

Zacchaeus

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[0 : 00] Well, now we'll add you to God's blessing, let us turn back to the portion of scripture which we read in the Gospel according to Luke and from chapter 19.

And although I want to focus on the first ten verses of this chapter which speaks about Zacchaeus, it takes a text to verse 10 of this chapter and we read, For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Well, this morning we looked at the book of Isaiah in the Old Testament, where Isaiah was exhorting the people to seek the Lord when he was to be found and to call upon when he was near.

And also telling the wicked man to save his way and the unrighteousness thoughts. Now, tonight I want to look at a real example of this. How does this work in practice?

And I believe that we can see many similarities between that text and what happened in the life of Zacchaeus. So as we read in the first verse, we read, and Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

[1 : 13] And here what seems like a very minor detail, just where Jesus was passing through, actually gives us a great insight into what was going on here. Because if you look at Jericho's history, when Joshua came across the river with the people of God, 14 years after they came out of Egypt, the first city that they destroyed was Jericho.

Now, Jericho, after they had been destroyed, God had put a curse on that city. And he said, curse against his people for their unbelief, for their sin.

And make sure that nobody ever tries to rebuild this city. Because if anybody ever does, he himself will be cursed. And yet, when you read through the books of kings, you see that there was a king which decided that it would be a great idea to build Jericho again.

And that's what happened. Jericho was built. And very quickly again, it became a very evil place. It was a city on which the judgment of God was lying.

And yet, despite that, we see that Jesus was passing through this place. And as he passed through this city under judgment, he preached forgiveness to them.

[2 : 37] That's what he did. And not only that, but the other thing that we can learn here is that this was the last time that Jesus was ever to pass through Jericho. Jericho was about about 17 and a half miles away from Jerusalem.

And Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, there to be crucified. Probably about seven days' time. And this was the last time he was ever going to pass through Jericho.

And as we think about these things, even in the very first verse, we can bear two things in mind ourselves as well. The first is that we are a city under judgment to some people.

We are under the judgment of God because of our sin. And God is just in condemning each and every one of us to tell that we are not in the past. And yet, forgiveness is offered to us.

Forgiveness is offered to us who are under judgment. And separately, just as Jesus passed through Jericho this day for the very last time, for all we know, Jesus might be passing through here for the very last time also.

[3 : 45] We don't know if we will hear the gospel again. We don't know if he will be offered to us again. And so, for the short time we'll be out together tonight, we'll like to focus our attention on Zacchaeus.

And the encounter which Zacchaeus had with Jesus in Jericho. An encounter which was to change his life forever. And as we look at these verses together, I would like us to take three points.

The first of these is what kind of man is Zacchaeus? Secondly, we will look at Zacchaeus' conversion. And thirdly, we will look at the way in which Zacchaeus' life changed.

Firstly then, what kind of man was Zacchaeus? What are we told about him in this short passage of scripture? Well, the first thing that we know is that he was a Jew, or certainly a nominal Jew, because Zacchaeus is a Jewish name.

And not only that, but in verse 9 he's called a son of Abraham. And that was a very given to many of the Jews at the time, because the Jews saw Abraham to be the father of the faith.

[4 : 51] It was Abraham who God called out of other fatalities. He was the one who became the father through Isaac and Jacob, and then the twelve sons and so on.

Abraham was the father. And so we know that he was at least nominally a Jew. And so I suppose in today's talk, he would be somebody who could have said a church background.

Although maybe not an active member of the church. Probably not an active member of the church. Secondly, he was the chief of the publicans, or the chief tax collector.

Now, Jericho at this time, like all of Judea, all of Palestine, and much of the surrounding area, Jericho was under Roman rule. And although the Romans didn't actually collect their own taxes, what they did was, they split the area of the land of the land, they split it up into districts.

And they sold off these districts to rich men and women businessmen, who would then collect the taxes themselves. And they would pay a yearly fee to the Romans, and then they would be granted to collect the taxes.

[6 : 00] And so, Zacchaeus worked for one of these businessmen. And it was his job, not only to collect taxes, but it was his job to manage all of the other people who collected taxes.

He was the boss. Everybody would come to him with the money, and he would deal with the boss. Thirdly, we know by his own admission that Zacchaeus was a dishonest man, that he was a cheat, that he would cheat people out of money.

Now, it's obvious that he was a well-paid man, he was a rich man. But despite his riches, he wasn't happy. So he continued to cheat people out of money, so that he could make himself richer.

And we'll perhaps be a little bit more about that in a wee while. And fourthly, we know that Zacchaeus was not a very well-liked man.

Because we have him here called a sinner. This man is a sinner. And, yes, we're all sinners, but this is a very specific word, which speaks about public sin.

[7 : 10] Which speaks about the way he was seen in the eyes of men. He was a sinner. He was a traitor for taking money off his people, for working for somebody who had bought the ground of romance.

And his reputation was further blackened by the fact that he abused his role, and that he stole from his own people. He wasn't a very well-liked man.

And I'm sure that if Zacchaeus was living today, that he wouldn't be any more popular than he was back then. You can imagine him as a proud, stirred-up man, living probably in one of the poshest streets in Edinburgh or in London.

A big man should have had a big posh car outside of his house. But was Zacchaeus happy? That's the question. Zacchaeus is a man. And is that man happy today? Because it's evident that we're all in life striving for happiness.

And Zacchaeus tried to achieve this more by increasing his wealth. And the more he got, the more he wanted. And the more he wanted, the more unfulfilled that he felt.

[8 : 19] And the less happy that he was. You see, Zacchaeus, from the outsiders' point of view, he seemed to have it all. But he knew better than anybody else that he really had nothing at all.

Now I don't know your position today, I don't know your situation, how like Zacchaeus or how unlike Zacchaeus you are. But I do know this, that your goal in life is happiness.

To be satisfied, not only for yourself, but perhaps for your family as well. That's your grace decide to be happy and fulfilled. And yet, I promise you this, that if you're not a believer in Jesus Christ, if you don't trust with him with all of his soul, then you may never be truly happy.

Your search for happiness is in vain. Because, you see, although God has given us many good things in this life, and we can't say that these things are bad, because many of them are good.

But the problem is this, these things were never meant to fulfil us. These things were never meant to give meaning to our lives. They are on us.

[9 : 29] And so we want through happiness, through fulfilment, and we need much more than money. We need much more than things. Well, secondly, let us look at Zacchaeus' encounter with Jesus, and we can see that from about verse 3.

We have to ask, why did a man like Zacchaeus, then, want to meet Jesus? A man who seemed to have it all. Well, obviously, Zacchaeus had heard that Jesus was in Jericho.

Everybody was raving about this Jesus. Some were saying that he was the Messiah, the one who was going to save the people from their sins. And you are sure that, although perhaps he didn't go to the synagogue of the Jewish church now, and perhaps he was quite far away from God, I'm sure that he can remember hearing about this Messiah.

This Christ who was going to come, and who was going to take away the sins of his people. And you know, to each other, she said, well, this Jesus is performing miracles.

He's doing amazing things, things that we've never seen before in our lives, in our lives. The blind receive their sight in the lame walk. The lepers are cleansed, and the dead hear.

[10 : 46] The dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And I'm sure that Zacchaeus, hearing all of these things, sitting in his big mansion, I'm sure that he thought to himself, well, is there any truth in these things?

He was curious, he wanted to see for himself, and so he did. He left his house, and he went for a walk. And he had it for the main road, and he had it for the commotion, which I'm sure that he could hear.

But when Zacchaeus reached the crowd, he couldn't see a thing. Because we were told that Zacchaeus was of small structure, that he was a wee man. And he couldn't see over the people.

And because he wasn't well-liked, people weren't just about to let him in, so that he could see. But you know, by this point, Zacchaeus' curiosity was overwhelming him.

He was compelled, he had to see this Jesus. So what he did was this, but we can imagine that he cut him down a back road, and headed up another road, and then cut him another back road, so he could get in front of Jesus, and the big crowd.

[11 : 56] And to make sure that he could see, he decided to climb up a sick and walk tree. We're told that in Jericho, back in these days, and I believe some of the streets are the same today, the streets were lined with these sick and walk trees, with hundreds of them.

And so Zacchaeus decided to climb up this tree, in order that he might see Jesus. Now we're going to ask ourselves, what was he thinking?

Where was his pride now? Was this the same Zacchaeus? You can see him there in his thousand-pound suit, up at three. One of the most well-known, one of the most proud men in the city.

And this big crowd coming towards him. Ah, but what did he have to do? You see, he looked for money, he looked for the material things of this world.

And these things hadn't helped him. And so he waited. And finally the crowd came, and he did see Jesus, the man that he'd heard so much about.

[12 : 57] And as Jesus was passing by to his great sacrifice, he heard these words. Zacchaeus, make haste to come down.

For today I must abide at thy house. And I'm sure that that man would have none of it. But you see, Jesus spoke with such power.

He spoke with such compulsion, with such love. How did Zacchaeus refuse? And so Zacchaeus, who are called, came down as quick as he could.

And he received Jesus into his house, joyfully. He did it joyfully. But he did it joyfully. And so Zacchaeus, who are called, came down as quick as he could.

Zacchaeus refused. And so Zacchaeus, who recalled, came down as quick as he could and he received Jesus into his house joyfully. He did it joyfully. When was the last time that this man had experienced joy? Was this not through happiness? Was this not the beginning of what he had been looking for all along?

[14 : 08] Well what had changed in the life of Zacchaeus? That he was willing to receive Jesus into his house as a guest and to do everything for him.

Well we're not told that there were any flashing lights. We're not told that anything too dramatic happened. But what we have told is this. That Jesus commanded Zacchaeus to do something. And Zacchaeus did as he was told. He was obedient to that command.

Jesus told him to come down from the tree and he found that he would do none else. And I'm sure that at this point Zacchaeus' knowledge was quite limited. I don't think he would have known the five points of Calvinism or his sheltered catechism.

But I'm sure that he knew that he was a sinner. And that he knew that he must follow this Jesus. He knew that he was a changed man. And that he had a life changing encounter.

Yet he would soon learn many of the great truths of the gospel. He would soon learn that his sins had been forgiven him. His guilt had been removed and his slate had been whacked clean.

[15 : 20] But know all that he knew that he knew that he must follow Jesus. And perhaps that's all that he needed to know. Well I don't know why you come to church today. I know that Christians come to worship God. And to hear what God has to say to them in the world. And for perhaps other reasons.

Perhaps you look like Zacchaeus. Perhaps you've been a church background. And that you want to learn more about the Bible. You want to learn more about this Jesus that you keep on hearing about.

But perhaps you've lived in the world for many years. And you've realised finally that these things have to do happiness. Or maybe you're just curious.

Well what does Jesus say to the unconverted man in battles tonight? Well not much has changed in two tries of years. Because the word of God says the same to us today as Zacchaeus heard all of these years ago.

If you're out of Christ you're to make haste and come down. For today Jesus must abide at your house. He offers himself to you, to each and every one of us who hear in the Gospel.

[16 : 38] And you know, it's not a small thing that Jesus asks. It's not as if he wants to just be your friend and to make you for a coffee every few weeks.

You see, we are never to bring God down to our own level. And that's who Jesus Christ was and is. He is God. He must abide at your house. He requires the whole of your life to be consecrated and to be set apart for himself. That's what he requires. He requires all of you.

And what does he gives you? And what does he give in return? How when he turns our lives around? He grants us the happiness and satisfaction that we've been looking for. He forgives you your sin. He rids you of your guilt. And he reserves a place for you in heaven.

And he teaches you and he teaches you and he teaches you no longer to live for ourselves, but to live for him who died for us and who rose again.

Well, notice the crowd's reaction to what happened. We're told that they murmured that Jesus had gone to be a guest with us sinners. But what grace, what condescension on the part of Jesus to be the guest of a sinner. He who was without sin, he received sinners to himself and he ate with them.

[18 : 10] And my friend, you might feel like the greatest sinner on the west side tonight. And yet, through the centuries, Jesus Christ has been taken to do with men and women like you, coming into their lives and abiding at their houses.

Is he not a great savior? Is he not a God of love who would save sinners like myself and yourself? Ah, but the people murmured, what's he doing? They were saying.

What's he doing with a bad man, a sinner like this? Jesus, we've seen him do all these amazing things. We've heard of preach all these amazing ceremonies. What's he doing? He's raking his ministry going to this guy's house.

But you see, they misunderstood Jesus. They followed him for his popularity and for his miracles. And there were very, very few of them who actually knew why he came.

We're told that there were only 120 people in Acts chapter 1. And I'm sure there were more than that. But 120 people is a figure that's given us to have met together in Acts chapter 1.

[19 : 26] But few really knew why he came. He had come not to call the righteous, but serve us to repentance. And that's a great misunderstanding today. People don't realize that God will save all who call him.

Not only those who are in good standing in their communities, but also the foul routes and efforts. Anybody who will call them will be saved. And don't think either that because somebody is rich, because somebody seems to be happy, don't think that he is.

Because there's many today in their communities who are looking for something. Many of them who are looking for the gospel. Neither because they're terrible sinners are we to think that they're not good enough for Jesus.

Jesus came to call sinners. And if you look into the darkness of your own heart, you realize that you are as great a sinner as any of those that are with you.

He was the one who came to seek and to save that which was lost. And let us always, as a church, remember that truth. Well, thirdly, it is a disaster. Did Zacchaeus' life change after his conversion, after that experience, that one encounter which he had with Jesus?

[20 : 47] And you know, you wouldn't think that one encounter would change somebody's life like that. But that's the way it was with Zacchaeus. Jesus had essentially asked Zacchaeus to give him his whole life.

And that's what he does with us too. He asks from all of us. Not just bits of us, but every single part of us. No, Jesus is a prophet, a priest and a king.

And as many of the old theologians used to say that you can't have Christ as a priest to save you from your sins, without having him also as a prophet to speak into your life, and as a king to prove all of you.

And you know, that's a great truth. Yes, Christ saves us, but he also takes a grinding seat by speaking into our lives and ruling over every part of our lives.

He conforms us to his will and enables us to live our lives as he decides us to live them. He is a God who purifies unto himself a peculiar people, peculiar to himself, sellers of good works.

[22 : 06] Well, how was this great change manifested in the life of Zacchaeus? Well, we read that every person which he cheated out of money, that he restored to them four times as much as he had stolen, far above what was required in the Jewish world.

And of the money that he had left to give half of that money to the poor. How was this the same Zacchaeus? Was this the same man who seemed lonely to care for himself and for his money?

Well, yes and no, he was the same man, yes, and that he had the same body and the same soul. But knowing that he was now different, he was a new man.

He had been given a fresh start, his sins were forgiven him. The Bible tells us that if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature or a new creation. The old things have passed away, behold all things have become new.

And Zacchaeus was a new creature, yet become new. And he took responsibility for his sins when the change came over his life.

[23 : 19] He didn't just say, well God has forgiven me, that was before I was converted, I can leave that behind. No, he went back and he could right his wrongs. He sought to live as God commanded him to live.

And so we must do too. Because you see, when God converts us, we don't just carry on as we were. We must change.

We are new creatures, our lives have been turned around. We no longer live for ourselves. We live for Jesus Christ. And just as what Zacchaeus did, by restoring four times as much to the people he stole from, and giving half his money to the poor, he didn't do that that he might be saved.

He did it as a fruit, or as a proof that he was saved. And so it is with us as Christians today. We don't do good things that we might be saved.

We are told that the good things that we do do before we are in Christ, there is filthy rags in God's sight. But the good works that we do, these things are a proof and a fruit that we are in Christ.

[24 : 36] You shall know them by their fruits. And so the Christian finds that keeping the law, although never easy, is so much easier, so much more natural than it once was.

And the Christian man, the Christian woman, now delights to do the will of God. Well my Christian friend tonight, what's your own experience?

Is it the experience of Zacchaeus? We are told to examine ourselves, to make our calling and our election sure, to make sure that we are in the faith. And that should be a regular practice.

It should be a daily work to examine ourselves. To ask ourselves, are we living as God asks us to live in his word? When we wake up in the morning, and a new day on Washington's ground, do we ask him, Lord, what can I do that I might bring glory to your name today?

And we ask ourselves, are we selfish in the way that we live? Do we keep God's commandments? Because you see, the Christian is called to a different life.

[25 : 46] Not the life that this world desires us to live. But a life of holiness, of separation, of self-denial, of loving our neighbours as ourselves, and of loving God above all.

And we will fail. And yet, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, we will continue to serve God, giving glory to his name as we grow in holiness.

And notice what Jesus spoke after he saw the change in the life of Zacchaeus. Notice what he said in verse 9. In the reading of Jesus said to him, There is a day of salvation coming to this house forasmuch as he also was a son of Abraham.

As we have said, Zacchaeus proved his faith by his works. Just like James says to us in chapter 4 of this book, Faithful with works is dead.

But Zacchaeus' faith wasn't a dead faith. It was accompanied with works. Remember, I said that we knew that Zacchaeus was a Jew, because he is called here a son of Abraham.

[27 : 00] And that's true. But you know, there is more to it than that. There is another level. Because Galatians chapter 3 says this to us, They which have of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

You see, a true son of Abraham is somebody who has faith. Somebody who has been saved. Somebody who has believed. And as that was true of Zacchaeus, so it's true of everybody who has faith.

Of everybody who believes today. If you believe you are a son or a daughter of Abraham. The father of all who believe. And you have been adopted into the family of God.

Well in verse 10 we read, For the son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Thus far we have seen how Zacchaeus sought out Jesus.

How he looked for him and how he found him. However this verse, at the end of this wee story, tells us that there was far greater depth to what had happened here.

[28 : 07] In fact it wasn't really Zacchaeus who had to seek Jesus. In the grand scheme of things it was Jesus who had come to seek out Zacchaeus. And not only had he come to seek him, he had come to save him.

You see, Jesus had to go to Jericho that day. Just as he had to go to Samaria that the revival might break out through the woman at the well. So he had to go to Samaria.

Because one of his own people was there. Remember that he said, All that the father gives me shall come to me. And when that comes to me, I will in no eyes have left.

And because God the father had elected Zacchaeus from all eternity and given him to his son, Jesus had to go to seek him and to save him.

Drawing him by his Holy Spirit and leading him to himself. But how does this affect the way that we look at the world today? How does this affect our theology of God and our theology of salvation?

[29 : 15] Well what we learn is this, that God has been in control of all things. Even salvation itself. It's God who takes the first step in bringing us to Jesus Christ.

And the truth is that if Jesus hadn't sought us out, we would never have sought him out. Because by nature we are so blinded by our sin.

But this doctrine here, this very verse gives hope to all Christians. It gives hope to all ministers. Because although we might be used to lead people to Christ, at the end of the day, it's not a word.

It's a word of God. It's God who draws men irresistibly by the affectionate call of his Holy Spirit. It's God who draws men to himself.

And so we know that although we faint and fail, and although if the work of conversion was left to us, that nobody would be saved. Yet we know that we are a great God.

[30 : 21] And because we have a great God, we have a great hope, that even the peace of this church might be filled again. Because God draws people to himself.

And so it should be our prayer today, that God would bless us again. That he would show kindness towards us, and pour out his Spirit upon us.

Remember that it's the Spirit that quickens, the flesh profits nothing. And does that not give the people of God a reason to pray tonight?

Because as we said earlier on, God's ways are not our ways. And he can save people, even despise us. Praise God that he's the one who can do all things.

And don't lose hope. Because you have a great God. You have a great God that can save men and women, in your own family, in your own community, in your island, in your country.

[31 : 23] He's a God who can do all things. And my friends, if any of you be here tonight, an Arab Christian, will see that you come and that you hear the voice of Jesus Christ.

As he has come to seek and to save that what was blessed. And remember that you too are asked to make haste and to come down. To turn your back on the world and to live for him.

And I promise you, that we will not let you down. That he will change your life and give you what you have been looking for all along. Amen. Let us pray.

Precious and eternal world. We confess that we are a great sinner. Just as Zacchaeus was a great sinner.

And yet we know that we are a great Savior. A Savior who would draw all the same people to himself. A Savior who has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

[32 : 30] O enable us then, about this night and mood, to confess that we are lost, or certainly we were lost, until we were found by Jesus Christ.

And allow us no longer to live for ourselves, but to live for him alone, to seek to reconcile our ways to his ways, and our thoughts to his thoughts.

Bless his congregation and his community. Grant that thy Holy Spirit will be poured out of heaven. And we pray that all that we have said and done this day might be to thy glory, and anything said or done on this might be corrected.

Go before us now and forgive us for our sin, for Christ's sake. Amen. And we can conclude by singing again to God's praise from Psalm 39 in the Scottish Psalter.

And if I die on page 258. And we can read from verse 4.

[33 : 41] Verse 4. My name from measure of my days, O Lord, unto me show, what is the sin, that I thereby my frailty well we know. O thou my days and hand-breath made, my age is in thine eye as nothing.

Sure each man at best is holy vanity. Sure each man walks in a vain show, they vex themselves in vain. He keeps up wealth and does not know to whom it shall pertain.

And I know, O Lord, what weight I have brought. My hope is fixed on thee. Free me from all my trespasses, to fools, scorn, make not me.

These four verses, Psalm 39 verses 4 to lead to God's praise. My name and measure of my days, O Lord, unto me show, what is the sin that I have done?

My name and measure of my days, O Lord, unto me show, what is the sin that I thereby?

[34 : 58] My prayer be well behold. Lord, O Lord, O my days and hand-breath, my days and hand-breath, my days and sin that I have As nothing through rich man at best is holy vanity.

Sure each man walks in a vain show, they vex themselves in vain.

He gives the wealth and God of all, to whom it shall pertain.

And now, O Lord, what weight I have brought. My hope is fixed on thee.

He gives the wealth of all my trespasses, And now, O Lord, what weight I have brought.

[36 : 37] My grace is fixed on thee. Gracious, my devil's voice of God, we give thanks for thy word, but it is true.

And that those who live by it and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall never perish but will have everlasting life. Grant that we would all know these truths in our experience.

And that as we depart from one another, that thy blessing would go with us. Bless us and keep us, each one and those who belong to us. And forgive us graciously for our sin. For Christ's sake. Amen.

Amen.