

A SAVIOR FOR THE LOST

Luke 19:1-10

INTRODUCTION: Friends are important, and they are a blessing from God. The greatest friend anyone can have is Jesus Christ. He was accused of being a friend of sinners. Of course, He is the Son of God who came in human flesh to offer Himself on the cross. Thank God that Jesus came to be the Savior for sinners. Zacchaeus was lost in sin the day Jesus called him to come down from the tree. Before the evening was over, Zacchaeus was a new man.

I. ZACCHAEUS WAS A MAN WITH A DESIRE TO SEE THE SAVIOR.

A. We learn from Scripture about Zacchaeus' position as the chief among the tax collectors.

The Jews hated the tax collectors because they worked for the Roman government, and they were known to cheat the taxpayers. This may be the answer for Zacchaeus' wealth. We learn from the Bible that Zacchaeus was rich. The name Zacchaeus means "pure." Zacchaeus was restrained by the Pharisees from going to the Temple. He would rob people by collecting more tax than the people actually owed. As someone has said, "tax-collectors or publicans were about as popular then as I.R.S. agents are today."

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus. We are not told why Zacchaeus had such a longing to see Jesus other than to see who he was. He may have heard of Jesus' miracles or maybe he heard others say Jesus was the promised Messiah. Regardless, Zacchaeus was an unlikely candidate for the Messiah to have noticed so the people and religious leaders thought. In the eyes of the religious crowd and the people in general, Zacchaeus was an outcast, a traitor to Israel. In Luke 15:1-2, the Bible says, "Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Zacchaeus may have known he was a sinner, but the self-righteous religious leaders did not. Jesus said later to these religious leaders, "Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." (Matthew 21:31) So, like other tax collectors and sinners, Zacchaeus wanted to hear Jesus for himself. He was longing for love and forgiveness and maybe a different life.

B. We are told that Zacchaeus was a short man in stature.

The crowd kept Zacchaeus from seeing Jesus. Neither his pride nor his position would keep him from seeing the Lord. "And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way." (Luke 19:4) Zacchaeus could have used this as an excuse. When a person really wants to know who Jesus is, God will make a way. Satan will place his road blocks before a sinner to try to keep him/her from coming to Jesus. Some say they are too bad to be saved. Others think they are good enough to go to heaven without Jesus. I have heard people say they did not own clothes good enough to attend church. Many come up with their excuses.

Every human being is physically small in the eyes of God. The Bible says that man was created from dust. (Genesis 2:7) Job 34:15 states: "All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust." Isaiah 40:15 states: "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing." Man is just a speck of dust. How big is God? Solomon said this when he was dedicating the Temple: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings 8:27)

Every human being is spiritually small in God's eyes. We are all sinners and unrighteous before Him. As we look at all mankind, we see a difference in their sinful acts and attitudes. Still, there is no difference between the best and the worst of men because we all have sinned and come short to the glory of God. (Romans 3:23) Jesus, the sinless, perfect Son of God, reveals the sinfulness of man. Who can be compared to Him or be His equal?

II. ZACCHAEUS WAS A SINNER SOUGHT BY THE SAVIOR. (V. 5)

A. Command of Jesus to Zacchaeus to come down.

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus while Jesus planned to save Zacchaeus. Jesus said to Zacchaeus, "make haste, and come down." The Lord spoke to Zacchaeus directly. Jesus knew Zacchaeus by name, and He knew he was in the Sycamore tree. The Lord knows each of us by name, and he knows us completely. Jesus also knows where we are at all times. The call of Nathanael is another great example. "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me?"

Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." (John 1:47-48) We often hear people say they found the Lord. Jesus has never been lost, but He did come to seek the lost. As Isaiah 53:6 states: "All we like sheep have gone astray." Jesus told Zacchaeus that He was coming to his house. It is very similar to the Scripture that said that Jesus "needs to go through Samaria" to save the woman at the well (John 4:1-29). Jesus entered Jericho looking for Zacchaeus. He is still seeking the lost even in this place today.

B. Compliance of Zacchaeus to Jesus' command. (v. 6)

"And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully." (Luke 19:6) This is the correct response to our Lord's command and invitation. Hell is populated with many who refuse to make haste to the Lord's call. This could have been Zacchaeus' only call to salvation that he would ever receive. Someone this morning may be passing up his/her last invitation to come to Jesus. Not everyone will have an opportunity to be saved like the thief on the cross. Zacchaeus received Jesus joyfully. He probably had never received a warm invitation from anybody before Jesus' invitation. What others had said about Jesus was true. He was indeed a friend of sinners.

C. Complaints against Jesus by the religious leaders and the people. (v. 7)

Jesus received complaints from those who heard Him talking to Zacchaeus. We read this in Luke 19:7: "And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner." The religious leaders and the people joined together in criticizing Jesus. They thought that Jesus, (if He was the Messiah), would not associate with this sinful man.

Zacchaeus used human effort to see Jesus before his salvation. The Holy Spirit was drawing Zacchaeus to God. Jesus said in John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day." God is not willing for any to perish. He takes the initiative in saving sinners. Zacchaeus thought he was seeking to see Jesus. The Sovereign Lord Jesus was seeking after Zacchaeus. "And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house." (Luke 19:5)

III. ZACCHAEUS WAS A SINNER SAVED BY THE SAVIOR. (V. 8)

A. Personal confession of Zacchaeus.

"And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." (Luke 19:8) The law required a penalty of 20% as restitution for money taken by fraud. (Lev. 6:5; Num. 5:6-7) Zacchaeus did more than what was required. He gave half of his wealth to the poor and was willing to give back four times as much to those he cheated. Zacchaeus knew he had to repent of his sin. The word "repent" means "to change one's mind." He had a change of heart that resulted in a change of actions. Like all sinners who come to Christ, it takes time to grow spiritually and overcome sin.

B. Power of converting Zacchaeus. (v. 9)

"And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." (Luke 19:9) We think of Saul when he was converted. The Lord changed his name and his life. Saul came to be called Paul who later became a great missionary and apostle. The Lord Jesus confronted Paul on the Damascus Road. Like Paul, Zacchaeus was saved, delivered from sin's power and bondage. The penalty of his sin was forgiven. The mission of the Lord Jesus never changes. He came to save sinners. All that Jesus did for Zacchaeus and Paul, He is able and willing to do for any one today.

C. Purpose of Christ's coming is clearly stated. (v. 10)

Jesus did not come to seek the self-righteous man who trusts in his own goodness. Jesus did not come seeking the proud man for God resists the proud. Jesus did not come for the famous or powerful man for they believe in themselves. In Luke 18:9-14, Jesus told a parable of the religious Pharisee and the publican or tax collector. The tax collector who was "standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."

George Whitefield was one of America's greatest evangelists. He had a brother who was backslidden. One day his brother was having tea with the Countess of Huntingdon. He said, "I know what you have said is very proper, and I believe in the infinite mercy and goodness of God. But I do not believe in its application to me, for I am a lost man."

The Countess put down her tea & said, "I am glad to hear it, Mr. Whitefield!" "Madam," he said, "I did not think you would rejoice and glory in a thing as terrible as that." "I am glad to hear you say you are lost Mr. Whitefield," she said, "for it is written that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost."

His eyes sparkled, and he said, "I thank God for that text, and for the extraordinary power with which it has now come into my heart." He died later that night. Until a man is lost, he cannot be found! Zacchaeus was a lost man, but the Savior found him. Jesus is seeking for the lost man or woman today. He is speaking to hearts wherever the gospel is being preached. Jesus said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." (Matthew 11:15)

LESSONS FOR LIFE:

1. Jesus is the seeker and Savior of those who are lost in their sins.
2. Jesus' invitation to the lost is for today because we have no promise of tomorrow.
3. Jesus will receive anyone who comes to Him in repentance and faith.