

**LIVES THAT REMIND US ABOUT GOD - Meeting Yourself In The Sacred Text Part twenty-six - Sunday, September 15th, 2024
Pastor Don Horban - Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON**

ZACCHAEUS - HOW LITTLE LIVES ARE MADE BIG

This is a wonderful story recorded only by Luke. It's interesting that it is immediately preceded by the story of the rich young ruler(18:18-30). It may be hard for the rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but all things really are possible with God(18:26).

We need the story of Zacchaeus. It shows God's redeeming grace reaching, not only a rich man, but a **crooked** rich man. So it's a story filled with hope for all who will come to Jesus as their Savior and Lord with less than unblemished backgrounds. Let's read the story together:

Luke 19:1-10 - "He entered Jericho and was passing through. [2] And there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. [3] And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small of stature. [4] So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. [5] And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." [6] So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully."

[7] “And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner. [8] And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” [9] And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. [10] For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Zacchaeus was a Jew - a “**son of Abraham**.” He was one of God’s chosen people under the old covenant. And he was **lost**. Everyone needs salvation through the New Covenant atonement through Jesus Christ, God the Son. Other than the fact that Zacchaeus was **lost**, we don’t know much about him. But here’s what we **do** know:

- 1) **HIS MOST FAMOUS TRAIT WAS HIS SHORTNESS OF STATURE**
 - The text says he was short. Our Sunday School chorus said “Zacchaeus was a **wee little man**...” While he was short, I don’t know that he would be thrilled to know that for over two thousand years we’ve been singing he was a “**wee little man**.”

- 2) **HE WAS A TAX COLLECTOR** - In fact, the text says he was a “*Chief tax collector*”(2). That meant he was at the top of a tax collecting pyramid. Much like an Amway distributor can multiply his or her profit by the number of people selling for him, Zacchaeus had many people working for him who collected taxes for the Roman government and who did the actual leg work for him. The only catch in this system was that the taxes were steep because people like Zacchaeus wanted a cut of the profits before passing on the final total to Rome.

Because this system got to be such an expensive one to fund, people like Zacchaeus were very unpopular among those who eventually had to pay for all this crooked overhead. And the people who had to pay for it all were the tax payers.

- 3) **HE RECOGNIZED THERE WAS SOMETHING SPECIAL ABOUT JESUS** - Probably he came only out of curiosity. Maybe he wanted to see Jesus perform some mighty miracle. Maybe he was just checking Him out. But for whatever reason, Zacchaeus made the effort to actually get close to Jesus.

At least give Zacchaeus this much, *he wanted to see Jesus for himself*. He had heard what the people had said. Perhaps he had encountered some people whose lives had been totally changed. And it wasn't enough for him to get everything second hand.

And I want to take a minute just to point out the obvious - with the exception of the rich young ruler, who wouldn't do what Jesus asked him to do, nobody who came to Jesus for himself ever left disappointed. Jesus enriched and transformed all who would simply make the effort to come to Him. He **still** does. You can taste and see for yourself that the Lord is good. You don't have to take someone's word for it. You can come. You can be forgiven. You can be made new.

4) IT'S NOT ENOUGH JUST TO OBSERVE FROM A DISTANCE

Curiosity will only take you so far. It's interesting to observe the radical swing in the story of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus starts out thinking **he's** looking for **Jesus**. After all, he's the one squinting up in the Sycamore tree.

It must have been quite a shock to see Jesus, whom Zacchaeus probably never met personally, gradually walk through the crowd, and keep getting closer and closer to Zacchaeus. Surprisingly, Jesus' eyes look up the tree and finally fix on Zacchaeus. Then Jesus actually opens his mouth. But instead of some great teaching, like the sermon on the mount, he says, "**Zacchaeus, hurry and come down**"(5)! And Zacchaeus discovers that things weren't the way he had imagined. All the while he thought **he** was seeking **Jesus**. Now he discovers **Jesus** was seeking **him!**

As we should know by now, Jesus doesn't deal with crowds. And He doesn't deal with congregations. He calls people - people like Zacchaeus, and Mary, and Peter, and Don, and Joe. And He **knows what's in your heart**. He knows all the details of your life. He knows when you're faking that everything is fine.

You may have been a Christian for 40 years. Never forget that Jesus deals personally with your life. He walks toward you every day. He exists. He lives. He speaks to your mind and heart through His Word and Spirit. He sees clearly into your soul. He stops where you stop. He walks where you walk.

Don't fall into the trap of institutionalizing what is essentially specific and individual. He loves you today. Paul doesn't hesitate to say "**He loved me and gave Himself for me.**"

5) **JESUS CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE, PERSONAL ATTACHMENT**

Notice the wording of verse 5 - "**Zacchaeus, hurry and come down!**" And you can't help but get the impression that Jesus **expects** obedience. He expects a response that coincides with the command. The decisions you make for Jesus, make right away or you probably won't make them at all. Jesus knows most of us aren't **deniers** of His Word as much as we're **delayers**.

Jesus is pressing here with good reason. He knows the human heart. He knows that tenderness comes and goes. He knows that opportunities can be quickly and easily lost. Above all, He knows that eternity hangs in the balance of a well timed decision. The most precious thing in all the world is a great opportunity.

Let me ask you very simply and directly, has Jesus talked to you about anything in your life that you've done nothing about yet? That's deadly. It can cost you your soul:

Matthew 7:24-27 - "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. [25] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. [26] And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. [27] And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

Or, **Luke 8:18 - "Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."**

What powerful words! Jesus specifically asks me to review how I listen to Him. And central to how well I listen is this issue - every time Jesus speaks, do I still hear those words **“right away”**? Because every time He speaks He still says, **“right away!”**

Our tendency is to linger. We're slow to listen. About parting paths with sinful activities. About our devotional lives. About tithing. About sharing you faith with the lost. About forgiving enemies. About apologizing. About getting serious about your church attendance.

6) **JESUS RECLAIMS PEOPLE OTHERS WON'T TOUCH**

Verse 7 - “And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.”

When Jesus invited himself over to have supper with Zacchaeus He used an interesting word. It's right there in the **fifth verse** - “**I must stay at your house today!**”

Must? What can Jesus mean? ***Must.*** He ***must*** stay with Zacchaeus, because more than anybody else in that crowd, Zacchaeus demonstrated what Jesus' time and ministry were all about. The crowd was right but they were also wrong. Yes, Zacchaeus was a sinner. Maybe the ***worst*** sinner in the whole crowd! But how else could Jesus prove the power of those words in **verse 10?** - **"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."**

Yes, Zacchaeus was a sinner. Yes the crowd had written him off. Yes, everyone else hated him. But Jesus didn't. He came to reach out to those everyone else avoided. He came to offer hope to the hopeless.

7) **ZACCHAEUS DEMONSTRATES HOW SINNERS RESPOND TO GOD'S GRACE**

Luke 19:8-10 - **"And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." [9] And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. [10] For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."**

We need the example of Zacchaeus today. Salvation has as much to do with transformation as with forgiveness: **1 John 3:6** - “**No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him.**”

Repentance doesn't just *feel sorry* for wrongs done. To the degree it can, it *rights* them relying on God's grace and help. The actual, visible glory and character of the Lord begins to spill over into areas that used to be selfish and proud and ugly and stubborn. That's where Jesus was taking Zacchaeus. That was the evidence of God's grace reaching Zacchaeus' heart.

Zacchaeus demonstrates a changed disposition. A new set of affections. Did Jesus tell him he had to return all that money? We'll never know. But certainly the Holy Spirit made it clear to him that he had done wrong and had to make it right. And all of this, “*right away!*”

It was at this point that Jesus said, “**Today, salvation has come to this house!**”(9). Jesus was right. But it didn't take Jesus to see something that obvious. Everyone could see this wasn't the old Zachaeus anymore. Zacchaeus was a free man. He was brand new from the inside out. That's what Jesus still does to all you will come to Him today.