Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

A Sinner Meets a Seeking Savior, Part 1
Scripture: Luke 19:1-10
Code: 42-238

I would invite you to open your Bible now to the nineteenth chapter of the gospel of Luke. Luke chapter 19 and the opening ten verses which provide for us one of the most familiar New Testament stories in all the Bible. If you were raised in the church and if you attended Sunday School, you were taught the story of Zacchaeus, a little man who climbed up a tree to see Jesus. Here is that wonderful story. It is only recorded by Luke, does not appear in the other three gospels, but Luke's account is rich and instructive. Luke chapter 19 and I'll read, starting at verse 1 down through verse 10.

"And He...meaning Jesus...entered and was passing through Jericho. And behold, there was a man called by the name of Zacchaeus and he was a chief tax-collector, and he was rich. And he was trying to see who Jesus was, and he was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. And he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.' And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. And when they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, 'He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.' And Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the So9n of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.'"

That final verse, verse 10, that final statement of our Lord Jesus is the most valuable, the most glorious and the most important truth ever revealed in Scripture. As far as we are concerned, this is why we are saved, because God is a seeker and a saver of those who are lost. This is true to the nature of God. From the fall of man in the garden, when the Lord came searching for Adam and Eve who were hiding from Him, and He said, "Where are you?" Genesis 3:8 and 9, God has continued to seek for lost and hidden sinners. It all began in the garden and it still goes on. In one of the most beautiful Old Testament passages, Ezekiel quotes God as saying this, "I will seek the lost. Bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the weak," Ezekiel 34:16. God is a seeker of those who are lost and in grave danger. This is critical. This is foundational to our understanding of the Bible and of God's divine purpose in history. We need only to be reminded from Romans 3:11 that no man seeks after God to be grateful that God seeks after us. In our sinfulness, in our

fallenness, in our reprobation, in our blindness, in our ignorance, in our association and relationship to the kingdom of darkness and under the power of Satan, we cannot seek after God, we do not seek after God. There would then be no reconciliation, no salvation, no forgiveness, no hope of heaven if God did not seek after us. God does the initial seeking. God does the saving of those who apart from Him would hide themselves from Him like Adam and Eve, running from His presence with no capacity in them to ever turn and pursue Him.

This is what our Lord is saying here. He is the seeker. He is the saver of those who are lost. And the story is an illustration. A man out of a massive crowd sitting in a tree has a divine appointment with the seeking, saving Lord who spots him, names him and by divine necessity says, "I'm coming to your house because this is the day of your salvation." This is one of the great biblical illustrations of sovereign salvation, of God seeking not just sinners in a general or vague way but seeking sinners in a very specific personal way. And this is the work of the Son of Man. The Son of Man in verse 10 is a title which Jesus used of Himself more than any other, by far. It refers to Him as man, that is His humanity but far more than that, it is a messianic title referring to Him as the all-glorious, chosen One by God to rule and reign over an ever-lasting Kingdom. That is prophesied as He is there identified in Daniel chapter 7. So it sees Him yes in His humanity, but far more in His divine glory and everlasting rule. Son of Man has come...has come refers to His incarnation, not has come to Jericho, but has come into the world, at His birth He came, incarnation, for the purpose of seeking and saving. Those are two infinitives which means it starts with to, t-o. That's an infinitive, these are what we call in the Greek infinitives of purpose, two purposes to seek, to save. The word seek, *zeteo,*means to pursue, to look for, to search for. To save means basically to rescue from harm, to deliver from danger. And the amazing irony of it all is that God sends Christ to seek and to save those who are headed for His own wrath and judgment.

To sum that up, God seeks to save people from Himself, from His own wrath and His own holy judgment. The ones that He seeks to save are identified here as that which was lost, that which was lost. Literally in the Greek it's a condition of being, the having been lost one, the one who is in a permanent state of lostness. But even being lost doesn't express the fullness of this word. It's a very strong word in the Greek, *apollumi*, any Greek students know, it's a familiar word, it means to be ruined, it means to be destroyed. The Son of Man then was incarnated coming into this world for the purpose of pursuing and saving those who are in a condition of ruination and destruction and headed for damnation. Couldn't be more clear. Jesus did not come into the world to be a good teacher. He did not come into the world to be a moral leader. He did not come to espouse religious ideas. He did not come to raise the religious consciousness of the people in His community and society. He did not come into the world to show us what a good life looks like. He came into this world to rescue doomed sinners. That is the Christian message. That is the only Christian message. Everything in the Old Testament points to that. Everything in the New Testament defines that.

Sin has devastated all of humanity and all of humanity is marred, corrupted, evil ruined, headed for eternal damnation. We are all in that same condition. In fact, that condition needs to be understood and so we read in Romans 3, starting in verse 10, a very careful description of that condition. "There is none righteous, not even one. There is none who understands. There is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become useless. There is none who does good. There is not even one. Their throat is an open grave. With their tongues they keep deceiving. The poison of asps, or snakes, are under their lips. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their paths. The path of piece have they not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes." So writes the Apostle Paul and every single sentence he drew from the Old Testament. This is not a new description of man, this is God's description of man's sinful condition from the start.

In Ephesians chapter 4, an even more concise description of the human condition. Verse 17, "We walk in the futility of our minds, darkened in our understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance in us, because of the hardness of our hearts we are callous given over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of purity with greediness." We can never get enough impurity. This is the human condition. And the purpose of the coming of the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus into the world, is to rescue sinners from this condition with its inevitable result of eternal damnation. So God sends Christ to rescue the lost from God's own wrath and to preserve them safe and unharmed in heaven's eternal joys. That is the Christian gospel. That is the Christian message. Nothing less and there could be nothing more.

So I say, verse 10 is the most important truth laid out in all of Scripture, that God seeks and saves otherwise damned sinners. It should have been clear from the very beginning that this is true. Matthew 1:21, the angel says upon announcing the birth of Jesus, "Call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." At His very birth it was clear that that is why He came. First Timothy 1:15, Paul writes, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost." He came to save sinners. At the very birth of the Lord, the announcement was made, He will save His people from their sins and here at the end of His ministry as the exclamation point of His itinerant ministry, He reiterates the reason He came, the same reason announced at His birth, to save lost sinners. And so, at the beginning and the end of His life, the purpose for His coming is clear.

No writer in the New Testament puts more emphasis on this than does Luke. In fact, Luke's marvelous and unique emphasis is found in chapter 15. Go back to it for a moment. It will be a wonderful memory for those of you who were with us when we went through chapter 15, to be reminded that God likens Himself to a shepherd seeking a lost sheep, a woman seeking a lost coin, and a father seeking a lost son.

In the first parable that the Lord gives, verse 4, "What man among you if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them doesn't leave the ninety and nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?" This is God, the shepherd, who goes after the lost sheep who is in grave danger. "And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing, comes home, calls together his friends and neighbors saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost. I tell you in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." The joy of God and the joy of heaven is in the recovery of lost sinners. That's the point of the story. The Lord finds His heavenly joy and the joy of all the saints and angels that surround His throne in the recovery of lost sinners. God does it for His own joy. He does it for His own glory.

And then the second story about a woman. God is first likened to a shepherd, then He is likened to a woman who had several...namely ten silver coins and lost one. Lit the lamp, swept the house, searched until she found it. Same response. Called her friends and neighbors saying, 'Rejoice with me, I found the coin which I had lost, in the same way there's joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." And again, here is God the seeker looking, searching, finding the lost, bringing the lost home and all heaven celebrates the joy of God and the joy of all who surround Him.

And then the next story. You remember the son who was the prodigal. The father pursued him. He was coming back with a lot of misconceptions. But verse 20 says, "While he was still a long ways off, his father saw him, felt compassion for him, ran, embraced him, kissed him." Here is the seeking shepherd, the seeking woman, the seeking father. God seeks to save the lost for His own joy and the concomitant of all the inhabitants of holy heaven. God finds His own satisfaction in the recovery of lost sinners. He finds His own delight in it.

In Isaiah 62:5, "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so your God will rejoice over you." And here is an illustration as the highest joy in human life is the joy of a man and a woman in love coming together in the union of marriage. God finds His highest joy in the restoration and recovery of sinners. The Old Testament even says God shouts for joy, He's exuberant.

Jeremiah 32:41 says, "And I will rejoice over them to do them good and I will faithfully plant them in this land with all my heart and with all my soul." It is all soul and all heart for God to recover lost sinners. He does it because it's His greatest satisfaction and highest joy. And none of us is going to seek God unless God seeks us.

The Bible talks about men seeking God. It talks about sinners seeking God. But when you put the two together, it's pretty clear the only way we can ever seek His...seek Him is if He seeks us. And I think John summed it up when he said, "We love Him because He first loved us." Once God begins that seeking, once He opens our understanding to our own sinfulness, once He illuminates us as to the glory of the gospel, once He takes away the blindness and the darkness, once He gives life to our

deadness, the awaken sinner, the enlightened lost one, the one who has been given life responds by seeking the one who sought Him.

And then Proverbs 8:17 says, "Those who diligently seek Me will find Me." And Isaiah 65:6 says, "Seek the Lord while He may be found." And Jeremiah 29:13 says, "And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart." Amos 5:4, "Seek Me that you may live." Or Matthew 6:33, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added." Or Matthew 7:7, in the same Sermon on the Mount, "Seek and you shall find." We are only enabled to seek when God has first sought us. That's exactly what happens in the story of Zacchaeus. Out of nowhere Jesus seeks him and before it's over, his heart responds by seeking Jesus. Any seeking on the part of a sinner must be in response to the seeking on the part of God. The generation of those who seek the Lord, in the words of Psalm 24:6, are those whom the Lord has sought.

So here the Lord seeks a man who then seeks Him. Now once more, for the last time, Jesus is headed for Jerusalem, leaving His ministry behind as He heads for the cross in a few days. He's about to give His life as the only acceptable sacrifice that satisfies God, the only ransom price paid to God for sin. It is imminent. He's wrapped up His earthly ministry. Spent most of that last year in Judea, just before this occasion had made a little foray into Galilee and then down through Peraea, crossing the Jordan to the east so as not to go through Samaria which the Jews did not traverse normally and coming down the east side of Jordan back across the river, headed through Jericho up to Jerusalem for the Passover. This would be His last time. And so He arrives at the city of Palms, as it was called, the city of Jericho six miles north of the Dead Sea and six miles west of the Jordan River.

As I told you last time, it was really a wonderful city. It was the garden city of the ancient world, certainly of the land of Israel at that time. Far more wonderful place then than it is frankly is now. It was fed by springs that were producing ample amounts of water which was brought by aqueduct into the city and used to irrigate the area so that it bloomed in a magnificent way. It was a walled city, new walls, not the ones that fell down in the Jericho of the Old Testament. There was a theater there, there was an amphitheater there built by Herod. There was a new palace as well. Gardens designed by Achilleas, it was a magnificent, magnificent place. Edersheim, the great historian, says, "It was characterized by groves of feathery palms rising in stately beauty, stretched gardens of roses and sweet scented balsam plantations. The largest behind the royal gardens of which the perfume is carried by the wind almost out to the sea and which may have been given to the city...may have been used as the reason the name was given to the city, Jericho. Jericho meaning 'the perfumed.'" Edersheim says, "It was the Eden of Palestine, the fairy land of the Old World."

Deep down in a hallowed valley it sits, massive limestone mountains to the west. The sunken Jordan Valley to the east and off in the distance the purple mountains of Moab, a remarkable place, the streets filled with a motley throng. Pilgrims from Galilee and Peraea, priests who live there and serve

there, traders from all lands, it was one of the high density trading centers, there were routes going north, east, west and south, it was a busy, busy place, full of good people in a human sense, full of the wretched, the worst who occupied places where there was lots to steal. The robbers were there in mass. The great caravans came through there. There was ample supply for those who stole, as well for those...as well as for those who bought and sold. Soldiers were there, courtiers were there, the worst of everything, the best of everything, tax collectors had a high profile there because it was one of the three regional tax centers in the land of Israel, the northern one being Capernaum, the central one on the coast being Caesarea, the southern one being Jericho.

So here Jesus came with His disciples headed for Jerusalem, not just His disciples but all other kinds of followers that had collected with Him, plus all the pilgrims headed for a Passover. It was a huge crowd that crossed the Jordan and came into...entering says verse 1, and passing through Jericho. And the question was on people's minds...is this Jesus the Messiah? Is He going to bring the promised Kingdom? They knew He had miracle power, He had filled the land with His miracles. They knew He was a teacher like no other teacher. And in Jericho they knew He had raised Lazarus from the dead because just up the hill a little ways from Jericho is Bethany before you enter into Jerusalem where Lazarus lived and was well known and it was only a matter of weeks before this event that He had raised him from the dead. And the word would have spread everywhere, we know it spread, it spread right up to the upper echelons of the leadership of Jerusalem. We can be certain that it spread down the hill into Jericho that He had power over death as well as disease, as well as demons.

So He was followed by a curious pilgrim crowd. And when He came into town, it was a customary thing that when pilgrims came through your town, to come out and greet them, asked them if they needed a drink, asked them if they needed something to eat. That's what you did. That's just normal in the course of events. But in this case because it was Jesus, the crowd was bigger coming in and the crowd coming out of their homes would have been greater than normal as well. It was a melee, it was a mob of people because it included Jesus of Nazareth, the Prophet, the Healer and perhaps the Messiah. It is to this huge crowd in this city that Jesus declares He is come to seek and to save the lost and gives a magnificent example of that in the salvation, the sovereign salvation of Zacchaeus.

So Luke is telling us the story of Zacchaeus, but it's really the story of God. It's really the story of the purpose of God fulfilled in Jesus Christ. But let's meet the sinner, okay? Then we'll meet the Savior. And then we'll talk about salvation.

Let's meet the sinner. Verse 1, "He entered and was passing through Jericho and behold, there was a man called by the name of Zacchaeus and he was a chief tax-gatherer and he was rich." So into this little paradise, as it was called, the city of Jericho, comes Jesus with His massive accumulating crowd. Comes in to this crossroad city, highway going to the north headed toward Damascus, Tyre

and Sidon. Great trade centers of the north. Highway going through the west through Jerusalem, headed for Caesarea and Joppa, great trade centers also on the Mediterranean Sea. Highway going through headed to Egypt in the south and cities east of the Jordan into Moab and the far east from which all kinds of products came and went, great exchange center. This city would have had many, many tax collectors. This man is identified as a chief tax gatherer.

As you know, because we've seen our tax gatherers before, this is number six in the gospel of Luke. This is the sixth time our Lord has an encounter with a tax gatherer. And by the way, all of them are favorable. So He defies the conventional wisdom and the attitude of the people toward these men. And in so doing, reminds us that it's not a crime to be a tax collector. That may encourage those of you who are. It is a noble calling if you do it right because taxation is a divine institution. Jesus said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's." Pay your taxes, He did. Paul said, "Custom to whom custom is due, tribute to whom tribute is due, tax to whom tax is due," Romans 13. The entire theocratic kingdom of Israel in the Old Testament was basically functioning by a very carefully laid out taxation system in which every Jewish person paid essentially twenty-three and a third of their average income to the theocratic kingdom in order to fund the government. The Lord instituted taxation because He instituted government. Powers that be are ordained of God. The Lord never had a problem with the people who collected tax because He never had a problem with tax as such. But the Lord does have a problem with abusive taxes with illegitimate taxes, with corruption, dishonesty, crime and separating people from their money illegitimately by use of physical force and cruelty, which is what the tax collectors in the ancient world did.

In order to have a tax franchise, you had to buy it from Rome. So you were a traitor from the very outset to your own people who were occupied by the Roman idolatrous and despised pagans. Rome would set a certain amount that the tax gatherer had to pay. Whatever else he could collect, he could keep...a formula for corruption for sure. And there were so many ways to tax. The people had no idea what they were supposed to pay. Yes, there were some sort of foundational taxes. There was, for example, an individual tax, kind of a poll tax for men from 14 to 65 and women from 12 to 65 and they paid that tax. There was a ground tax called like a property tax, one tenth of all grain or something the equivalent of grain, one fifth of wine and oil. So there were some fixed taxes. Even a kind of income tax which was about one percent of a person's income. So they had those that were fixed. But beyond that, you could tax anything that you could get away with taxing. You could tax everybody's commerce by taxing every wheel, every axle on their cart, taxing every animal pulling the cart, taxing every product that they bought and sold, every way imaginable. And so tax collectors became filthy rich because what they paid Rome was only a portion of what they actually collected. They also became despised and hated. They couldn't attend the synagogue. They couldn't have any social relationships with people because the people wouldn't get near them because they were considered unclean and anybody who came near one of them would be polluted. So the only people they could associate were the people who were also unclean, and so they were the collection of

people called the tax collectors and sinners that we meet so often in Jesus' ministry, the very people that God loves to save. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." In fact, Jesus spent so much time with the scum and the riff-raff, the tax gatherers and their assorted criminals, that they called Him, Luke 7:34, Matthew 11:9, "a friend of tax gatherers and sinners." They would have said that with such disdain you couldn't imagine it. And it is really why they thought that He represented Satan because He spent so much time with the people that they thought belonged to Satan.

Well here's one of them. There was a man called by the name of Zacchaeus. Now his mom and dad had good intentions for him when he was born. Zacchaeus means, are you ready for this?, clean, innocent, pure and righteous. Nice try, things didn't go the way they intended them to go. So he in his life defies the intent of his parents and becomes unclean, guilty, impure and unrighteous.

It's interesting that He gave him a name. This is the first for us to see a tax gatherer who actually named other than Matthew who is called an Apostle by Jesus. Why the name? Well again, remember when we studied Bartimaeus and we suggested the church historians have said that Bartimaeus later became a very prominent Christian and his name was used because everybody knew who he was and this would have associated him with that great moment in his life when he was given sight and saved in Jericho. Well here you have, according to some church historians, a similar situation. It's Clement of Alexandria, one of the church fathers, who says that this man, Zacchaeus, became a very prominent Christian leader and ended up a pastor of the church in Caesarea, later to be succeeded by none other than Cornelius, the centurion. That's from church history. We can't find that in the Word of God. So perhaps it's so and that's why his name was used.

Nonetheless this is Zacchaeus, he was, it says, *architelones*, *architelones*, actually means commissioner of taxes, commissioner of taxes. He was at the top of the pyramid, top of the pile. Everybody who collected everything, and there were lots of tax collectors, had to pay him a piece of the action. So everything came up the...up the pyramid and landed eventually in his pocket. Everybody extorted for him. He got a piece of everybody's action. And as a result, he was rich...a combination of legitimate and illegitimate activity, the people saw him as a sinner, verse 7, they all began to grumble saying He's going to be the guest of a man who is a sinner. That category is not simply a commentary on his personal life, that is not a commentary on his character, it is a statement of the category in which he belongs. He is in the category of outcasts. He is in the category of the defiled. He is in the category of those that you don't go near or you will become defiled. He is sorted. He is outside the pale of social contact. He can't go the synagogue and no one can come near him without a defilement. So this man was left to live with the rest of the scum who were disallowed from any social or religious contact with the rest of the population. Life would have been pretty tragic for him...a lot of money but outside of everything that was good and noble and meaningful.

Verse 3 tells us that he was interested in Jesus. He was trying to see who Jesus was. Everybody heard about Jesus, he probably had heard about the fact that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and he got the word from the folks that were first in the crowd coming into town that Jesus was in this pilgrimage group and he wanted to see who Jesus was...which one in this pilgrim crowd was Jesus. He was trying to see Him, perfect tense, he was in an ongoing continual effort to try to see Jesus. And you can just see the picture of him because you know his stature was small and the crowd is massive and he's bouncing up and down, bobbing back and forth trying to get a glimpse of this massive people flowing between two crowds on either side of this dusty road and he can't see Jesus. Is he curious? Sure he's curious. Is it more than that? Sure it's more than that, he has a dissatisfied heart. He knows he's alienated from God. He knows he has no eternal life. He knows that he's overwhelmed with guilt and sin. He knows the kind of man he is. I don't know exactly what was going on in his heart, but he was after Jesus for more than just curiosity because the Holy Spirit made sure he was in the right place at the right moment for Jesus to look at him and speak to him.

Now he had two problems. Simple, verse 3, big crowd, small man...two problems, he was unable to see Jesus, see who He was, because of the crowd for he was small in stature. The crowd was too large and he was too small. Can't see past them because they're too thick, can't see over them, he's too short. But he's determined to see Jesus, setting aside all sense of embarrassment and these guys would probably keep to themselves and not expose themselves to large crowds very often because they didn't want to take the abuse that came to them because of who they really were. He sets all of that aside, he ceases to be self-protective, or self-conscious as he normally would have been. He comes out of his low profile kind of existence and he determines that he's going to see who Jesus is. We can be sure he's being prompted by the Spirit of God, so what's he going to do? Well, you've got to get ahead of the crowd. So verse 4, he did what is obvious, he ran on ahead. He climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him for He was about to pass through that way. He knew the route, through the street, up the hill to Jerusalem, he knew exactly the path that Jesus would go. So he ran ahead of where Jesus was, ahead of where all the crowd was and got beyond the crowd and he found a sycamore tree, sometimes indicated as a mulberry tree. What's important to know, it's a very...very low tree, short fat trunk and low broad branches that a little guy could climb rather easily and get up above the crowd and perch himself in those branches. And that's exactly what he did. It's a lot like an oak tree, some writers tell us, with very low branches. And he sits there in the tree, waiting for Jesus to arrive.

So we meet the sinner, the sinner that Jesus is going to save. And this sinner is going to get the shock of his life. Man, he's going to be the shock of the town, too. Secondly, we meet the Savior in verse 5. "And when Jesus came to the place," the place where he was sitting in the tree, the exact spot, "He looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus,'" I think if that were me at that moment, I'd have fallen out of the tree, landed on my head and had to be taken to the hospital and been unconverted

because Jesus would have kept going. He said his name. This is a reminder that the Son of Man knows who He's seeking. It reminds me of Nathaniel in John 1 and Nathaniel said, "How do You know me?" And He says, "I knew you before you ever showed up." He knows His own. He never expected to catch the eyes of Jesus. He never ever dreamed that Jesus would know him. But He does. And He says, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house."

Whoa! The first stunner must have been the eye contact. The second stunner, "Zacchaeus." The third one, "Hurry and come down, I'm coming to your house to stay." The jolt to that poor little Jew's system must have been beyond description. But it was an irresistible call...an irresistible call because verse 6 says, "And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly."

Now I just need to kind of take this part a little bit for you for a minute. "Hurry and come down," that's an imperative, calls for immediate action, no delay. Why? "For today," listen, God not only knows who He will save, He knows when He will save and where He will save. "Today is the day of your salvation...today I must stay at your house." Well who said? Who determined that? This is what we call the divine necessity, a little particle *dei*in the Greek, d-e-i, transliterated in English, *dei*, it's used throughout Luke for divine necessity. For it must be, it is necessary, this is divine necessity, it is predetermined before the foundation of the world, if you will, that this is the day that I come to your house.

Wow. "Today, I must stay at your house." And that phrase, "stay at your house," indicates to spend the night. I'm coming and I'm going to stay overnight. This is not, by the way, a request and he didn't run a Bed and Breakfast. This is a divine command. Zacchaeus never could have anticipated anything like this because he knew he was a defiled person and no one who considered himself righteous or clean would ever come near him, let alone near his house, and worst of all, eat a meal with him which was tantamount to affirmation and partnership. Yes, Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was, but far more than that, Jesus wanted to see Zacchaeus. So in verse 6, he hurried, came down and received Him gladly.

It would have been the first time any righteous, clean, noble, respected person had come to his house. And here is the Lord, like that father, throwing his arms around a stinking prodigal son, kissing him all over the head and reconciling him and embracing him. Of course he received Him gladly, profusely because he was so overjoyed. Contrast that with the crowd in verse 7 and you understand the difference between the heart of God and apostate first century Judaism. "And when they saw it, they all said, 'Isn't it wonderful to see the grace of God toward a sinner.'" Oh, is that what it says? Afraid not. What it says is, "They all began to grumble," that is in the Greek an onomatopoetic word. You remember what an onomatopoeia is? It is a word whose meaning sounds like it. The word is *diagonguzo*, da-ga-da-go, *diagonguzo,* it's a compound strong term.

This is absolutely predictable. This is...you know they're going to do this, outraged propriety, religious incorrectness, no self-respecting Jew would ever expose himself to such severe pollution by staying at the house of the chief administrator of taxation, the most corrupt of all tax gatherers and then to eat a meal with him, to sleep at his house, absolute outrage. And then you've got to realize that there are people in the crowd who are just looking for some action on the part of Jesus to take them on the last few steps to being convinced that He's the Messiah, and instead He does something that would literally undo all of their previous idea that He would be the Messiah by defiling Himself in this way. It's just against the grain of everything that was a part of their religious thinking. He's gone to be the guest of a man, that is a Greek verb, *kataluo*, and it means to loose in a...in a compound sense, to take off. What it means is to be a guest...He went to take His clothes off to stay the night, He went to loose His clothing. It's also used to unhitch an animal. It's only here and in Luke 9:12. But it means to take everything apart, to take all your clothes off, get ready for the night. And this man is a *hamartolo*, he's in the category of the wretched that spies the rejected, the category of those people who are the unclean and the untouchable.

No Jew would go to his house because then he would be basically a partaker in his evil deed. He would be guilty of all his crimes and all his corruption. But Jesus goes to his house because He seeks to save this lost man. He is on a divine mission, established by divine sovereign grace and a divine timetable. He knows exactly who he is though he's never met Him. He knows his name though he's never heard it. And he has an appointment with salvation. He received Him gladly. What a contrast. And when they saw it, they began to grumble. They never got it. People of Israel never got it. All the way to the end they're holding on to their vile, damning self-righteous religion while Jesus is saving sinners who have no merit, nothing to commend them to Him.

At this point the curtain goes down on that day. Jesus has gone now to Zacchaeus' house. What happens? Come back next week. We're out of time. But what happens is the best thing that can ever happen to anyone and we'll see that next time.

Father, again we thank You for the revelation, the wonderful and rich revelation that You are the seeking God. That You pursue the sinner before the sinner could ever pursue You. We thank You, Lord, that You know our names before we can ever introduce ourselves because our names are already written down in Your book and they were written down before creation. You know us, You know those You will seek and save. And, Lord, we would ask that today even this day You might come to the house of some poor sinner here, that You might call that poor sinner and say, "Today, I must come into your life. Today, salvation is coming to your house." I just pray, Lord, that there are some Zacchaeus' here. They came. They're sitting in the tree this morning and You've passed by and they've seen you. I just pray, Lord, that this would be the day when You would call out to them and go to their house and bring them salvation. Do it for Your own glory and for Your own joy as well

as the joy that comes to the rescued sinner. We thank You. We want to live for Your glory, all this because of Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.

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