

# Guest Preacher - Dr. Marten Walker (Elder - Stornoway Free Church)

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Preacher: Dr. Marten Walker

[ 0 : 00 ] Now, if you'd like to have your Bibles open at Luke chapter 19, verses 1 to 10.!

Right. Our two readings that we've had have been records of sins forgiven, of the coming of salvation to individuals. We're going to concentrate on the episode of Zacchaeus. Now, this is a very familiar episode. Most of us who've been brought up with the scriptures have known this from when we were very young, partly because we're always intrigued by this little man who has to climb a tree to see Jesus. So it's something we tend to be familiar with.

And the trouble sometimes with being familiar is we miss things. We don't see things. So what I want to do today is go through this story a bit more slowly than we normally do.

And pick out some of the highlights. Now, the thing I want you to notice is that when we think of the New Testament, especially the Gospels, we meet many people who come across Jesus. But apart from the apostles and close friends, we don't know the names of the other people, we don't know the names of the other people.

So to know Zacchaeus' name is a bit unusual. There are other people we can think of, Bartimaeus or Legion, people where the name comes out in the discussion. But here we have a situation where we have a name, Zacchaeus. And it's not just that we know the name, but Jesus himself uses the name.

[ 2 : 27 ] Now, that's going to be important later. So hang on to that thought. Zacchaeus' name.

The text we're going to have for this sermon are the words we find in verse 5, where Jesus says, Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.

So hold that thought again as a text. Now, the sermon will be in three parts. The longest part will be understanding the passage. A shorter bit will be to understand something in particular about Zacchaeus' offering to pay back, especially when he says, if he's defrauded anyone, he'll pay them back fourfold. So that'll be the second part. And then the third part of the sermon will be to find something of application for us now. That'll be a short part of the sermon, but probably the most important. Now, we'll move into part one. This is understanding this passage. And something I want you to notice is verse 10, where Jesus says, for the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

These words are very special because this is Jesus himself during his earthly ministry, defining that ministry, that he is out to find those who are lost and save them.

And then this touches on the main theme of all Scripture. You probably have noticed this before. As you read through Scripture, you can find various themes and the things that get us thinking.

[ 4 : 45 ] The most important theme of all Scripture that runs like a golden thread right through Scripture is what the theologians call the history of salvation or redemptive history, but we could put into everyday language God's rescue mission.

God's rescue mission. And with the important thing that the initiative to rescue us is with God.

The initiative to actually do what it takes to rescue us rests with God. Sin is the problem, and there's nothing that we, as boys and girls, men and women, can do to undo the damage of sin in our lives.

But the important thing here then to recognize that God in his love has provided a way, and that's Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

He takes the initiative. He pays the price. He does everything. The thing is, as we read through the Scriptures, from beginning to end, and I would say this golden thread of redemptive history, of God's rescue mission, this golden thread is probably better described as golden chain, a very special golden chain that runs right through the Scriptures.

[ 6 : 24 ] And the thing we should always do when we read the Scriptures is say, how does this relate to this golden chain? People like Spurgeon put it another way.

They said, from wherever you start from the Scriptures, you will end up meeting Jesus. And that's one way of expressing this golden chain.

So, remember, what we are now studying is something very important to do with that golden chain. We're going to look into this passage, and we're going to take a very wide focus to start with, and then narrow it right down.

So the wide focus is to work out what's happening in the background here. Jesus is obviously traveling. He's actually on his final journey up to Jerusalem and his impending death.

Now, most people don't realize that. They think he's just going up to Jerusalem. And he's going up with tens of thousands of other people because people are on the move for the Passover festival.

[ 7 : 39 ] People are on the move in great numbers from all over the world. And remember a world where there were no cars, planes, trains. People had to walk.

A few people might have a donkey. Hardly anyone had a horse. And people were on the move. Now, there were three festivals that the Jews had that they had to go to Jerusalem for as a pilgrimage.

Passover in the spring, Pentecost in the early summer, and Tabernacles in the autumn. So these festivals.

And it's interesting when you read about Jesus in Jerusalem, through the Gospels, it's often one of these festivals that he's actually there for. This time, he's going for Passover.

And that meant many people were on the move. Not just him, not just the disciples. The ancient historians tell us that the number of people on the move was anything up to two million.

[ 8 : 48 ] Jerusalem normally had a population, they reckon, in those days of about 50,000.

But for a few weeks each year, anything up to two million pilgrims would go to Jerusalem. That's a bit like saying, if you've had an air flight to Inverness, and you've looked down at Inverness, there are 70,000 people there.

And another time, you've maybe flown to Glasgow, and you've looked down on Glasgow. Within 30 miles of George Square, there are over two million people.

Imagine those two million people on the move to Inverness, and swelling the population of Inverness to two million. That's what was happening here.

People were going in large numbers. And where were they coming from? The scriptures are very helpful on this. If we go to Acts chapter 2, on the day of Pentecost, the people who heard the apostles speaking in their own languages tell us where they're from, and we can work out what's the furthest west and what's the furthest east.

[ 10 : 10 ] The furthest west they describe in Acts 2 is Italy, because people had come from Rome. And the furthest east was a place called Parthia, a name we don't use anymore.

But if we work out where Parthia is, it's the western part of modern Afghanistan. So pilgrims, God's people, were on the move from the far corners of the world, all for one week in Jerusalem when the Passover festival would be held.

Now Jericho that day, Jericho was one of the entry points into the Holy Land. People come from the east would go through Jericho, and there would have been a well-worn path through Jericho that the pilgrims took.

And the local people, if they weren't going on pilgrimage, would gather by the roadside and cheer them on. This festival was one where the atmosphere was one of great joy in remembering God's redemption of his people and rescuing them from Egypt.

So people were joyful. People who were on the move, people who were by the road.

[ 11 : 48 ] Now this journey was to take them up to Jerusalem, and the walking distance from Jericho up to Jerusalem is 17 miles. But it's quite a hard climb.

The climb they had to make was 3,300 feet. steadily going up and up and up. That's a bit like us looking at the Clishum and having to add another 400 feet on top of it to realize how high Jerusalem is.

And then sometime when you go to Tarbur, just work out when you have 17 miles still to go to the Clishum. And imagine walking that and walking uphill. Now the pilgrims, when they were on the move, they used to sing psalms.

And the psalms they sang were from number 120 through to 134. And you can look these up later if you want, because it's interesting if you imagine yourself as a pilgrim and read these psalms, what it actually means in terms of traveling.

Now we've sung some of them this evening. Psalm 122, I joyed, went to the house of God, go up, they said to me.

[ 13 : 11 ] Gives you a flavor. Psalm 121, I to the hills will lift mine eyes. It's because Jerusalem stands on the top of a range of mountains.

And in fact, the word we translate as hills in more modern translations is translated as mountains. These were very serious hills. So people sang as they went up.

And you'll notice each of these psalms has a heading. Depending on the version of the scripture you're using, it will say a song of ascents, meaning going up, or a song of, or a psalm of degrees.

degrees. But again, it's this sense of going up to Jerusalem. And if you read Psalm 134, it describes you actually being in Jerusalem, but not just in Jerusalem, being in the temple precincts.

Now something interesting that theologians with a musical background have pointed out is that the psalms in Hebrew go very well to singing them at a walking pace.

[ 14 : 22 ] So I challenge you to do this in English. Go around the house one day and just sing a psalm. And sing it to the pace of your footsteps as if you were walking.

And then you're doing what these pilgrims were doing on that day in Jericho. They used to also make the singing interesting.

They would sing things as around. They would sing things so one group would sing some lines and other groups other lines. And by the time they had travelled hundreds if not thousands of miles, these psalms were etched into their beings.

Etched in a remarkable way. And something that helped heighten their approach to God. So that's the background.

It was a noisy place. A busy place. And we're going to narrow the focus right down on Zacchaeus. On the day when there's this steady stream of pilgrims going through and with people singing psalms, with people standing in crowds, where was Zacchaeus?

[ 15 : 44 ] He was at the back of the crowd. And that tells us that normally he did not get involved in any of these things. He was probably too busy with the mischief that he was normally up to.

But something was different that day. Something compelled him to go and see what was going on and especially a whisper must have gone on ahead of the surging crowd saying, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of David, is coming through.

In fact, just before this, you'll find the Bartimaeus story, Luke's version of it, and remember what Bartimaeus said, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

So, Zacchaeus knew something. But was he really interested? Normally, no. The thing for Zacchaeus is that he was hated by all the people who lived around him.

And that was because he worked for the Romans. They were the occupying force and were not liked, were not appreciated.

[ 17 : 02 ] But Zacchaeus knew how to make money, and so he thought, well, I might as well do it for the Romans. And he became one of their tax collectors, in fact, a chief tax collector.

The other people had a nickname for him. And that's in verse seven. In some translations of the Bible, you'll find there's a certain word that's got inverted commas around it.

And the word is sinner. Sinner. People couldn't stand tax collectors.

In Mark 2, the same thing happened at Levi's house. It records that tax collectors and sinners were there, and the scribes and Pharisees were appalled.

But something remarkable is going on here. Zacchaeus is actually taking an interest in what's going on. he knows everyone calls him sinner.

[ 18 : 07 ] He might not like it, but there's nothing he can do about it. But probably at this stage in his life, he was taking comfort in his wealth. But something inside him said it was important to see Jesus.

Something was moving him. And the trouble is, being a small man, he got stuck at the back of the crowd, and he couldn't get through. people were probably sticking out their elbows to block passages.

The thing is, as I said earlier, we know that the pilgrims took a certain route through Jericho. So Zacchaeus knew the route that Jesus would be taken, so he runs on ahead to find a place where he can see Jesus, and that involves climbing a tree.

Now we're going to focus on this meeting, Jesus meeting Zacchaeus. Our text in verse 5 is, Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.

The effect we then see as we read on, there's no explanation, but the effect is one of joy, Zacchaeus, who has nothing to do with anything to do with faith.

[ 19 : 29 ] Zacchaeus is overwhelmed by joy. Zacchaeus is now talking about giving money away.

Zacchaeus has actually changed. But what's going on? What's happened? We need to go in a bit more deeply to understand what's happened here.

here. If I say at this stage, it makes comparisons with our first reading in Mark. Remember, the scribes got very upset when Jesus forgave sins very publicly.

That's actually what's happened here. Jesus has forgiven sins, and it's very similar to where he said to the young man in the earlier passage, son, your sins are forgiven.

And you'll look at the text and you'll think, but it doesn't say that. I agree with you, in English it doesn't say that. It's not obvious in English.

[ 20 : 35 ] But if we know the Hebrew of what's being said here, it is very obvious. Now, Hebrew was the local language, so people's names and conversations with each other tended to be in Hebrew or a similar language, Aramaic.

For the purposes of writing down scripture, Hebrew wasn't used for the New Testament or Aramaic, apart from some very small areas.

It's written in Greek, because Greek at this time in history was the international language, which might seem strange now. But following Alexander the Greek conquest of the Middle East, places that we don't think of as Greek spoke Greek.

Places like Baghdad, places like Jordan, places like Egypt, they spoke Greek. And even all the way to Afghanistan, they spoke Greek.

So the important thing for writing down the scriptures was to write them in Greek. But that meant some words didn't cross over with their meanings.

[ 21 : 55 ] They're there, but not their meanings. English. As an English speaker, I find the same thing used to happen to me quite often in my work.

People would try and tell me something and say, if you knew Gaelic, it would sound much better when I explained it to you. So that's a shortcoming on my part. And yes, we have a problem with English.

It does not have the richness of expression that Gaelic does. And a similar thing happens here. Something's happening where the speech is in Hebrew, but it's then recorded in Greek.

So let's try and understand what is going on and then understand how we know that Zacchaeus' sins had been forgiven.

The key thing is that we need to know the meaning of the names. And there are two names to focus on. One is Jesus and the other is Zacchaeus. We'll start with Jesus.

[ 23 : 06 ] Jesus' name comes from the Old Testament name Joshua, which means the salvation of the Lord. And the Lord there is God's covenant name.

Sometimes expressed as Jehovah. So the Lord. So Jesus means, it can mean Jehovah saves, the Lord saves, the salvation of the Lord.

These are different ways of expressing Jesus' name. The important bit is salvation. Salvation is in there. Now if we go to verse 9 and compare it with verse 5, something interesting happens.

In verse 9, Jesus says, today, salvation has come to this house, since he too is the son of Abraham.

Abraham. So Jesus is confirming that, yes, Zacchaeus has been saved, and he's using, really putting his own name in there.

[ 24 : 22 ] This could read, today, Jesus has come to this house since he also is the son of Abraham. Abraham. And then if we compare it to verse 5, where it says, hurry up and come down, for I must stay at your house today.

If we realize that bit is Jesus saying, I must stay, meaning my own name, Jesus must stay, meaning the salvation of the Lord must stay.

I hope that makes sense. So Jesus' name means something very special about salvation. And Jesus has used this play on words in both verse 5 and verse 9 to emphasize that.

We then need to work out, what does Zacchaeus' name mean? It comes from the Hebrew, which would be pronounced, I think, Zacchae, so Zacchae, and the meaning of that is innocent.

Zacchaeus' name means innocent. And if we unpack that even more, it means innocent, and it means pure, and it means righteous, in fact, all the things that Zacchaeus was not.

[ 26 : 06 ] Remember, the local people used the name sinner as a nickname for Zacchaeus, the very opposite of his name, which was innocent, or pure, or righteous.

but in the same way that Jesus used his name, with a play on words, his own name, he also uses Zacchaeus' name in the conversation he has with him.

And what I want to do is just, as amplified Bibles do, is put all the words into the text, so you get a sense of the meaning.

So you've got a picture of the scene, Zacchaeus is up his tree. Something has motivated him to be there. There is a yearning in his heart, probably for the first time, that something's not right about his own life.

And that's probably due to the proximity of Jesus, and Jesus walking towards him. and much to Zacchaeus' surprise, Jesus stops.

[ 27 : 21 ] There's a crowd swirling around, but Jesus stops, picks him out in the tree, and says this, and this is with all the meaning put in. Jesus says, your name is innocent, and I declare you innocent, meaning your sins are forgiven.

Hurry, come down, for I myself, the salvation of the Lord, must stay with you today, and in a spiritual sense, stay with you from now on.

I'll read that again. So Jesus has stopped, he's looking up at Zacchaeus in the tree, and he says, your name is innocent, and I declare you innocent, meaning your sins are forgiven.

hurry, and come down, for I myself, the salvation of the Lord, must stay with you today, and in a special spiritual sense, stay with you from now on.

salvation. No wonder Zacchaeus was joyful. Something remarkable had happened in that transaction. He had been saved.

[ 28 : 39 ] He had been saved. He had been made right with the living God. From being the biggest crook and sinner in that area, he'd been saved.

He'd been declared innocent by Jesus. And there's a comparison you can make here in Luke 18. You know the parable when the Pharisee and the tax collector go to the temple.

Jesus confirms it's the tax collector who's forgiven, and he uses a word. He says, it was this man who went home justified that day. Now, the word justified is a legal term for court, meaning declared innocent.

So these two episodes are also very similar. Anyway, that's the end of the first part of our sermon. The next two parts are much shorter.

What we want to do is understand Zacchaeus' offer in verse 8 of giving away money. He's going to give half of his goods to the poor, and anyone he's defrauded, he's going to pay them back fourfold.

[ 29 : 54 ] Now, for this, we need to go back into the Old Testament. God's law is recorded there for us, and in a situation like this, someone who had committed a crime had to make restitution to the person who had been defrauded.

And it's interesting, the Old Testament law gives three different options. The mildest one is this, in Numbers 5, if a thief decides that they need to confess what they'd done, what they had to do was pay back to the person they'd stolen from 1 and 20%.

So, a thief that confesses 1 and 20%. If the thief is caught in the act of thieving, this is in Exodus 22, if the thief is actually caught, then they have to pay back what they've stolen and the same again, 100%.

stolen. The third option is where a thief has stolen what is absolutely vital for other people to live and left them destitute.

And what they have to pay back there is fourfold. restitution.

[ 31 : 27 ] So, the restitution three options. The mildest is if you confess, you've not been caught, you're just owning up, you give back what you've stolen at 20%.

If you're actually caught in the act, then there's another part of scripture that applies, and that is you give back what you've stolen and the same again.

But the most severe is fourfold. Fourfold. You'll find an example of this also when Nathan visits David over the Bathsheba incident.

You'll find fourfold appears there. But I'll leave that for you to read his homework later. So, the thing to say about Zacchaeus, when he makes the fourfold offer, he is actually saying how awful he was as a sinner.

He's actually admitting how badly he'd behaved towards those around him. And he wants to put it right.

[ 32 : 38 ] Yes, he's been saved, but all of his neighbors, all of his community, he realizes he has to make things right with them. Now, it's not that making things right deals with the sin, but making things right restores the damage done.

And the remarkable thing is that in that way that God does with us, he shows us what we're really like. This is Zacchaeus being shown by God, what he has really been like.

And Zacchaeus says, yes, I know. But now Zacchaeus is a changed man. He's been declared innocent. He's been declared innocent. So, that's the end of the second part of the sermon, and very briefly on to the third part.

And I apologize if the time is gone. this will be brief, but it's important. The people sitting in here who have been saved already, in a way, Jesus has already called you Zacchaeus.

He's addressed you as Zacchaeus, saying your sins are forgiven. Now, if that's still to happen to you, and you're left with your thoughts, how does all this work, what happens, pick out some key things about the Zacchaeus episode.

[ 34 : 08 ] The first is that in a crowd, which probably numbered thousands that day of people going through Jericho, Jesus was able to pick out Zacchaeus. That must have been a big surprise to Zacchaeus.

And he was addressed personally, despite all the hubbub around them. Jesus knew what Zacchaeus was like, and Jesus also knew that there was a yearning in his heart that things had to be put right.

So Jesus met him there. And remember verse 10, where Jesus said, the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.

But Jesus is still doing that. It might not be physically, on the dusty roads of the Middle East, but he's still doing that spiritually.

He's still doing that spiritually with the likes of us, even on this island. Ask the Lord, as I think what so evidently happened here.

[ 35 : 30 ] If you have not come to a saving faith in Jesus, and something inside you says, this is what I must do, ask him first to show you yourself.

A bit like Zacchaeus, when it was revealed to him what he had done. And showing us ourselves is about showing us our sin. God says, that's what I need to deal with.

And then the prayer after that is, Lord, show me yourself. And to realize the wonderment of what he does in our lives, and accept him flooding into our lives in Jesus, and bringing us into a right relationship with the one true God, not just for a moment, but for every moment of every day.

We've now come to the end of the third part of the sermon. And what I would like to emphasize to you is the joy.

The number of people who, through history, in meeting with Jesus, and having their sins forgiven, have all said the same thing. They have been surprised by joy. we read it here.

[ 36 : 48 ] We read it in some writer like C.S. Lewis. We read it in our shorter catechism. What is the chief end of man?

Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Amen.

We've come to the end of the sermon. Shall we bow for a short prayer? Lord our God, thank you for this opportunity to be together now in this place and worship you.

Please speak into our lives. Give us something to take with us into this new working week, something of your word and yourself to think upon and turn over in our minds.

And please, Lord, be that excitement and that joy in our lives. Oh, Lord, our God, please, when we come to the benediction, bless each one of us and please be with us as we part.

[ 37 : 58 ] We ask all of these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Now, our final singing, and I should maybe point out, you'll notice that all the singings that have been chosen for tonight are from this group, from 120 to 134.

The one we're going to sing now is the St. Psalm's version of 126. And so, we know that this psalm was being sung in Hebrew that day in Jericho, the day Zacchaeus was saved, as were all these psalms.

As were all these psalms. So, I'll read the first four lines before we sing. So, Psalm 126, the whole of the psalm. When Zion's fortunes God restored, it was a dream come true.

Our mouths were then with laughter filled, our tongues with songs anew. Shall we sing these wonderful words of praise to the one true and living God?

When Zion's fortunes God restored, it was a dream come true.

[ 39 : 20 ] Our mouths swirled in with laughter filled, our tongues with songs anew.

The nations said, the Lord has done great things for Israel.

Israel. The Lord did mighty things for us and joyous hearts knew well.

We stowed our fortunes, gracious Lord, like streams in desert soil.

a joyful harvest will reward the weeping sow our joy.

[ 40 : 30 ] The man who perished it is so goes out with tears of grief will come again with songs of joy bearing his harvest year.

As we go from this place, may each of us know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Thank you.