



Luke 19:1-10
What a Friend for Sinners

NKJ Luke 19:1 Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

2 Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich.

3 And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature.

4 So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way.

5 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."

6 So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.

7 But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."

8 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."

9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham;

10 "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

To this day, I can't think of Zacchaeus without thinking of the words to the Kid's Sunday School song "Zacchaeus was a wee little man, and a wee little man was he" but that song and indeed all of the popular imagery surrounding this passage from Luke paints a picture of Zacchaeus as though he was a lovable little character. You can almost imagine Danny Devito up in the tree.

But, that sentimental imagery couldn't be more wrong. A more accurate kid's song might be "Zacchaeus was a great big sinner." Yes, he was small in stature, but then again the Mongol Horde was made up of small guys who rode ponies, and yet nobody made up cute songs about how "Genghis Khan was a wee little man" because the Mongols were hated and feared.

Zacchaeus was an ἀρχιτελώνης - a chief tax collector for the Romans. One of only three in the entire province of Palestine, the other two were located a Caesarea on the coast and Capernaum in Galilee. He was in charge of all the other Tax Collectors, the men like Matthew Levi, who sat at the toll booths and collected revenues on all the trade that took place in their district. Now Jericho was a rich city, it sat right in the middle of an important trade route and any commodities going to Jerusalem from the East would pass right through it, additionally Jericho was a center of production for Balsam an expensive and much desired balm – if you've ever smelled balsam, there is nothing quite like it. Roman Catholics use it a lot in their various rituals.

Anyway, the point is, this wee little man Zacchaeus would have been the hub for all of the tax collection of the hated Roman government for the entire area, he had a certain amount of taxes he had to send each year to Rome, but anything over and above that, he kept. As such you can imagine how

the system encouraged corruption, extortion, kickbacks, and so on, and how popular he would have been with the people. He produced nothing, he worked for oppressive gentile government that was over his people, all he ever did was take, take, take. And if you couldn't or wouldn't pay, he had the power and authority of the legions to back him up.

It isn't surprising then that in verse 7 we read that "*they all complained*" – the entire city hated this guy. The Lepers on the road side outside of Jericho were probably more popular than Zacchaeus. I mean, if you asked the citizens of Jericho the question "*Who in this town is least worthy of salvation?*" If the name Zacchaeus wasn't number one, it would definitely be in the top ten. It's ironic then that the name Zacchaeus comes from the Hebrew *Zakai* – the righteous one – 'cause that may have been his name, but that was certainly not his nature.

But that is the wonderful thing about Divine Grace. God's grace doesn't search out the person who is worthy to receive it – if it did it wouldn't be grace, and it would never find an object. Rather it takes an unworthy person and makes him the object of God's unmerited love.

Jesus comes into town that day, and there is obviously a huge crowd around him, so big that little Zacchaeus isn't going to be able to get a glimpse of him. And that was his object, to find out who this guy Jesus is. Zacchaeus did not wake up that morning thinking, "*I have to get right with God, I have to get saved!*" He heard the commotion, and probably heard from people in the crowd that it was Jesus of Nazareth, and he might have heard rumors from the other tax collectors about him, the man so unlike the other rabbis, a godly man who ate and drank with sinners, who did miracles and so on. And because he knew the crowd wasn't going to part for him, he runs ahead and climbs a tree. Which was an undignified thing for a rich and important man to do, but what other chance did he have.

He expects to see Jesus in passing. He's not like the leper, he doesn't call out to him, he's just looking to get a glimpse at the guy who's causing such a stir. But instead of him seeing Jesus in passing, Jesus sees him, and the most amazing thing happens.

He says right off the bat: "*Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.*"

I hope you catch how amazing that statement from Jesus is. First Jesus knows who this man is, it's reminiscent of John 1:48 where Jesus met Nathanael for the first time and greets him as if he knows him intimately and Nathanael is amazed "*48 Nathanael said to Him, 'How do You know me?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.'*"

But more amazing than the fact that Jesus knows Zacchaeus, is that he says "*for today I must stay at your house.*" He doesn't say, "Zacchaeus, I'd like to come visit your house for a while, if that would be ok." He says, I must stay at your house. Why did Jesus come to Jericho? Ok, yes he's going up to Jerusalem and to get there he needs to pass through the city. But that isn't why he came, he tells you in verse 10 why he came "*for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.*"

Part of Christ's divine mission given to Him by the Father, the things that He MUST do, included saving Zacchaeus that day. Do you see how amazing that is? Zacchaeus didn't go out to be saved by Jesus. **Jesus came to save Him.** But that is what Jesus does – *Jesus Saves Sinners*. Here you have one of the greatest examples of effectual calling in the bible.

John 6:37 "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." Zacchaeus was given into his hand by the father, and so when Christ calls to him, how does Zacchaeus react? Verse 6 ***So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.***

Here you have conversion. Regeneration, the new birth. Jesus calls, and this man is forever changed, an awesome transformation occurs. And one that Zacchaeus never in a million years would have expected. I wonder how many other times this has happened again and again. People go to church to humor a friend, or stop in on Sunday on a whim because it was too rainy for anything else, or they go out to see some preacher causing a commotion, and end up receiving something far greater than they ever expected.

Most of you don't know the name of Robert Robinson, but he is the author of *Come thou Fount of Every Blessing*. Robinson was told by a fortuneteller that he would live to see his great-grandchildren, and he thought to himself, "If I live that long, how can I make sure they'll like me?" so he determined to get a stock of stories and anecdotes so as his first acquisition, he determined to go hear the "poor deluded Methodist" preacher George Whitefield, who was causing such a stir. He went expecting to get something he could later spin into an amusing yarn about the silly things that happened when he was young. That day Whitefield was preaching on Matthew 3:7, John the Baptist's stern rebuke of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, ***"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"*** Robinson records:

Mr. Whitefield described the Sadducean character; this did not touch me, I thought myself as good a Christian as any man in England. From this he went to that of the Pharisees. He described their exterior decency, but observed that the poison of the viper rankled in their hearts. This rather shook me. At length, in the course of his sermon, he abruptly broke off; paused for a few moments; then burst into a flood of tears; lifted up his hands and eyes, and exclaimed, 'O my hearers! the wrath's to come, the wrath's to come!' These words sunk into my heart, like lead in the waters. I wept, and when the sermon was ended, retired alone. For days and weeks I could think of little else. Those awful words would follow me, wherever I went, 'The wrath's to come, the wrath's to come'!

Now from the last 4 Verses, I want to draw out 3 applications:

- 1) Verse 7: ***"But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."***

Kids, you have been given a great privilege, one that many of us Adults here didn't have – you are growing up as members of the church, members of the Covenant community. You have great spiritual benefits, but you are going to be subject to a terrible temptation to become like the people in this verse. So that when big sinners get saved, or come to church, you aren't happy for them. Instead you complain, and grumble. That is a terrible sin. It's like the way the older brother acted in the parable of the pharisee, or the workers in the parable of the vineyard who complained when everyone got the same pay no matter how long they'd been working.

You know what that's like, Well, its like if your Mommy or your Daddy gave you a special treat which you hadn't earned like taking you out for ice cream. But then later on when they did the same thing for someone else, you saying "THAT'S NOT FAIR! THEY DIDN'T DESERVE ICE CREAM!" ***Neither did you!*** But you've forgotten that.

So when someone receives a blessing, especially when that blessing is becoming a Christian. REJOICE AND BE GLAD FOR THEM!

Adults, be watchful of this yourselves, keep praying that the Lord would bring big sinners into our church, and then when they come. Don't get all upset and huffy and give them the cold shoulder. What is *he doing here?* Remember where you were headed when the Lord CALLED YOU!

- 2) *"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."* You know how you can tell true conversion, because it produces a real change of life, and the visible evidence of repentance:

(Worship Folder)

In 2 Cor. 7:10 Paul describes true conversion, For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, a repentance which bringeth no regret: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. This true repentance is based on and rooted in the work of regeneration. It is the effect of regeneration in the conscious life. It involves a change of thoughts and opinions, of desires and volitions. It is an altering of the entire course of life. The book of Lamentations describes conversion as involving a twofold aspect. Turn thou us unto thee, O Jehovah, and we shall be turned... 3 On the one hand, there is the passive aspect of conversion, in which God is the active agent. This involves the subconscious level of man. It is the regenerating work of God. On the other hand, there is the active response of man. This is the resulting conscious act of the regenerated man, by which he through the grace of God turns to God in repentance and faith. - Morton Smith

The world doesn't understand this, they think it is the works that save, the giving away of money. Zacchaeus could have given away everything he owned, without faith, and the inner change of heart that produced it he would have been just as lost. But when the root is good, good fruit automatically follows. The heart is changed the inclinations are changed and so love, repentance, restitution and charity follow:

"The world, and the love of it, go out of the heart as soon as ever the true love of Christ comes into it; the soul knows that it cannot serve God and mammon." – Poole

That is one of the ways you can tell that the Rich Young Ruler remained unconverted, he would not part with his god mammon.

- 3) *9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham;*

10 "for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Here you had one of the worst sinners in Jericho, and a rich man to boot. You remember what Jesus had said: *"25 "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."*

But here We see the "camel passing through the eye of a needle," and the "rich man entering the kingdom of God." We behold a plain proof that "all things are possible with God."

Some of you, have sins in your past that haunt you to this day. You may even bear the scars that resulted from sinful decisions.

Is. 1:18 " Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool."

There are no incurable cases under the Gospel!

What is meant by the Son of Abraham comment:

Son of abraham – Gal. 3:29 "29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Romans 2:28 " 28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh;

29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God."