

Luke 19:1-10
Salvation Has Come

There are at least two challenges in preaching and listening to the message this morning.

1. Finding something fresh. The story is familiar, fun, short and simple. But it is familiar.
2. Avoiding the catchy children's folk song staying our head.

This is a vital story because it's the last personal encounter someone has with Jesus before he arrives in Jerusalem. A man's life is changed and Jesus' mission is brought into crisp focus. The story is simple but has a beautiful picture of saving faith. It reminds us that Jesus is all about saving the lost. It's a salvation story. We learn a few signs of salvation.

1. Salvation shows no favoritism (1-2,7)

- First, a clarifying comment. God does seem to have sympathy for certain people (e.g. the poor, or Paul to Corinth in 1 Corinthians 1:26, "not many were wise or powerful"). Yet God never writes a group, class, or race off. And he does not favor the types of people the world favors.
- Zacchaeus was an outcast like the blind man, just on the opposite end of the spectrum; he was wealthy and despised.
- Remember back to 18:24-25 what Jesus said about rich people in God's kingdom? It's really hard for the rich to get into God's kingdom. In Luke we see that the rich don't usually land on the side of grace. We don't expect a guy like Zach making it in. This is going to make the miracle in the story shine all the brighter.
- Now, people in Jesus' day automatically suspected tax collectors to be greedy and dishonest. Zacchaeus is chief collector, which means he's in charge of a region. He's one of the higher-ups in the racket.
- We see it in the crowd's reaction. They are quick to discriminate and dismiss; quick to show favoritism. Why would Jesus waste his time here?
- In Lk 5:27-32, we saw a very similar scenario. Levi the tax collector is shown mercy. Levi and Zacchaeus may have known each other. Levi may have told Zacchaeus about Jesus.

“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

Apply: The first sign of salvation is that it shows no favoritism. No one sin keeps the gospel away more than another.

2. Salvation overcomes every obstacle to see Jesus (3-4)

- We saw this similar heart in our last text; the crowd tried to silence the blind man, but he out-yelled them (v39).
- There was a man with an obstacle, yet he overcomes it because Jesus is worth it.
- Zacchaeus has a limitation. He’s short.
- But he does not let that hinder his pursuit of Jesus.

What does he do? Runs ahead of the crowd and climbs up to get a glimpse.

Salvation means that we are eager to get past the obstacles to see Jesus.

Illus: Here’s a picture of overcoming obstacles. I went to India in 2010 to help with some teaching and training of local pastors. Most of the pastors came from rural villages. It was during monsoon season, so there was massive rain every day. On the first day of training we heard that a major road had been washed out. It was an obstacle that was going to prevent the pastors from coming. Our group was going to be half the size. That afternoon we walked into the training facility, and the room was packed. The pastors had to travel twice as far to see Jesus in his Word, but they did.

As Americans, we were surprised because people don’t usually do this. In America, we are good at overcoming every obstacle, for the things we are most passionate about like our sports, or vacation. But we usually need people from other nations to show us what overcoming obstacles to see Jesus looks like. What obstacles are there for you? Would you overcome them to see Jesus? Is he really worth it for us?

2. Salvation joyfully welcomes Jesus into life (5-6)

- We love our space, don't we? That's why the hospitality book we read in the fall was so difficult. Our home is our castle. Our culture is not grounded in hospitality.
- The drama of the story really starts to unfold in vs 5-6.

A few things stand out.

- 1) What Jesus commands. First, Jesus commands Zacchaeus by name. Hurry. Jesus says, "It's urgent, the time is now. I must stay."
- 2) Stay is the same word for "abide."

- Here we get a critical part of salvation.

Salvation is about the abiding presence of Jesus invading our lives.

That's an indication of knowing if we are saved. Is the abiding presence of Jesus, by his Spirit, a part of our lives? Salvation means that the personal presence of Jesus abides in us permanently.

- 3) How Zacchaeus responds. He is a model in how disciples should respond to the grace of Christ.

- First, he responds with *urgent obedience*

If you feel the Spirit of Jesus working on your heart, don't delay.

- Secondly, he "received him joyfully".

Salvation is coming to Jesus not for judgment, but for joy.

Joy is such an essential part of salvation.

I think there is a misconception of what happens when people turn to Christ. Some have the wrong perception that becoming a Christian means that you automatically turn against everything and your life turns sour. The Bible links salvation and joy together.

(Ps 51:12) "restore the joy of salvation"

(1 Pet 1:8) "joy that is inexpressible"

Our spiritual life should be marked by deep, inner-joy. Not a plastic smile. But a deep happiness because we have a relationship with God. With salvation comes a measure of joy that nothing can match.

4. Salvation allows repentance to cut deep (8-10)

- The fourth sign of salvation is that repentance will cut us deep.
- Yet there is a logical flow. Jesus takes up residence which leads to transformation.

Notice in this situation, Jesus did not say, “get your life straight, then I’ll abide”. He invites himself, and his abiding presence to transform a man.

- The striking thing is that it is simply the presence of Jesus that promotes repentance. The simple presence of Jesus by the Spirit does something radical to the heart.

Most of you were not handed a list of things that needed to change when you were converted. Simply having the presence of Christ’s Spirit was enough.

- This repentance cut deeply. I do think there is difference between surface level repentance and deep, surgical-heart repentance.
- First, repentance sees Jesus as the Lord: “Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord”. The Lordship of Christ is a key factor in repentance.
- Deep repentance *makes radical departures*. “Half of my goods I give to the poor.” For a Jewish man to give even 20% to the poor was considered generous.
- Deep repentance *restores*. Financial restitution in the law only required repayment, plus an added fifth.

What Zacchaeus suggests (v8) fourfold restoration seems rooted in David’s comment in 2 Sam 12:6.

In 2 Sam 12, Nathan the prophet confronts David for his adultery and murder with a parable about the rich man who steals the poor man’s little ewe lamb. David is outraged and says it needs to be made good by applying the restitution law of animal theft (Ex 22:1).

David’s heart was about to be moved to deep repentance.

Illus: I heard this story about Alistar Begg. During an elder meeting, he made a biting remark toward another elder. The next day Pastor Begg got a call from another leader at the meeting who told him the way he treated his brother and fellow elder was wrong. He said, “I believe you need to call and confess it.” He added, I’m going to call you back in 20 minutes to see how it went. He did and it was humbling. Very humbling. The truth of deep repentance is that it will offer a crushing blow to our pride.

Like when a spouse has to confess hidden porn addiction. Or when a business owner has to confess lack of integrity in work, or a woman confess her slanderous comments to a friend. Or a student confesses to his parent he or she has not been honoring them.

Deep repentance crushes our pride.

- Deep repentance shows us that forgiveness does not release us from moral obligations. Just because God forgives, does not let us off the hook. Repentance means we bear responsibility to make things right.
- Deep repentance reflects the gospel. The generosity that Zacchaeus offers is above and beyond. It was full of overflowing generosity. Just like the gospel.
- Finally, deep repentance is a sign of salvation (v9). Jesus declares that salvation has come.

The miracle work of a rich man getting into the kingdom (18:25) has happened. Salvation is about God making the impossible possible through Jesus.

Conclusion

It's interesting to see the irony of Zacchaeus going from big man (rich, chief tax collector) and a short man, to finally a *new man*.

The beauty of this story is that *salvation has come*. But it's not because Zacchaeus was such a good tree-climber. No, it's a beautiful picture of Jesus's sovereign, saving grace. Jesus takes the initiative to seek and save the lost. Jesus fulfills what the prophet Ezekiel foretold in 34:11 where we not only see the Lord's heart for lost sheep, but also the fact that *Jesus is Lord*.

Summary lessons

1. Jesus receives sinners of all shapes and sizes.
2. Jesus is the all-sovereign, seeking Savior.
3. When salvation has come, so does a transformed life.