

HEIRS OF THE KINGDOM: ZACCHAEUS AND THE TRUE SONS OF ABRAHAM LUKE 19:1-27

REV. CHARLES R. BIGGS

Introduction

Jesus is approaching Jerusalem and about to enter the city riding on a donkey's colt as King of Israel (19:28), but one more stop along the way and one more parable to be told before he reaches his destination (9:51). Our passage today will complete Dr. Luke's travel narrative that began back in Luke 9:53 and Jesus will reach his destination in Jerusalem.

Jesus goes once more into the home of a sinner. This sinner's name is Zacchaeus and he receives and enters the Kingdom by faith in Jesus Christ (cf. 15:2). Because of Zacchaeus' faith in Jesus he is revealed as a true son of Abraham (19:9). Although it is virtually impossible for the rich to enter the Kingdom (18:24ff), nevertheless, what is impossible with man is possible with God (18:27) - even for a rich chief tax collector!

In light of the reality of Zacchaeus' faith and repentance, Jesus tells the Parable of the Ten Minas. This parable is about how true Kingdom disciples or true sons of Abraham live as stewards of the Gospel of the Kingdom in the interim period between the first and second coming of Jesus Christ. The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost (18:10).

Zacchaeus is a chief tax collector and he is rich! (v. 2)

The first thing we notice in our text is that Jesus is passing through Jericho (still on his journey to Jerusalem to accomplish his mission, cf. 9:51). Jericho is about 17 miles from Jerusalem, so he is getting close to his Messianic destination. As Jesus gets closer, he meets a man named Zacchaeus who has two "marks" against him: ***He is a chief tax collector and he is rich.***

As we have learned about tax collectors in our previous sermons, they were a despised people in Jesus' day. Particularly were they hated by Israelites because they taxed other Jews on behalf of Rome, and so they were perceived as earning their living by being traitors to their people.

Tax collectors were deviants of low status who were despised and hated as scum in Israel because they were seen as traitors in being employed by Rome to tax the Jewish people; tax collecting was the most hated profession in Jesus' time (Bock, Vol. II, pg. 1461; Hughes compares tax collectors with modern pimps and drug pushers, *Luke*, pg. 192).

Zacchaeus is not merely a tax collector, but is a *chief* tax collector (avrcitelw,nhj) which means he was the boss. He managed other tax collectors in his region or district and these

manager-bosses were often rich because of the money they skimmed off the top of the take for the Romans. He is a kind of “district manager” with other tax or toll collectors working as his subordinates (Green, pg. 668).

It is significant that he was in Jericho since Jericho would be a good geographical location for a customs station because of the passage of the Jordan from Judea to the lands east of the Jordan (Geldenhuis, pg. 471). Jericho was located on the main road from Trans-Jordan to Jerusalem and there were many tax collectors who served as ancient customs officers.

Zacchaeus is also rich and as we have learned in our previous sermon from Jesus how difficult it is for the rich and wealthy to enter the Kingdom of God (18:24-30), but what we learn in our passage today, what is impossible with man is possible with God (18:27). Although it is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom, it is not impossible with God if God has sovereignly chosen him to be his own.

To be wealthy in ancient Israel (like many today) was to enjoy privileged status and power. However, to be a rich “tax collector” did not mean that one was respected. In fact, the way most people would have thought of rich tax collectors was like we think of mobsters today: those who are rich but have earned their money in a dishonest, underhanded and cruel fashion.

In contrast to the rich ruler who thought he had kept all the commandments of God (and was probably recognized as a keeper of the commandments according to Rabbinical tradition, 18:21), Zacchaeus is considered a “sinner” in the eyes of the culture.

Zacchaeus’ name in Hebrew means “pure” or “righteous”. His name is derived from the Hebrew יצחק: *Zakkai* (see Ezra 2:9; Nehemiah 7:14).

Zacchaeus had heard of Jesus and desired to see him but could not (v. 3).

Zacchaeus was a “wee little man” as the children’s song goes and so because he was short in stature he climbed a tree to get a “bird’s eye” view of Jesus because of the crowds preventing him from seeing him.

It seems that Zacchaeus had heard that our Lord Jesus would receive repentant tax collectors and even sup with them in contrast to the other teachers of Israel who despised and rejected them and would not even come close to them (Luke 18:9ff; cf. Acts 10). Because of Jesus’ reputation as being gracious and merciful, Zacchaeus sought to look at him- -to see him—to perhaps compare this man with the other teachers of Israel.

We should note that Zacchaeus is one of several other people who face obstacles in seeing the Lord. Zacchaeus is like the widow in Jesus’ parable of persistent prayer who seeks justice from an unjust judge (18:1ff); he is like other tax collectors who are not received in the community (15:1ff); he is like the children who were initially kept from coming to the

Lord (18:15-17); he is like the blind beggar who was rebuked by the crowds and told to keep quiet (18:35ff). Zacchaeus' obstacle is not only being a tax collector and rich, but because he is of "small stature" (v. 3).

It is interesting to note that although there are sometimes obstacles for certain individuals to enter the Kingdom, yet God makes it possible (18:27) by His grace and his sovereign election of the individuals. Those who find it hardest to get close to the LORD Jesus are those who ironically get the closest to him! And ironically it seems that sometimes those who are closet in proximity to Jesus and His Word are the ones who are the farthest from him (cf. Luke 15:25ff with the older son in the *Parable of the Prodigal Son*). Again, this ought to humble us into realizing more and more that salvation is of the LORD and is possible because he makes it possible by *His initiating grace*.

Zacchaeus is sought by the LORD of Glory (v. 5)

We see God's initiating grace demonstrated in Jesus as he see Zacchaeus in the sycamore tree (v. 5). Jesus commands Zacchaeus to come down from the tree (distance) and come near to Him. Our Lord initiates the relationship of grace with Zacchaeus and calls him near (although Zacchaeus faced an obstacle of seeing the Lord because of the crowd). Zacchaeus' small stature is probably revealed to us to teach us all how far we are from God and because of our sins how far we have been separated from our Great Creator. Like the blind men and the lepers before him, Zacchaeus is also a picture of humble circumstances and in great need of God's help of finding him!

Knowing him by name, Jesus calls him down (commands him to come down) because it is necessary (Greek- *dei*- "*I must stay at your house...*") for Jesus to stay at his home (v. 5). Although at first glance we might think that Zacchaeus is seeking Jesus, we realize that it has been Jesus who has been seeking Zacchaeus. The way that Jesus says that he "must" stay at Zacchaeus' house reveals that Jesus understands his encounter with Zacchaeus to be part of his Divine Messianic Mission. When the Second Person of the Trinity stepped out of eternal glory into the womb of the virgin to be permanently united to humanity- - Zacchaeus was one he came to seek and save!

This term *dei* means "it is necessary" or in modern terms "it is a must!" that Jesus stays at Zacchaeus' house. Jesus uses this term when referring to the mission he must accomplish that God has sent him to complete. We could have a sermon just on this one term alone! Notice in Dr. Luke's Gospel how Jesus uses this term to refer to the fulfillment of his call and commission from God:

²⁵⁷ *Luke 2:49 And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?"*

²⁵⁷ *Luke 4:43 but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose."*

²⁵⁷ *Luke 9:22 saying, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."*

^{RSV} Luke 13:33 Nevertheless, I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem.'

^{RSV} Luke 17:25 But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

^{RSV} Luke 21:9 And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified, for these things must first take place, but the end will not be at once."

^{RSV} Luke 22:37 For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment."

^{RSV} Luke 24:44 Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

What is happening here in our passage is that Zacchaeus is being revealed as part of God's sovereign election from the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3-14). In space and time, the Lord Jesus is calling him by name to come to himself. We should remember that no one seeks after God (Romans 3:9) and Dr. Luke does not say "Zacchaeus was seeking salvation from Jesus" but that "he was seeking to see who Jesus was" (3a). Curiosity is driving him, not his own free will in an attempt to achieve salvation. We notice here that although God seeks the lost, the sinful and lost are commanded to receive him by faith.

However, in God's sovereign mercy and grace, Zacchaeus is revealed as part of the Son of Man's mission to seek and save the lost (v. 10). This passage reveals God's sovereignty in choosing and electing his people! Zacchaeus does not choose to seek Jesus (only to see him!); God in Jesus Christ does choose, that is, it is a must, that he stay with him and bring salvation to his household!

Zacchaeus responds in obedience and joy to the LORD (v. 6)

In contrast to the rich ruler who sadly goes away unrepentant (18:23), Zacchaeus finds repentance and great joy in the presence of Jesus Christ. Zacchaeus realizes joyfully the salvation of the Kingdom of God that is found in Christ.

Zacchaeus joyfully receives the LORD into his home for hospitality. This response of joy is a common motif in Dr. Luke's gospel when sinners receive the grace of God found in Christ (Luke 1:44; 2:10; 6:23; 10:17; 15:7, 10). Joy and repentance go together as we learn from King David when he sought repentance from God (Psalm 51:8-10); when we sin without repentance before the Lord we live a sorrowful and broken life, but when we repent we "hear" (experience) "joy and gladness":

Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. 'Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. ¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Although Zacchaeus has found the joy of the LORD through repentance and faith in Christ, the crowds still grumble in their sins.

The crowds continue to grumble (or murmur like the Pharisees) because Zacchaeus was a sinful outsider (v. 7)

In contrast to the joy experienced by Zacchaeus, the crowd grumbled (or murmured) because of the audacious action of Jesus in accepting hospitality from a “sinner”. Again, Jesus demonstrates his willingness to seek the lost and to save those who are outcasts in society; Jesus shows his power to make what is impossible- -possible- -with sinners repenting and finding faith in him.

Again, we should be reminded that the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law would not even sup with a lowly and despised tax collector; much less would they have gone to his home and received hospitality (cf. 15:1-2). Yet Jesus says: “Today, I must abide at your house” (v. 5b).

In this passage from Dr. Luke’s gospel it is not necessarily merely the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law who make up the crowd, but vaguely mentioned is “when they saw it” (v. 7a); that is, when they, the crowds (not merely the teachers of Israel, but many in the crowds) saw the Lord going to sup and receive hospitality with a sinner they grumbled.

As Dr. Luke has shown us before, as Jesus approaches Jerusalem more and more of the crowds are revealed as those *who do not have ears to hear his word and eyes to see His Kingdom*. This prepares us for the crowds reaction to Christ’s suffering and humiliation on the cross with their cry of “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

...But they kept shouting, "Crucify, crucify him!" -Luke 23:21

Zacchaeus shows his true faith and repentance by His obedient actions (v. 8)

Zacchaeus’ sin included idolatry and love of Mammon. In response to his new found LORD, he shows his true faith by giving to the poor (v. 8a) - “Half of my goods I give to the poor” (cf. Luke 18:18ff: Rich young ruler). Zacchaeus shows that he is obedient to the demands of God concerning his money and that he wants to love his poor neighbor as himself (as we have learned from previous sermons in Luke, compare):

^{ESV} Luke 14:13 But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind...

^{ESV} Luke 14:21 So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'

Because of God’s grace in Christ, Zacchaeus would no longer be a worshipper of Mammon and overlook the poor around him like the rich man who ignored Lazarus (16:19ff) or the Pharisees who loved money rather than God (16:14). Now Zacchaeus would throw parties where the poor were invited and provided for even though they could not repay!

Zacchaeus would no longer live like the rich ruler (another man of wealth and position)- - but is now willing because of God's grace to sell all that he has and distribute to the poor:

EST Luke 18:22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

Zacchaeus' sin also included defrauding (v. 8b) or robbing and stealing from others; he is admitting that the money that should be repaid was money that was stolen. He had become rich primarily due to ungodly money and business practices (Gk: ei; tino,j ti evsukofa,nthsa means "from whomsoever I have wrongfully exacted anything"). This implies that he had wrongfully exacted money from people in an ungodly and unfair manner; he had stolen according to God's Law, his extortion amounted to theft.

EST Exodus 22:1 "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep."

EST 2 Samuel 12:5-6: Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

He shows forth his repentance in his willingness to obey the Law of God (Exodus 22:1) and seek to give back what he has stolen from others. Because of the change that has happened within his heart because of God's grace in Christ, *Zacchaeus seeks to do what is right and fix the wrong things that he has done.* Zacchaeus will show his love for God by showing his love for his neighbor, by loving his neighbor as himself, by doing unto others what he would have them do unto him!

EST 1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.

EST 1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.

EST Matthew 7:12 "So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

Zacchaeus did not merely confess his love for God and neighbor here in our passage, *he showed forth his love for God in his actions*; he was not merely confessing with his mouth his salvation, but showing forth that salvation in his deeds (cf. James 2:14ff).

EST Psalm 15:1-3: A PSALM OF DAVID. O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? ²He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; ³who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend;

What is interesting to note is that in Zacchaeus we see the love, equity and justice of God for the poor and oppressed being realized. In this present age, there is much corruption, theft and unfair treatment of others - particularly those who are helpless and weak. *But in Zacchaeus we see God's Kingdom to be fully revealed in the New Creation dawning NOW in*

his faith; Already God is making things right through his people. This is what the Apostle Paul means when he rejoices in our union with Christ in 2 Corinthians 5:

ESV 2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

One of the characteristic attributes of a Kingdom Disciple is a willingness and eagerness to make right what was wrong; to set things right in response to God's making things right with those who believe in Jesus Christ. As God restores and reconciles sinners to Himself through Jesus Christ, so repentant sinners show forth the restoration and reconciliation that should occur between mankind.

Repentance shows itself clearly in our actions. Zacchaeus is a picture from God of the change that happens in how we think, act and live because of the grace that has transformed our hearts. We are transformed in order that we may serve and love. Zacchaeus' repentance is to make right that which was wrong in his life as much as it was in his power to do so.

As God grants us the grace in Christ Jesus and we realize repentantly our own sins and wrongs against our neighbor, so we should be quick to be transformed in our thinking and to go forth to make right any wrongs with our fellow man as far as it depends upon us! This is part of our being NOT conformed to the pattern of the world and being transformed by the renewal of our mind so that we might do the will of God as the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 12:

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. - Romans 12:2

True repentance in our life is a lifelong journey for Kingdom Disciples. Whenever God's transforming grace points out sin in our hearts, or sinful practices or tendencies, we must be quick to change. In response to the work of God's Spirit through the Word of God, we must be quick to change, to turn from our sins, our practices, our patterns that have been established and seek (as much as it is possible) to right all wrongs between God and our fellow man.

ESV Luke 3:8 Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

How do we change? God reveals by his grace and mercy our sins and we respond not merely with words such as "I'm sorry" or even "Boy, I'm a sinner and don't deserve God's grace" (although this is a good start!); but *we also respond by faith with deeds and actions of repentance.* Anyone can say to oneself confidently: "We have Abraham as our father" -- but not all can do what Abraham did!

Zacchaeus is declared to be a true son of Abraham (v. 9).

Zacchaeus showed forth in his actions that he had been an unrepentant sinner in his life before he met Jesus. Now as a repentant sinner because of God's grace, salvation has come to his house. Although he has been all of his life ethnically a "son of Abraham" now he is a true "son of Abraham" by faith because he believes God's promises found in Christ by faith *as Abraham believed*.

Being declared as a "son of Abraham" by Jesus is equivalent with saying that he was saved or that he entered the Kingdom of God through faith in Christ. A "son of Abraham" was not merely someone who descended from Abraham ethnically, but one who believed God like Father Abraham believed!

257 Romans 4:12 and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

258 John 8:39 They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did...."

It is interesting to note that "salvation has come to this house" reveals that God makes himself known to the heads of family's as a covenant God. Although normally it is virtually impossible for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God, nothing is impossible with God (for God's grace to families or households, see Luke 10:5; John 4:53; Acts 10:1-48). As early as Jesus' ministry we see the gospel of salvation coming to households just as God promised to Abraham (cf. Acts 2:38ff).

Jesus shows forth his favor and grace to Zacchaeus and because of God's sovereign mercy and grace, he slips through the eye of the needle (which is so hard for the camel- -or the rich- -to get through)! As Jesus approaches Jerusalem to die, his mission is again accomplished in the salvation of a son of Abraham. Although many so-called "sons of Abraham" who descend from Abraham merely ethnically as Jews will reject and hand over the Son of Man, here again we see that those who believe can be saved - - whether Jew or Gentiles - - and they can find hope and become an heir to Abraham's promise in Christ's Church as witnesses to Christ's Kingdom!

Jesus' logic in this passage consists in two related syllogisms (the conclusion is inferred from the premises): (1) Children of Abraham are those whose lives (dispositions and behavior) are oriented toward God. Zacchaeus' life is oriented toward God. Therefore, Zacchaeus is a child of Abraham.

(2) Salvation is for the children of Abraham. Zacchaeus is a child of Abraham. Therefore, salvation is for Zacchaeus (see Green, NICNT, pg. 673).

Zacchaeus was lost but the Son of Man found him (v. 10).

As YHWH, the LORD God promises Israel in the Old Testament through the Prophet Ezekiel, one day he will come and shepherd Israel. God taught the Old Covenant people

that one day he would come himself to shepherd Israel and to seek and save the lost sheep of Israel (Ezekiel 34).

Zacchaeus is a partial fulfillment of this prophecy that teaches us that Jesus of Nazareth (the man that Zacchaeus wanted so badly to see) is none other than God in the flesh- -the Great Shepherd of the Sheep! This gives us a fuller understanding of why it was so necessary, why it was a “divine must” that Jesus go to Zacchaeus’ home: He was one of the lost sheep of Israel that God in the flesh came to seek after, find, heal, bring home, and shepherd by His grace!

Son of Man

The Son of Man terminology Jesus again uses to describe himself in the present passage of Scripture: cf. Luke 17:22, 24, 26, 30; Dr. Luke has used many times before in his Gospel (see scripture below as well as Luke 18:8, 31; 19:10; 21:27, 36; 22:22, 48, 69; 24:7- -over 20 times!). Jesus’ use of the Son of Man has great Messianic and theological implications regarding the rule and reign of God over the world. Many expected when Messiah or the Son of Man would come that he would be gloriously enthroned and avenge and vindicate Israel from her enemies’ oppressive rule over them. The expectation of many in Israel was when the Son of Man comes there would be a glorious time for Israel as in the days of King David.

But interestingly, the term “Son of Man” is Jesus’ most frequently used term to refer to himself and His ministry- *particularly his death and suffering that will come in time:*

^{ESV} Luke 5:24 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”- he said to the man who was paralyzed- “I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.”

^{ESV} Luke 6:5 And he said to them, “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

^{ESV} Luke 6:22 “Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!”

^{ESV} Luke 7:34 The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’

^{ESV} Luke 9:22 saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”

^{ESV} Luke 9:26 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

^{ESV} Luke 9:44 “Let these words sink into your ears: The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men.”

^{ESV} Luke 9:58 And Jesus said to him, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

^{ESV} Luke 11:30 For as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.

ESV Luke 12:8 "And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God,

ESV Luke 12:10 And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

ESV Luke 12:40 You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

ESV Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

The term "Son of Man" refers to Jesus' Messianic revelation of His sovereign rule and reign over his Kingdom. This rule and reign is being revealed in the midst of the people at the present time as Jesus is with them in the flesh and as he seeks to rule over and witness to his Kingdom through those who believe, like Zacchaeus.

However, as we have learned before from our Lord, the "Son of Man" must die as a substitute for sinners (v. 25; cf. 9:44ff); he must go through great suffering and humiliation in order to take his exalted and supremely regal position as the enthroned Son of Man-Son of God at God's right hand. Jesus is about to enter Jerusalem, but it will not be to set up his great visible kingdom immediately!

After the Son of Man suffers in Jerusalem, he will rise from the dead and take the Davidic Throne in Heaven at God's right hand. He will rule and reign over heaven and earth (cf. Matt. 28:18-20) until he returns to fully reveal the Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:21-26).

ESV Luke 21:27 And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

This is another reference to Daniel's prophetic vision of the Son of Man ruling sovereignly over heaven and earth as Great King and Judge (Dan. 7:13-14).

ESV Daniel 7:13-14: I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. "And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Parable of the Minas (or the Pounds)

As these words ring in the people's ears, as Dr. Luke writes: "As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable..." (v. 11). We should note the fact that Dr. Luke wants us to interpret this parable in light of the preceding story of Zacchaeus' salvation (there is no change in scene).

How should the sons of Abraham live until Christ returns -not only as recipients of the Gospel of the Kingdom -but by investing this Gospel of the Kingdom in Word and Deed in the lives of other people (19:11-27). Those who become true sons of Abraham through faith in Christ are called to seek the lost by declaring in our lives the Gospel of the Kingdom.

We are accountable to God with what we do with the gospel! Again Jesus puts our focus not on God's timetable of when the Kingdom will come, but rather how we should live as we anticipate its full manifestation and revelation.

In the larger context, Jesus is about to come to his Messianic destination in Jerusalem. All of His teaching about the Kingdom being present in Him will be realized but also questioned by many who did not understand. The Kingdom has come through faith NOW for Zacchaeus (and others who believe) but the full realization of the Kingdom will not be immediately manifested and revealed.

As we have learned in past sermons, the Kingdom of God would be manifested in three acts or stages: *The Kingdom has come in Jesus; the Kingdom is coming in Jesus as the Gospel is made known and men believe, and the Kingdom will come again.*

With these three acts or stages of the kingdom in mind, it is important to understand that many of the Jews of Jesus' time only thought of the Kingdom as appearing immediately (v. 11). So Jesus is clarifying for all who has ears to hear how the Kingdom of God will continue to come regardless of how unsuccessful it will seem in his suffering, humiliation and death.

The Jewish expectation of the Last Day during Jesus' time was that when Messiah would come he would immediately set up his Kingdom and overrule and overthrow all of God's political enemies. In the thinking of many Jews of Jesus' day, they were expecting Messiah immediately to release the people from the oppressive bondage of Rome and set up a mere political Kingdom; Messiah was a mere political Messiah in many people's minds.

Because this was the popular teaching in the Judaism at the time, Jesus teaches this parable to explain that this end or Last Day or the full manifestation of His Kingdom would be delayed. During this interim time of delay the people were to be faithful with the preaching and proclamation of the Kingdom, so that many true "sons of Abraham" would find hope and salvation in Christ. Jesus tells the parable to fix rightly their eschatological expectations and assumptions and to encourage faithfulness in His Kingdom with the good-news-message that Jesus has entrusted to them. As He tells his disciples in John 16 about the advantage of him going away:

John 16:7-11: Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. ⁹And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; ¹⁰concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; ¹¹concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

Even the disciples reveal their eschatological assumptions were slow to change even though Jesus had corrected them. In fact, after Jesus' suffering, crucifixion, resurrection

and before His ascension to his throne, the apostles ask him if this is the time that Jesus will now set up his Kingdom; but notice Jesus' response about their duty to the Gospel:

EST Acts 1:6-9: So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." ⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

Jesus teaches in this parable the sobering fact that for Israel and the world, the Last Day will be not only a day of salvation, but also one of judgment, as the parable ends on a very grim note (v. 27). Those who do not put their trust in Christ and do not believe the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom that Jesus Christ is Messiah that rules on God's throne over heaven and earth, then they will be destroyed for their cosmic rebellion:

EST Luke 19:27 But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me."

Jesus teaches the "Parable of the Minas" (or "Parable of the Pounds") to tell all of his followers to invest their lives with the Gospel of the Message until He returns.

What is the content of Jesus' parabolic story?

A Nobleman went to a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return (v. 12) Jesus begins telling the disciples (a Nobleman is one in the ancient world who is of lofty position on the scale of power and privilege because of his birthright- Green, pg. 678). The Nobleman goes into a far country which was normal for nobles to be confirmed in their power from the central location in Rome during Jesus' day. The important fact that the story tells that he goes to a far country is to instruct Christ's disciples that his return will not be immediate, but rather a long journey.

This teaches us that Jesus will leave his disciples in order to ascend and be enthroned at God's right hand. Jesus would rule and reign on the Heavenly Throne (Matt. 18:18-20), and in the interim Kingdom Disciples are to show their commitment to the King and His Throne (Kingdom) by being faithful with what he has given to them.

Before the nobleman departs he leaves with ten of his slaves some money to invest (ten minas, or about three or four month's wages for a laborer) and tells them to "engage in business until I come" (v. 13). In contrast to a similar parable in Matthew's Gospel (15:14-30) where the servants receive large amounts of money, here the sum is smaller because it is a test of faithfulness with what does with the small sum of money (Geldenhuis, pg. 477).

Although Nobleman will be absent, the slaves of the future king are to continue to keep commerce and trade profits coming in so that his treasury may be full when he returns.

Unfortunately, the citizens or people of the Kingdom hated him and did not want him to rule over them (v. 14). This did not change the fact that he was king and ruler and eventually he returned (v. 15).

It is interesting to note that Jesus' parable is partially based upon a true story (sounds like a special on television!). In about 4 B.C. Archelaus, the son of King Herod, was sent to Rome (a nobleman) to be confirmed as king as defined by King Herod in his will for his son to take part in the sovereign rule over a portion of Herod's kingdom. As the historian Josephus teaches us, after Archelaus set out to be confirmed by the emperor, a Jewish delegation was sent at the same time to Rome to protest his appointment. When King Archelaus returned with royal power, he exacted judgment and punishment upon his enemies (Josephus, *The Jewish War*, ii, 6; *Antiquities*, xvii, 8-11).

Like King Archelaus, Jesus is going to the Father's right hand to receive a kingdom; like the Jewish delegation who protested Archelaus' appointment, so many people (both Jews and Gentiles) will protest rebelliously and reject Jesus' appointment and enthronement as God's Messianic King at His right hand ("We do not want this man to rule over us..." v. 14b). Yet Jesus will return *as king*, and he will exact judgment and punishment upon his enemies (19:27; Revelation 19:11):

^{ESV} Revelation 19:11-18: Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³ He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. ¹⁴ And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. ¹⁵ From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. ¹⁷ Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God, ¹⁸ to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great."

Jesus' story concludes: When the king returned he called for his servants to come and give an account to him as to how they invested the deposit that he had given them before he left (v. 16). There are three specific responses to the King's question of how faithful they were (but only two categories of response: *faithful or unfaithful/patriots or rebels*):

- 1) One man increased the original ten minas by ten- -One man doubled his money! (v. 16) Jesus' response was "Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in very little, you shall have authority over ten cities" (v. 17).
- 2) One man increased the original ten minas by five (v. 18) Jesus' response "And you are to be over five cities" (v. 19).
- 3) Another man came with nothing (vv. 20-21); he had hidden the ten minas rather than investing them as was commanded. Jesus responds with a strong rebuke (vv.

22-23). This man was left with nothing- -even that which he had was taken away (v. 24).

The first two men receive commendation and reward having “turned a profit”. Because of their faithfulness in the small things, they are rewarded with more responsibility and more honor to serve the king. As we have learned before in Dr. Luke’s recording of our Lord’s words:

esv Luke 16:10 "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.

A third slave has been disobedient and refused to listen to his master’s commands primarily because of what he thought of the master (v. 20ff). A little interest from the local bank would have been better than no action or investment at all (v. 23). We dare not push this parable too literally as we have learned the nature of interpretation the parables; this does not teach for example that Jesus is dishonest and severe (cf. vv. 21ff).

The point that Jesus makes with this story that we must all hear and heed by His grace is that we have been entrusted with the Gospel of the Kingdom to invest it in the lives of others. We have been called by Christ as His disciples to make disciples of all men during the interim in which he has gone to receive a kingdom and prepare a place for us (cf. John 14:1-6; 1 Cor. 15:21-26). This Kingdom that is to come is what the Apostle Paul teaches us about in 1 Corinthians 15:24-26:

24-26. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

Summary: esv Luke 19:26-27: 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 27 But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me.'

The story ends with judgment as will God’s story when he returns. When the Kingdom is fully manifested with the Second Coming of Christ the kingdom will be delivered to God the Father after Christ destroys every rule and authority and power that challenges his reign (see Psalm 2). “Christ must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.”

This parable ends in salvation for true sons and heirs of Abraham (those who have been faithful will be saved!); this parable ends in judgment and destruction for those who do not believe (those who have been unfaithful and have protested and rejected God’s King).

We show our faithfulness to Christ and our status as true sons of Abraham by making known the Gospel of God’s grace. We show our faithfulness to Christ by declaring in what we do (like Zacchaeus) as well as what we say (our confession) that the Kingdom of God has dawned in Jesus Christ.

A person enters this kingdom (like Zacchaeus and all who believe) through Jesus Christ alone. As Jesus says in John 14:6:

“I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father (and His Kingdom which is implied) except by (that is, through) me.”

Let me challenge you with something I have been pondering lately in my decision-making. I have noticed recently that in the Proverbs and the wisdom literature in the Bible that the decisions of how we spend our time are not merely in the category of “right and wrong” but also in “good, better, and best”.

What do I mean by this? Well, in light of Jesus’ teaching on being faithful stewards of His gospel, what we do in our lives is more than asking if something we do is right or wrong. *We should indeed ask what is right and wrong according to Scripture, but it seems that wisdom and mature Christians do more. That is, once they know what is right or good to do, they then think about what in that category of right is good, better, and/or best.*

Think about daily decisions you make; it is good if you ask “Is this right or wrong?” But also ask: “Is this good, better or the best way to spend my time doing right?” Think about that because I believe in the category of good, we should also seek to do what is best in our service. *What is the best way for you to serve Christ in his Kingdom? What is the best way to spend your money? Etc. What are the best practices for me as a disciple to seek to accomplish so that I can be more effective by God’s grace to make the Gospel of the Kingdom known?*

If Jesus will hold his servants accountable to what he has given them and if faithfulness in small things means that we can be trusted and faithful in great things, then we should ask ourselves these questions.

Will you be received hospitably by Jesus (as Zacchaeus) when he returns? Will he sup with you at the table of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom (Matt. 8:11)? Will he commend you for your faithfulness to the making known of his gospel in word and deed as the nobleman commended two of the servants?

Or will you be like the crowds at a distance who merely grumble (19:7)? Will you be rebuked by the King of kings and Lord of lords for your unfaithfulness, losing everything as the unfaithful slave in the parable because you were not a true son of Abraham? Will you face a judgment of being “slaughtered” by the king for your cosmic rebellion?

Repent and believe the Gospel of the Kingdom! Jesus Christ has come and salvation and the Kingdom of God is found in him!

May it be evident that you are a true son (and heir!) of Abraham because of your trust in Christ and because of your evident faithfulness to the great possession and gift he has entrusted to you while he has gone to receive his kingdom!

May it be evident in how you repentantly live from day to day that (like Zacchaeus) you don't merely confess your faith, but show your faith in righting wrongs, and loving God and your neighbor as yourself!

May God's kingdom rule and reign over your heart be evident for all to see!

Whether you are a Jew or a Gentile -even if you're considered a "sinner" by everyone, you can find hope and salvation today- -and enter God's Kingdom- -through Jesus Christ! You too can be a son of Abraham through faith. As the Apostle Paul teaches us:

²⁵⁷ Galatians 3:26-29: ...For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Thanks be to God for His Word! Thanks be to God for His Christ!
Amen.

CRB

www.aplacefortruth.org

Bibliography- For Further Reading

Beale, G. K. and D. A. Carson. Editors: *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Baker, 2007.

Bock, Darrell L. *Luke: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Volumes 1-2, Baker, 1994.

Bromiley, G. Editor: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)*, Volumes 1-4, Eerdmans, 1982.

Geldenhuis, Norval. *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke (New International Commentary on the New Testament, NICNT)*, Eerdmans, 1952.

Green, Joel B. *The Gospel of Luke (NICNT)*, Eerdmans, 1997.

Green, McKnight, and Marshall. Editors: *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. IVP, 1992.

Hughes, R. Kent. *Luke, Volumes I-II (Preaching the Word Series)*, Crossway, 1998.

Marshall, I. Howard. *The Gospel of Luke (The New International Greek Testament Commentary)*, Eerdmans, 1978.

Morris, Leon. *Luke: The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, IVP Academic, 1988.

Ryken, Wilhoit, and Longman. Editors: *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, IVP, 1998.

CRB

Scripture Lesson

^{85v}**John 8:31-59:** So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, ³²and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." ³³They answered him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free?'" ³⁴Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. ³⁵The slave does not remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. ³⁶So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. ³⁷I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you. ³⁸I speak of what I have seen with my Father, and you do what you have heard from your father." ³⁹They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did, ⁴⁰but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. ⁴¹You are doing what your father did." They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father- even God." ⁴²Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. ⁴³Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. ⁴⁴You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies. ⁴⁵But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. ⁴⁶Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? ⁴⁷Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God." ⁴⁸The Jews answered him, "Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?" ⁴⁹Jesus answered, "I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. ⁵⁰Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. ⁵¹Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." ⁵²The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.'" ⁵³Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?" ⁵⁴Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.'" ⁵⁵But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. ⁵⁶Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." ⁵⁷So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" ⁵⁸Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." ⁵⁹So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

^{85v}**Galatians 3:26-29:** ...For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

^{85v}**Exodus 22:1** "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.

^{85v}**Ezekiel 34:11-15:** "For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out. ¹²As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the country. ¹⁴I will feed them with good pasture, and on the mountain heights of

Israel shall be their grazing land. There they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on rich pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord GOD.