. Oh, my. Pointing at him. Up in a tree, no place to hide. And Jesus speaks to him words that were, on the one hand, hopeful and promising. It is a direct response from Jesus to what only He would have known as God, the condition of Zacchaeus' heart, a heart that had been made ready. Zacchaeus had come looking. He was ready. He needed some answers. Jesus responds by initiating the contact. Now here's something interesting: if you're Zacchaeus, the Lord knows your name. He doesn't say, "Hey, you." He says, "Zacchaeus." "How does He know my name? That's not good. That can't be good! But His smile seems so welcoming, and He wants to come to my house. That can't be bad!" But notice He calls Zacchaeus publicly in front of everyone. "Zacchaeus, hurry up. Come down. I've got to go to your house today." It may have been the very first time in a long time that anyone in that town had used the name "Zacchaeus" without following it with a four-letter epithet. They didn't like him much. Zacchaeus had longed to see Jesus. Jesus knew he was ready. He sets the course through this town to make sure that He ends up where Zacchaeus is. He leads the huge crowds down the street. He stops under this tree, and He calls Zacchaeus by name. That's how you get saved. God knows your heart. He picks you out of a crowd. He calls you by name.

We might think it is poor etiquette for someone to invite themselves over to our house. And, I guess, in western culture that isn't so easily done or so welcoming. But understand that, in eastern culture, to be given the privilege or the honor to shelter someone, to feed them, to protect them, to give them comfort in their travels was the hospitality that characterized the culture. And I think anyone in that crowd, if they believed that Jesus was the Messiah, would have been blessed, tickled, felt totally privileged if He would have asked to stay at their house. But notice that Jesus gives that privilege and that distinction to this city's most notorious sinner.

The Bible tells us that sinful man, by his nature, will never seek God or His will. In other words, if we are left to ourselves, we'll never find God. Paul said to the

Romans in chapter 3, beginning in verse 10, "There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one." But in the midst of that, "There's none that seek after God." In other words, if we're going to come to the Lord, that process has to begin with God breaking through to us. When Paul wrote to the Ephesians (2:8-9), he said that by grace we were saved through faith, that not of ourselves; it was a gift from God, and not of our works, so no one could boast. That really is the key. God, in His desire to give man life, sends His Spirit to begin to convict.

And the whole process of salvation begins with Him; not with us but with Him. Paul said to the Philippians, in chapter 2:13, "It is He who works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure." So understand that for Zacchaeus, the working of God's Spirit in his heart - the conviction, the dissatisfaction with the world and all that he had been able to purchase - was a stirring that God began. And now Zacchaeus is responding to that. You remember when, in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve sinned, they had the initial desire to hide from God. They were aware of their sin. They weren't looking for God; they were hiding from Him. And yet God came looking for them to find them. And that's really always the case. Jeremiah said, in chapter 23:24 (that's an easy one to remember), "Can anyone hide themselves in a secret place, that I will not find them?" God comes looking for you.

And if, tonight, you find yourself hearing and wanting to know more about the love of God for you or wanting that life - just having a new life, just having a life in relationship to God - understand that you are at that position because God has been doing a work in you. All of us are inevitably going to have a meeting with the Lord. You can either meet with Him as Zacchaeus does here, turning from sin while hungering for mercy and finding it, or you can face Him in judgment, like the rich young ruler, in the previous chapter, who saw life but wasn't willing to let go of the life that he had to embrace it.

So Jesus calls Zacchaeus by name; asks him, in front of the crowd, to make a commitment; and invites Himself to his home. By the way, it's the only place in the gospels that I'm aware of where Jesus invites Himself into somebody's house, though Revelation 3:20 tells us He stands at every door to knock, which is that work that God begins. Right? "He stands at the door. If any man hears My voice and opens the door, I'll come in to him and dine with him, sup with him, and he'll sup with Me." We'll have fellowship. That's God's move.

But specifically to the house, first place, the only place. Look, God wants into your life. He wants to be invited in, but He's not going to force Himself upon you. And He knows us and knows that we have to (and we're told that we have to) respond personally to His call. "And the Spirit and the bride," at the end of your book, there in Revelation 22:17, "say, 'Come!' And if you are thirsty, then come. Whoever would desire, look, he can come and take the rivers of life freely." So God knocks, He works, but you have to respond.

And here's Zacchaeus - up a tree, dissatisfied with life, sorry with the way that he's lived, disillusioned with what he's been able to gain, just humbling himself; little guy climbing up a tree, and the Lord stopping - He knew his heart. It is a perfect picture of salvation. And notice what the Lord said, "Hurry up. Come now. I must come to your house." Those two things are pretty interesting. You've got to do it now while you have the opportunity. Don't wait. Don't drag your feet. And the Lord said, "I must come to your house." It is a very strong word. "I must come there." Why? Because a hungry heart will always bring the promises of God to bear. Without delay. You want to come to Jesus? It won't be two days, five days, two months. You're not going to be on probation. If the Lord gets your interest, if you hear His voice, then you come now. You don't wait. You don't put it off. It'll be now or never because, for this publican, this tax collector (same thing), this is the last time Jesus is passing through Jericho. He's on His way to the cross. What if he said, "Well, let me think about it"? No. That's why the Bible says (2 Corinthians 6:2, Hebrews 3:15), "Today is the day of salvation. Today, if you won't harden your hearts." Or, as Paul said, in the book of Acts (3:19), "When those times of refreshing come from the Lord, when God's Word, His voice, gets through to you, and you realize now you have to make a decision, make it! Don't wait. Don't procrastinate."

Maybe some of you have been putting off answering the Lord's knock on your life for quite some time. You've struggled to say "no," but He's continued to hound you, to knock on your heart, to knock on your door. And you've shut your ears and closed your eyes and turned your heart away. But here's Jesus' counsel to Zacchaeus, who's open to hear, "Make haste!" While you hear His voice, make haste.

Well, verse 6 tells us that Zacchaeus was ready. Notice what we read there, "He made haste, he came down, and he received Him joyfully." I just love the verse. Here's his response, "He made haste, he received Him joyfully." Now nowhere are

we told in the story what broke the camel's back in terms of Zacchaeus' willingness to surrender. We know Matthew (Levi) came to Jesus one day while sitting at the receipt of customs, obviously in that same kind of condition; he was still doing his job, crooked as it might have been. And yet, when the word from the Lord said, "Come," he came. So, I don't know how much of Jesus he had heard about, but he had known his own life and deception. It had worn him down. And the conscience that he had was being tormented, and he couldn't buy peace, and he had not been able to find relief. And then he heard about Jesus. "Maybe He can help me."

But I want you to look at the picture because, though all of the crowd is so enamored with Jesus and pushing and shoving and crowding around to get a glimpse, Jesus turns His full attention to the one that He is aware of having a hungry heart. He found him in a crowd. And Zacchaeus immediately responds with hope. You might feel like you're lost in a crowd, but trust me, God sees the heart.

And so off to the house they go. The doors are closed, and he and Jesus spend some time together and with, apparently, others sitting at the table as well, talking and examining and concluding what needed to be done. We're not told what was said. No record of the lunch that took place here. But we do have the result, as this man's life is changed. Forgiveness came, mercy came, a new life was available. And it is recognized. And when we see Zacchaeus at this lunch, at some point, we see a man that is almost unrecognizable from the old Zacchaeus. He has a new countenance, and his first words of his mouth declare that his life has been changed. This is what God wants to do with you - change your heart, give you new life, born again.....if you'll respond in haste, let Him in. Well that was Zacchaeus' response - with great joy. "I'm ready!"

But look at the response, in verse 7, of the crowds. It says, "When they say it, they all began to complain, 'He's gone to be a guest of a man who's a sinner.' " Zacchaeus was joyful, but many in the crowds were not. It's amazing how we hate to see the grace of God in the lives of others while we try to live like Pharisees in the I-can-do-it-myself kind of world. If you go back to chapter 18:35, 43, you will read how amazed the crowds were at Jesus healing the eyes of these two blind men. But now the public opinion has changed again because the crowds watching are very self-righteous, and they deserve honor with Jesus, not this despicable tax collector who has made his living hurting the lives of others for years. They don't like Jesus' decisions. They accuse Him of poor judgment and low standards. "He's eating with sinners." Yeah! He is. And it's not the first time that He's been

accused of that. When Jesus was speaking about the reaction of the Pharisees - both to John the Baptist's message and to His own - Jesus said (Luke 7), "John came strong in his outward esthetics. He only ate certain things. He lived a really simple life. He was a rules guy, if you will, in many ways, though he looked a little bit wild." And Jesus says, "And then the Son of Man comes along, and He's eating and drinking with people, and you say of Him, 'He's a glutton, and He's a winebibber; He's a friend of tax collectors. He's a friend of sinners.'" And Jesus said, "Your whole rationale, your whole wisdom is justified by her children. You can't be reached because you have an argument for everything. You don't like his approach; you don't like Mine. You'll always find a reason to turn away from what the real interest is" which is we're sinners who need to be saved.

So, Zacchaeus couldn't find Jesus while he was in the crowd; he was too short. He couldn't stand with this crowd. Isn't that interesting? And you really can't stand with the crowd in the world either. We're not going to measure up. Right? The world is going to have their opinions, the crowds are going to be offended when you believe, and the crowd wants to stand taller on its own and be counted. Jesus, said in Luke 16:15, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. And what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in God's sight." So the crowd had an opinion about Jesus. "Look, He's forgiving the worst! He's going to eat with the worst!" That's right. That's exactly why He came. But until you realize you're the worst, there's really no place for you at the table. When you rely on your height or your stature, your works, you're still blinded to your need for God's grace. So Zacchaeus and the crowds were still at odds. But this time not because of his sinfulness. Now because of the grace God had given him, his humility and his repentance.

We're told, in verse 8, that Zacchaeus, during this lunch at some point, stood up and spoke to the Lord in the hearing of those that were there. This would have been the typical reclining position around a table. And so here's an important announcement made from this very powerful man who has been hearing from Jesus about life. And he stands up, and he's probably now taller than he's ever been in his life. And he stands up to repent. He calls Jesus, verse 8, his "Lord." Immediately, the change in his heart. "I'm going to give half of my goods to the poor. And since I have defrauded folks, I will pay back any of those false accusations 400%." The word "if," in verse 8, is usually the word since. I don't think there was a doubt that he had been defrauding folks. But he does have financial records - Rome required them - and so he was able to go back and say, "Okay, I hustled this guy and

cheated this fellow." He said, "I'm going to give half of my wealth away to the poor, and I'm going to be sure to pay back those that I've ripped off 400%." All of that to say man, this guy's heart is changed! This is not a tax collector! This is crazy! This is not the way they behaved. This is not how it works. But here's what he says, "Lord, from now on I'm going to be different." And the Good Shepherd had found another sheep, and within a few days from now, down the road, He was going to give His life for him. So Zacchaeus is saved in the Old Testament sense, in the fact that his heart was touched by God. What followed were good works, evidences of his faith. You see, saving faith is not just a bunch of pious words or devout feelings; it's a change of trust. I no longer trust what I used to trust in; now I trust God. And a relationship with the Lord is much more than just words; it's a change of behavior. James, in chapter 2:20 (we just finished it on Sunday mornings), said, "Oh, foolish man, don't you know that faith without works is dead? Wasn't Abraham our father justified when he offered his son Isaac upon the altar? He did it by faith." So, "Abraham believed God. It was accounted to him for righteousness." God is interested in faith, but faith behaves a certain way. Whether it was Paul or the woman at the well or the cold-hearted Philippian jailer, all of them, when they came to Jesus, produced in their lives behavior that testified to what had happened in their hearts.

So you read here, in verse 5, "I must," and you get down to verse 9, and we read, "Today salvation has come to this man." "I have to come." Why? Because his heart is ready, and the result is he's going to be given life; he's going to be born again. I love it! "In an acceptable time, the day of salvation, I've helped you. Today, behold, there is an acceptable time". And then it says (2 Corinthians 6:2), "Today is the day of salvation." Today! So for you tonight, if you're listening, you can give Jesus your life, and what happened to Zacchaeus can happen to you. Your sins forgiven, your life changed, your heart touched. God can do that. God will do that.

Every Jew called themselves a son of Abraham. Their Jewishness, the fact that God had chosen the nation, was oftentimes clung to by them as an advantage. "You are Gentiles, you're not chosen, but we are the chosen." When John the Baptist was ministering to the Jews, he told them to consider their relationship far more than the descendancy from which they came. In fact, he said to them (Luke 3:8), "You should bring forth fruits that are worthy of the fact that you're repenting of your sins, and don't begin to say to yourself, 'Abraham is our father,' because God can raise up children of Abraham from the very stones that you see." It's not descendancy, it's relationship. And that was what God wanted to drive home. And

notice He says that here. He was a Jewish man who had now become fully a son of Abraham by faith. In fact, if you read Romans 2:28, Paul said, "Look, there is not a Jew who is one outwardly nor is circumcision something that is just outwardly in your flesh. You're a Jew if you are one inwardly. The circumcision is from the heart." And so he then calls those of us who believe in God by faith to be sons or children of Abraham, and so are we. And that's the way the Lord uses the term here. "You're a son of Abraham" in the real sense, not just in a descendancy issue but in a complete sense of faith.

Zacchaeus did what the rich young ruler refused to do, and there's quick evidence on the outward that God had changed him from within. This man had a lot of wealth, a lot of wealth, but he loved God more than his possessions. He was tired of the baggage that came with it. The rich young ruler (in the last chapter) unfortunately was just the opposite. He loved his money and his way of life and even his good works with that money far more than he desired a relationship with God. Zacchaeus just wanted forgiveness. He wanted the load to be lightened. He wanted to find life that Jesus could give. The rich young ruler did not.

Now, just in context - and we're certainly not going to look at it tonight - but if you start at verse 11, here in chapter 19, and you go to verse 27, at the end of the story of the rich young ruler and then this rich tax collector, for the next seventeen verses or so, Jesus will tell a parable here about the danger of loving wealth and how it can keep you from Him. It's interesting that those are placed here together by Luke.

We can end tonight with verse 10. And, in one sense, Jesus responds to the complaints in verse 7 by saying, "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save those that are lost." So, hey, he went to eat with sinners. That's right. That's why He's here. That's why He came. It's exactly why He came. On the other hand, this is the living example of that. He might have gone to dinner with a sinner who lived his life in opposition to God, but He brought out of that dinner a man that now was surrendered to the Lord. And that's exactly why the Lord knocks on every heart.

Maybe tonight you're tired of the way you're living. Maybe you're ready for a change. Maybe you're hoping to escape it. Maybe no one thinks you'll ever be saved. No one thinks you're reachable. And I think that's how they would have seen Zacchaeus. But, look, tonight the Lord will call you by your name. And if

you're willing to climb a tree, so to speak, and humble yourself before the world, He's ready to save you and to come to you. He's knocking. Unfortunately, most of the people never answer the door. Look at verse 7. They believe they're more righteous than the people the Lord has gone to. But He went in to the one whose heart was ready. So if you'll quickly go and answer the door and let Him in, tonight will be your night to find life. What an amazing thought.....that God loves you so.

Shall we pray?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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