

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

### **Jesus: The Seeking Savior, Part 2**

Scripture: Luke 19:1-10

Code: 80-35

As you know from last Lord's day, we're doing a little two- part series on Luke 19. So let me have you open your Bible, if you will, to Luke 19 verses 1 to 10. I want to read that section of Scripture as our setting for our message. We introduced it last week, discussed verse 10. This morning we want to look at verses 1 to 9, but I'll read the whole text so you'll have it in mind.

Speaking of our Lord Jesus and here He's on His way to Jerusalem to be crucified, the text says:

And 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 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, or stood--literally--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 Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

The story of Zacchaeus is intended to illustrate the truth of verse 10. The story of Zacchaeus puts into practical reality the statement that Jesus came to seek and save that which was lost. He sought and He saved the sinner Zacchaeus, who is a living example of what the Lord Jesus came to do.

Now as we said last time, it is important for us to realize that God is a seeking God. God is a God who pursues after sinners. Scriptures literally speak of that from the beginning of the Old Testament to the end of the New. God is a seeking God. And, beloved, if it were not for that, none of us would ever be saved because in our natural fallen depraved state, Romans 3:11 says no man seeks after God. And if it were not for the reality that God seeks us, we would never know God and we would die in our sins.

But God is a seeking God. In Matthew 18 God is depicted as a shepherd who having lost one of a hundred sheep goes out to find the one that is lost and comes back to rejoice over that one. In John

chapter 4 and verse 23 it says the Father seeks true worshipers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. God is a seeker and a Savior. God seeks sinners who in their natural state do not seek Him. And so the heart of the gospel is bound up in verse 10, the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Once God reaches out in seeking man, man may respond by seeking back. But apart from the seeking of God, no man seeks after Him. The Old Testament particularly in Proverbs 8:17 says those who diligently seek Me will find Me. Isaiah 55:6 says seek the Lord while He may be found. A very familiar Jeremiah 29:13 says, "And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart." Amos 5:4 says, "Seek Me that you may live."

And in the New Testament, the Scripture says, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God," and Matthew 7:7 says, "Seek and ye shall find." So there is a seeking that man does, but only in response to the prompting of the seeking God. For man in his natural state, in his fallen state is totally alienated from the life of God, totally unable to seek God, only when he is touched by the prevailing sovereign convicting power of God can he make a movement toward God.

And so we can bless God that we have a seeking God, or all of us would perish. It is because God first loved us that we can ever love Him. It is because God first sought us that we could ever begin in our fallenness to seek Him. And so the generation of those who seek the Lord, as we're called in Psalm 24:6, are those whom the Lord has sought. Everything in salvation is initiated by a seeking God. For a dead man, a corpse, a blind man, a deaf man, a dumb man, a mindless man cannot seek, cannot know God. And so what we have here is the seeking God revealed in the seeking Savior showing us how it is that He seeks to save the lost. The lost is Zacchaeus and before the text is completed, he has become the saved.

Now let me give you a little bit of the scene. Notice verse 1. And we're just going to flow through the narrative, it's a simple and yet profound one. "And He--speaking of Jesus--entered and was passing through Jericho." The reason He was passing through Jericho was because He was on His way to Jerusalem. He had for some time been ministering in the northern part of Palestine, the land known as Galilee, the southern part was Judea, the middle part Samaria which was sort of off limits to the Jews, the northern part Galilee. Jesus had been ministering in Galilee. He was really from Galilee, the city of Nazareth being in Galilee. Much of His ministry took place there and He had been back there ministering again, preaching, teaching, healing. He had then gone across the Jordan, east of the Jordan, to the land known as Peraea. And He had ministered there in Peraea. And all the time ministering in Galilee and Peraea, He was moving east and then south because He was headed to Jerusalem for the Passover, the Passover in which He would be the Passover lamb giving His life for the sins of the world and rising again from the grave within three days.

And so, He is headed inexorably to the cross. He has gone through Galilee, down the east bank of the Jordan through Peraea. And along the way He has collected with Him many of the pilgrims who also are on their way to Passover in Jerusalem. They cross the Jordan River, fording the river a few miles north of Jericho because that's where the river Jordan was forded. Everyone coming into Jerusalem from the north and the east would come that way, crossing the Jordan at approximately Jericho. Having crossed maybe a handful of miles north of Jericho, He then proceeded down the road that led through Jericho and south of Jericho took a hard right turn up the plateau to Jerusalem. And so it is that He comes passing through Jericho, with no intention particularly of ministry there, with no intention of staying there, definitely on the pilgrimage into the city of Jerusalem. And Jerusalem was not a long way from Jericho, really could be walked in a day rather easily. And so there would be apparently no need to stay in Jericho.

But when He got there it was obvious that the Spirit of God had prompted His heart to give there a graphic illustration of the reason He had come into the world and the reason He was going to the cross to die, and that was to seek and to save the lost. What better place to make that clear? So, as He comes on to Judean soil for the last time in His life as He forged the Jordan river for the last time, as He comes to the consummation of His life and the eternal plan of God comes to its very high point, Jesus passes through Jericho.

Now Jericho was a fascinating city. Today it's not that fascinating, to be honest with you. In fact, it has been called by some commentators a wretched Hamlet. I'm not sure the Chamber of Commerce of contemporary Jericho would go for that, but it's a forgettable place. In those days it was a rather unforgettable one. It is located directly east of the city of Jerusalem and Jerusalem--as you know--is on a very high plateau and Jericho, the plain of Jericho at its southern end has the Dead Sea which is the lowest spot on the face of the earth. So the descent from the high plateau of Jerusalem to the low place of Jericho is a rather dramatic descent and that's often why it says in the Scripture "they went up to Jerusalem," it was up from the east, it was also up from the west, since the plain of Sharon on the coast was flat at sea level and had to be then beneath the city of Jerusalem which ascended to that great plateau.

Jericho was then east of Jerusalem. It was at the southern end of the great Jordan valley, a wonderfully fertile place. At the southern end it tended to be a bit more like desert and there they grew date palms. In fact, Jericho which means the perfumed probably got its name from the groves of Balsam wood, the perfume of which was so strong they said you could smell it in Jerusalem. They also said that you could hear the music of the temple in Jerusalem down in the valley in Jericho. So the Balsam wood and then the palms that completely covered the landscape where dates were harvested and the Romans exported both all over the world, gave that city its name...the city of palms, Jericho, the perfumed. Just about six miles west of the Jordan River and just about six miles north of the Dead Sea.

It was a magnificent place. In the summer it was warm, but even in the winter it says they wore nothing but light linen because it was such a place of warmth. It was fed by the Elisha Spring, a little bit north, and then about a dozen miles north of that was a second spring so the water supply was spring fed. All that twelve mile plain of Jericho being watered by the springs and then also by the Jordan River.

Herod had come there and built a theater, an amphitheater. Archelaus had come and built a magnificent palace and beautiful gardens and it was sort of the rose capital of the Middle East. They grew roses everywhere. The most magnificent gardens were behind the palace. And so it was called in those days the little paradise, or the Eden of Palestine.

Now not only was it a beautiful place in itself but it was a crossroads in terms of its economics. Everybody traveling from the east forded the Jordan River at that spot and came to Jerusalem through Jericho. Everybody coming from the north, from even Tyre and Sidon and then over into Damascus coming down the Jordan valley would come through Jericho on their way to Jerusalem or on their way south to Egypt. Everybody from Egypt north to Damascus, Tyre, Sidon or way on up into Caesarea, Philippi or wherever, would all come through Jericho. It was where you passed on your travels. People leaving Jerusalem going east crossing the Jordan out into the great Arab world came through Jericho.

Now because of the taxation system of that time, wherever there was a transverse activity of people on the move, they set up custom houses to tax people. And so there were three great tax centers in ancient Palestine. One was at Capernaum on the northern port of Galilee. Another was at Caesarea on the seacoast where the port was placed. And another was in Jericho. The three great taxation centers...Capernaum, Caesarea and Jericho. And apparently they operated no tax center in Jerusalem for obvious reasons, so as not to totally infuriate the Jewish establishment. But the Romans set up those three tax centers and there was a major one in the city of Jericho because of the tremendous economic activity, there was that tax center set there to collect custom.

And as I told you last time, there were taxes on carts, there were taxes on each wheel on the cart. There were taxes on the animals that pulled your cart. There were taxes on the good you carried...goods you carried on your cart. There were taxes on what you carried in your hand, on your back. There was personal tax, poll tax for just living and breathing and showing up. There was tax for everything.

And you remember that the Roman government sold tax franchises to Jews who were considered by their own people traitors to Judaism and to Jewish nationalism. They sold them a tax franchise and they wound up then collecting taxes from their own people to pay to an occupying hated army. And so they were viewed as traitors. Any tax collector was not allowed to testify in a court of law because

they were recognized as defiled and also as liars. And none of them were allowed to worship in the synagogue or the temple. They had no part in the life of their nation. They had sold their souls for the sake of money to the Roman occupation and their people turned their backs on them. Now they had to pay Rome so much, anything they could collect over what Rome required they kept for themselves. And that led to graft and extortion and robbery and abuse of major proportions.

Now the Lord Jesus had a special love for tax collectors. All through the gospel of Luke, Luke focuses on the many, many times Jesus encountered tax collectors and every time Luke brings it up it is always a favorable encounter because Luke is showing us how much the Lord Jesus reached out to the worst riff-raff in society. The ones who were the outcasts of the religious establishment who were the flagrant public sinners were the very ones that Jesus concentrated on in order to demonstrate that He had come to save sinners. And the worse the sinner, the worse the stigma, the more marvelous the grace, the mercy, the love and the glory of God in saving that sinner.

So, here we see a little bit about Jericho. In the city of Jericho there is a particular tax gatherer who is not just an ordinary one. It says he was, verse 2, a chief tax gatherer. We could surmise from that, although it's the only place in Scripture this word is used, we could surmise that he was a commissioner of taxes, that he may have even operated the whole tax center at Jericho, or he may have been one of many commissioners who had a certain realm of taxation over which he had responsibility. But he was not a little mokesch, like Matthew who was a personally going out getting taxes from people. He probably oversaw a lot of folks who were doing that. He was despised, he was hated. Verse 7, they call him a sinner and they grumble about Jesus going to his house, not just because he is sinful in terms of personal character but because he is sinful in terms of office having betrayed his country.

So, Jesus comes into this very busy, very wicked city, in fact it was a city surrounded by robbers to the north and west. If you've been to modern day Jericho, the ancient Jericho is a few miles north, so right west of that are all these limestone rocks with caves and robbers and brigands used to hide out there. And as people moved back and forth through there, they would rob them along the highways, such as in the case of the good Samaritan, you remember, the story of the good Samaritan finding the man who had been beset by robbers, beaten and robbed lying on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem. This would be very typical kind of occurrence in that place. So it was a very volatile place, a sort of a resort place, sort of an economic center and a place for graft and corruption as well as robbery and all matters of crime.

It is then into this city that Jesus comes with the intention of passing through. But as He passes through, there are two wonderful incidents recorded in Scripture...the one we're not looking at is the healing of two blind men, one by the name of Bartimaeus who cried out to Jesus the son of David and asked for mercy upon him and Jesus wonderfully healed him and his friend so that they could see and granted them salvation as well. The other incident is the incident of this man by the name of

Zacchaeus. And he is an illustration of the seeking saving Lord.

Now all we really know about this crowd is that they were on their way to Jerusalem. Jesus, of course, was the focal point. The disciples are with Him and this mob of people was around Him. And with as many pilgrims as were coming and with the popularity that Jesus had, we can only estimate the crowd in thousands and thousands of people. And as they moved to the city of Jeru...of Jericho, it wouldn't be any surprise for them to arrive. Obviously word would travel, the pilgrims were flowing in a steady flow to the Passover so some could say a few miles back comes Jesus in this huge crowd. The cloud of dust could probably be seen and as they crossed the fording of the Jordan and came toward the city of Jericho, it would have been customary for the townspeople with so large a pilgrimage to come out and line the street, the main street, and welcome these pilgrims on their way to the city of Jerusalem. And, no doubt, many of them would know each other, perhaps having family relationships or business relationships or whatever. And so the city of Jericho would all be out.

Now particularly because Jesus was involved in this and they had all heard about Him, His fame had spread throughout all of Palestine, His ability to do signs and wonders and heal people and the marvelous raising from the dead of Lazarus which occurred just a little time before this on His last visit to Jerusalem, happened in Bethany and Bethany is the next town between Jericho and Jerusalem. As you go up the plateau to Jerusalem, it's Bethany before you hit Jerusalem. So the word of the resurrection of Lazarus and the reality that he really did live must have reached that little town, as well as all the stories about what Jesus did. And so you can be sure that everybody who could move in Jericho was out lining the streets, the whole town was curious. Was He the Messiah? Was He coming to take over? Was He coming to set up His Kingdom? Was He coming to defeat the Romans? Was this going to be it? And was the power shown in the resurrection of Lazarus just a precursor to what power He would display in this wonderful arrival in Jerusalem?

But on the way, as if to say--Look, if you think I've come to knock off Rome, you're wrong. If you think I've come to set up a political kingdom, you're wrong. I have come to seek and save the lost. And I'm going to give you a demonstration of that right here in your own town.

Jesus came to save. Very important to understand that. I think that sometimes we miss that in traditional dispensationalism, you get a little bit tangled up with terms and some people think that He came primarily to preach about the kingdom. Well, what you have to understand is preaching about the kingdom was the same as preaching salvation. If you doubt that, look at Matthew 19, start at verse 16 and go to the end of the chapter and you'll see a rich young man comes to Jesus and says, "What do I do to obtain eternal life?" And he's asking about eternal life which is salvation. Jesus says to His disciples after the man leaves not having received eternal life, "See how hard it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Therefore the Kingdom of Heaven was the same thing as eternal life. Then He turns right around and calls it the Kingdom of God, therefore the Kingdom of God is the same thing as the Kingdom of Heaven is the same thing as eternal life.

Then the disciples said, "Who then can be saved?" Therefore being saved is the same as entering the Kingdom of God which is the same as entering the Kingdom of Heaven which is the same as having eternal life. So whatever terminology you want to use, Jesus came to speak a message of salvation. Eternal life is salvation. Salvation is salvation and entering His Kingdom is salvation. Ever and always Jesus came to save sinners.

Paul said it, didn't he, in 1 Timothy, "He came into the world to save sinners," and then Paul added, "of whom I am chief." And he'd probably get a lot of argument from a lot of folks on that.

And so, we meet Jesus coming through this city. The man's name is Zacchaeus. That's not an unfamiliar name. It's a Jewish name. In fact, it is used twice in the Old Testament and it's there in the Old Testament Zakkay, but it's the same Hebrew root, it's basically the same name. By the way, it means "pure one, righteous one," which must have been some source of mockery for this poor man who was anything but pure and anything but righteous in the eyes of his contemporaries. But nonetheless he is definitely Jewish because he has this very Jewish name. And he is a tax collector there exacting things from his own people. The Romans were smart enough to know that they couldn't get taxes from Jews as well as Jews could get taxes from Jews.

By the way, it's interesting, there is some indication in church history that there was the belief that Zacchaeus after his conversion became the pastor of the church of Caesarea and was later followed in that pastorate by Cornelius, the Gentile whom Peter had led to Christ as we read in Acts chapter 10. So he may have later become a pastor, that was from Clement of Alexander, we can't be positive about it, but it's an interesting thought.

At this time, anyway, notice verse 2, he is the chief commissioner of taxes in some way, shape, or form, we don't know the specifics of that. But his official title is architelones, chief tax gatherer... architelones. Obviously in his position he could get very, very rich and it says at the end of verse 2 he was rich. Now he probably had a little bit of money to get the franchise to start with, but once he got into the thing, it was a real gravy train. He really could lock it up. And he would go out and hire men to collect taxes and to get whatever Rome wanted and then give them a little part and keep all the rest that he could get and use every possible means. When the people in verse 7 said he was a sinner, they weren't just talking about his office, they were talking about that in part, but also no doubt his personal character went along with the office. He was rich. He was despised because of it. He was hated.

You can imagine how the average hoi polloi, the common people of Israel would hate a traitor. And then how they would hate a traitor who got rich at their expense, who through their poverty became rich. And so they despised and hated the man. Anyone who was a tax collector, as I said, was unable to enter into the life of the nation at all.

But this man had heard of Jesus. There's no question about it because in verse 3 it says, "And he was trying to see who Jesus was." Now the best...best understanding of that phrase "who Jesus was" is that he had heard about Him but had never seen Him. And so he was extremely curious, trying to see Him, trying to see translates a...an imperfect which means a continual effort, he is continually making an effort to see Him.

Now you ask the question why? Curiosity? Probably. Conscience over his own sin? Surely. Desire for freedom from guilt? Could well be. How about the irresistible convicting power of the Holy Spirit? I believe if you read the record it has to be apparent to you that the Spirit of God has begun a process in the heart of Zacchaeus that will lead to salvation. Zacchaeus, in and of himself, is not seeking God, but the Spirit of God is moving his heart. And in response he begins to make effort toward seeing Jesus...obviously he would have heard about the resurrection of Lazarus, he would have heard about the claims that Jesus is the Messiah, that Jesus can forgive sin, etc., etc. And here was an outcast, here was a hated man, a despised man, a man whose hands were filled with hot money that he had taken at the expense of poor people, a man with a lot of guilt. And yet instead of running and hiding, there's something so desperate in this man to see Jesus that we can only assume the Spirit of God has overruled the natural inclination of the man to bring him to this place. And it becomes evident that that in fact is exactly what the Spirit was doing when the man is saved.

So, he was trying to see who Jesus was. But he was unable because of the crowd. There was so big a crowd there crushing Jesus and so many of the residents of Jericho all over the place lining the street, he had some very big obstacles between him and Jesus...namely the crowd. And to add to that it says he was small in stature. Now we don't know how big he was, but it would be fair to assume that he was probably well under five feet, since an average person in that time period would be maybe around five feet or a little more. He might have been like four-foot- six, or who knows...just a little guy. And here he is out in a crowd.

Now in the first place, Zacchaeus probably judiciously avoided crowds. Little people have a problem in crowds to start with. And then if you happen to be the chief commissioner of taxes and you get in a crowd, I mean, judiciously placed elbow in the chops or in the ribs or some boot on the big toe of your foot so exposed in your sandals, or a knife in your belly or your back or a hack at the side of your head, I mean, it's amazing what you could expose yourself to in a crowd if you were the chief commissioner of taxes and if you were little to add to it.

But nonetheless, this man is not concerned with his fears. He is not even concerned with his dignity. He is not at all concerned with his distance from the people. He is very, very persistently wanting to see Jesus and he will endure a kick and a punch and a poke here and there or worse perhaps, if it is necessary, in seeing this one who his mind demands that he see. And so out he goes.



Well, he can't see. So verse 4 says he ran ahead beyond the crowd, beyond the people and climbed up into a Sycamore tree. He knows which route they're going to take going through town, there's only one main road. And so he runs down the road a way ahead of the crowd, kicking up dust, gets down there, finds a Sycamore tree and that really...we think of a Sycamore, it's a different kind of tree. In those days it was more of a fig- mulberry, we use those two words because it had leaves like a mulberry tree which are big broad leaves and it had figs growing on it. It was like a short fat oak tree with spreading branches. It had a short trunk and the branches went way out. So a little guy could scurry up the trunk, get way out on a limb and hang over the road. And that's, no doubt, what Zacchaeus did. He ran ahead, climbed into a Sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way.

So he's got himself a perfect seat for the parade going by. He's tucked up in the branches of a tree. That's not a dignified place for a man to be, but he's not very dignified at this point anyway, he has no self-consciousness. He only wants to see Jesus. He's not concerned about his dignity. He's not even concerned about somebody yanking him out of the tree on his ear. He just wants to see Jesus.

And so along comes Jesus and the crowd. And I just love this, verse 5, "And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up." Just stopped and looked up. "And said to him, Zacchaeus..." I mean, that would be enough to just absolutely devastate the guy and make him fall out of the tree. "Zacchaeus..." he's never met Him before and all Zacchaeus wants to do is see who this person is of whom he has heard so much and He stops in the middle of thousands of people, looks up in a tree and says, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house."

Now this is what's known as the direct approach to evangelism. There's not a thing about this that's in any way, shape or form subtle.

Now we don't know how He knew his name. Some people suggest that the crowd were murmuring...Look, there's that terrible despised Zacchaeus in a tree, what's he doing there?...and Jesus heard them talking. We don't know that. We don't know whether He knew it naturally because the people pointed him out, or whether He knew it supernaturally, obviously supernaturally He knew what was going to happen that day and He had it all set up. But certainly it was a shock to Zacchaeus who was trying to, in his own way, just get a look at Jesus to have Jesus say, "Come down, I must stay." The word "must" means it's a divine mandate, it's not a request. He's not saying may I please come over, He's saying I'm coming, I must come. Why? Divine appointment, the work of the Spirit is already begun, the heart is already prepared, I must come.

By the way, the word "stay", the Greek construction means probably to "pass the night." We don't know that for certain, but that would be a very fair rendering. I must come and spend the night with you. The seeker commands. You see, here we see the point of the story. Jesus is seeking to save a

sinner. And here is the worse sinner in town in the eyes of the people. This man is worse than a prostitute, worse than a robber, worse than anybody, a traitor is the worst of all. And so He says I'm coming to your house and I must come. Why? Because He knew he had a prepared heart. It was all a matter of the divine timetable. Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus but he had no idea that Jesus wanted to see him. And that's always the way it is with a sinner, no sinner desires to see Jesus until Jesus has already desired to see him. That's back to the divine initiative, again. The soul seeks God only when the soul is sought by God.

And so, you can imagine the reaction of the crowd, all these religious elite who look down on this guy and all the common people who look down on him and it says their reaction, he hurried by the way, verse 6, and came down and received Jesus gladly. I mean, he was ecstatic. He was ecstatic because, well, there were many reasons. Certainly there was the spiritual reason and then there was the social reason, here was the number one hero in the land of Israel, the number one servant of God, the number one prophet of God and He said He'd come to his house. It's as if Zacchaeus was saying, "Ha, you won't let me in your houses and you won't come into my house, but He's coming to my house." Received Him gladly.

I'm sure there was that social aspect but the really deep aspect was the idea of the spiritual reality. The man was seeking to see Jesus because the Spirit of God was working in his heart. And so he was glad under the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, he was glad. You would think that a sinner would be very, very distressed if the perfect sinless Son of God said I'm coming to your house, but he was glad because his heart was prepared.

And the reaction, verse 7, "When they saw it," who's they? Everybody else. This is the crowd reaction, "They all began to grumble." Grumbling and mumbling among themselves, griping, "Saying, He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."

Now if you want to know a definition of what it means to be lost, that's it. If Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost, then being lost is being a sinner. Lost to salvation, lost to holiness, righteousness, lost to heaven...lost to eternal life because of sin. Isn't that awful, they said, He went to be the guest...I love that word in the Greek, "to be the guest of" literally means to loose one's clothing. Did you ever go into somebody's house where you feel really at home? And they say to you, "Hey, take your coat off...ah, why don't you loosen your tie?" And you find yourself kicking off your shoes...and you just sort of relax. That's the kind of situation here. That's what's behind that word. Come over and loosen your belt and your garments and kick off your sandals and be my guest.

He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner. Isn't that awful? Can you imagine that? Boy, doesn't it show you how far off these people were? See, they believed that to go into the house of an outcast was to defile yourself. And to eat with someone was the epitome of defilement. The table

and eating with someone was reserved for high honor, and if somebody sat at your table they were your honored guest. And for this man to go and to sit at this man's table and honor him and be honored by him was absolutely unthinkable. They had no value placed on the soul of Zacchaeus. They had absolutely no concern for his spiritual welfare. And all they could see....yes, just what we thought, He's a friend of drunkards and sinners and so forth.

And so, He says I'm going to your house. And Zacchaeus gladly came down and took Him and they went away and the people said, "Look at that, He went to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." Beloved, that is exactly the reason Jesus came into the world, to take up residence with sinners. And that's what they wouldn't understand and they wouldn't see in the blindness of their ugly self-righteousness. And that's why Luke constantly has Jesus with the tax collectors over and over and over again so that we will understand that He came to be with sinners. He came to save sinners. That's what this is illustrating. And the people saw it. He's gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner. Of course, that's not wrong, that's the reason He came. That's the purpose for which He came.

So, off they go to Zacchaeus' house. The curtain drops at the end of verse 7, end of scene 1. You say, "Now what happens?" We don't know...we don't know what happened at the house. It doesn't say what they had for dinner. Doesn't say how long Jesus stayed. It doesn't say what Jesus' method of evangelism was. It doesn't tell us anything. It doesn't say that Jesus said this and Zacchaeus said this and Jesus said this and Zacchaeus said this and Jesus said why don't you pray this prayer with Me and Zacchaeus said okay I'll pray that prayer with You and I'll do whatever. It doesn't tell us. None of the dynamics of the actual conversion of that man are given. The curtain closes, that's it.

But that shouldn't surprise you. Because if you look from the beginning of the gospel record to the end of it and go through Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, you'll be hard pressed to find any specific methodology of conversion used by Christ. You'll be hard pressed to find any of the dynamics of actual conversion. You see, it is a divine miracle. And there's really not much to discuss and there aren't any formulas. It...it doesn't tell us what the four steps to salvation were that Jesus used, or the three steps to salvation or the eight steps to salvation, or what kind of prayer He told him to pray...or whatever. It doesn't tell us anything.

Now Jesus certainly confronted his sin. My own personal feeling is that He would use the same approach that He used with the rich young ruler. He would try to awaken him to his sin which Zacchaeus, no doubt, already realized. And then He would try to awaken him to the responsibility to be obedient to Christ as Savior and Lord so he would confess his sin, turn from his sin, embrace Jesus Christ as Lord. Obviously the cross wasn't an issue yet because He hadn't died on the cross although it was coming and the sacrifice for sin would be paid. Zacchaeus needed to turn from his sin, embrace Jesus as his Lord and Savior, even though the fullness of His accomplished work was not yet done. I'm sure the Lord laid that out for him. We just don't have the record of that. It's almost

as if that whole dynamic is so unique to each individual life that the Spirit of God covers it so we don't assume there is any formula to be used.

And so, the curtain goes down in verse 7 and the discussion of salvation is left out. But notice what isn't left out. The curtain rises again in verse 8. "And Zacchaeus stood," now this is obviously after the conversation, maybe later in the same day, maybe the next day, "And Zacchaeus stood," and the word there is a very interesting word. It means to take a set attitude. It means to take a stand formally. He took a formal stand, stood and made a formal declaration. That's the idea. It's not just the idea of stood, NAS translates it "stopped." It's the idea of taking a formal posture to make a formal declaration here in this context. So he took a stand, it says, "And said to the Lord," this is what we see when the curtain opens. "He said to the Lord, Behold, Lord..." let's stop there.

Now he's now acknowledging Jesus as Lord. You say, "Well, maybe he just means master, teacher, rabbi." Well, yes but you see he's saved because verse 9 says he's saved and so if he's saved he must be acknowledging Jesus as Lord not in the sense of teacher but in the sense of deity, right? He would have to be acknowledging the deity of Jesus Christ, that He is God, that He is sovereign God incarnate. And so he is saying Lord in the sense of its fullness. He is doing what Romans 10 says, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." Of course, obviously the resurrection hadn't happened, but he is confessing Jesus as Lord. And that is an affirmation that comes from his heart, that's something he could not have made before he met Christ and Christ had worked wonderfully in his life.

So, the first thing you see then about Zacchaeus is his acknowledgment that Jesus is Lord. Second thing, look at this, "Half of my possessions I will give to the poor." Now wait a minute...wait a minute, this is a big reversal. This is a transformed heart, folks. One half of his estate he will give to the poor. That's more probably than he had taken. I mean, he was probably digging into his own empire, his own legitimate empire. What does this mean? One, he's acknowledging Jesus as Lord, as God in human flesh and his master and teacher. Two, he is now evidencing a totally transformed character. The taker has become a giver. The extortioner has become a philanthropist. Incredible change. This is the evidence of a changed life.

Do you remember what we're learning in James 1? Verse 26, "If any man thinks himself to be religious and yet doesn't bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless, this is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of God and our Father to visit orphans and widows in their distress." And then in chapter 2 of that same marvelous epistle of James, he goes on to discuss in detail how you are to treat a poor man because God has such a heart for the poor. And John in 1 John says that it's your love toward someone in need that demonstrates the transformation of your heart. Regeneration changes a person and one of the manifestations of that is that you have the heart of God and the heart of God is especially bent toward the poor. Is that not so? We've learned that repeatedly in our studies in James.

So, when he acknowledges Jesus as Lord, he shows us that there's been a changed mind there. When he acknowledges that he's going to take half of his entire estate and give it to the poor he acknowledges he's got a changed heart. He's a different person. And then the next thing that I just love, "And if I have defrauded anyone of anything," and that's a first-class conditional construction in the Greek which means "and if I have, and I know I have." You could literally translate it "Since I have defrauded people...watch this...I will give back...how many times?...four times as much."

Now he's got a changed behavior. Totally different. His behavior is totally different. What's he doing giving back four times as much? Listen to this carefully. Looking back to Mosaic law in Leviticus, the Mosaic law says, Leviticus 6:5 and it's repeated in Numbers chapter...let's see, Numbers chapter 5 verse 7, I believe. The Levitical law, the law of Moses, the constitution for Israel's life said this, "If a man robs and personally confesses his robbery, or if he defrauds and personally confesses the defrauding and restores it back voluntarily...a voluntary confession and a voluntary restitution...then all he has to do is pay back what he took plus one fifth...one fifth." Which would have been perhaps the interest that could have been earned on whatever he took. So the Levitical law says if you've extorted or stolen and you do it voluntarily, you give it back, give it back plus one fifth. That would have been the law that bound Zacchaeus. He would have done what God had said to do in the economy of Israel if he had given back, not four times, but just given back one time plus a fifth.

Second, in Exodus 22 verses 4 and 7, it says if there's ordinary robbery, ordinary stealing, and the original goods can't be restored, then a person has to give back double in value. So if you can give back the goods and you do it voluntarily, you give back the goods plus a fifth. If you can't give back the goods, you're caught, the goods have been consumed, you're required to give back double in value.

But the third principle comes in Exodus 22 verse 1, "And if the robbery involved violence and included destruction or death, you were to pay back four fold or even five fold." Zacchaeus, because he voluntarily confessed to his robbery in a sense, he doesn't actually say it was robbery but it's giving back which means he acknowledges that he unjustly took, he could have been satisfied and God could have been satisfied if he'd have given back what he took plus a fifth. It would have been very generous if he'd given back double what he took. It was absolutely extravagant that he gave back four times what he took. For that applied only in the case of violence and the death say of an animal, a sheep, or another animal.

Now what does that tell you about Zacchaeus? Listen carefully. Number one, when he says Jesus is Lord, when he confesses Jesus as Lord, it shows you that his mind has been totally transformed to understand the deity of Christ. When he says I want to give half of my entire estate to the poor, you know his heart has been changed and now he has the heart of God toward the poor. And now, thirdly, when he says I'm going to pay back four-fold, it shows you that his behavior is so altered that

he is extravagantly obedient to God. He is obedient to God beyond what is even necessary. And that, my friend, is the initial heart response of a redeemed person. They're not saying, "Well, this salvation is wonderful, but don't expect more than you...than just the basics. I'm just going to give you what's necessary so write down what specifically is necessary and don't expect anymore...not on your life." There's something in the heart of a new-born creation that wants to extravagantly obey, that wants to go beyond just the minimal. There's a heart of eager, generous obedience, a changed mind, a changed heart and a changed behavior.

So dramatic that look at verse 9, "And Jesus said to him, Today...not yesterday, but just today this has happened..."salvation has come to this house." Stop at that point.

How do you know that? Jesus is reacting to the evidence, not the divine miracle in his soul, not the divine transaction that's imperceptible, He's reacting to the evidence. And the evidence is in the fruit of a changed life. That's what He's seeing. Jesus says today salvation has come to this house. And what makes Him say that? Jesus sees the manifestation. He sees a changed mind, a changed heart, a changed behavior pattern. And there's no other explanation, absolutely no other explanation. This is how you see salvation. This is how you perceive salvation. The proof is in the transformed life. And so, salvation changes his essential nature from greed to graciousness, changes the passion of his life from selfishness to righteousness. And by the way, when it says "today salvation has come to this house," it might mean more than just his man. It might have been they had a revival in his house and a whole lot of folks got saved. We don't know that.

But you say, "Well, where's the faith? I mean, all we have here is a guy who's a tax collector, Jesus goes over and he comes out and He's changed all his behavior and we say that's salvation...how do we know that's not salvation by works? That the guy's just changed his whole approach to life?" Notice verse 9 again, here's the heart of it, "Because...see, the reason I see the salvation is in the works, but the reason I know the salvation is come is...because he too is a son of Abraham." Now you say, "What does He mean by that? Does He mean he's a Jew? Is being a Jew equal to salvation?" No. But this is a statement about his faith. Now you've got to get this, this is so rich. What Jesus is saying is - Look, the salvation is made manifest, the salvation is visually proven by his behavior, but what is behind it is the fact that he's behaving this way because he is also a son of Abraham.

You say, "Well, then what do you mean by the son of Abraham?" A son of Abraham not in the racial sense, but in the sense of what? Faith. And this introduces to us from the lips of our Lord something that Paul explodes in the epistles of Romans and Galatians. For example, look at Romans 2 for a moment, and Paul is really building on what Jesus says. I want you to get this, it's very very basic. In Romans 2:28 Paul says this, "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly." Folks, I want you to know that is revolutionary teaching. He is not a Jew who is one outwardly. The beginning of verse 29, "But he is a Jew who is one inwardly." A true Jew is not a Jew who is merely a descendant of Abraham

racially, but one with a changed heart. Boy, that's basic.

Go to Romans 9. Lots of people going around today celebrating their Jewishness and they really don't have it in the truest sense, they're strictly a racial Jew but not a true Jew. In Romans 9 Paul says of the Jews, verse 4, Israelites, that they have the adoption of sons, they have the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the temple service, the promises, theirs are the fathers from whom, that is through them the Christ has come according to the flesh, that is he is a Jew, the one who is overall, God blessed forever. In other words, they have everything. The Messiah came through them. The covenants, the promises, the law, the temple, all of it, but verse 6, it is not as though the Word of God has failed, for they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel. And he says the same thing again. Just because you're descendant from the loins of Israel, or Jacob, doesn't mean you're a true Jew. A true son of Abraham is a son of Abraham by faith. Heritage, racial heritage is not sufficient to make a true Jew. Ceremony is not sufficient to make a true Jew. Circumcision is not sufficient to make a true Jew. Knowledge is not sufficient to make a true Jew.

What makes a true Jew? Galatians 6:16, what is the Israel of God, the true Israel? Galatians tells us chapter 3 verse 9, "So then those who are of faith, that is those who believe God, are blessed with Abraham the believer." You ought to underline that phrase "Abraham the believer." He is the prototype believer. He believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. He fathered then a whole race of people in a spiritual sense. Everyone who believes, in a sense, believes like Abraham who was sort of the original father of the faithful. He is the model of faith. And so in Galatians 3:9 those who have faith are blessed with faithful Abraham, or Abraham the believer.

Then in verse 29, if you belong to Christ by faith obviously, then you are Abraham's offspring. You see, a true son of Abraham is not just a racial Jew, a true son of Abraham is a Jew who believes in the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

Now go back to Romans chapter 4 and pick up what Paul says there in verse 11, he says that Abraham...he's talking about Abraham through the whole chapter...Abraham is the father of all who believe. Verse 11, he's the father of all who believe. Verse 12, the faith of our father Abraham. Verse 16, it says those who are of the faith of Abraham who is the father of us all. So listen, there are two ways to look at the fatherhood of Abraham. He fathered a race physically. He fathered a race spiritually.

Now with that in mind let's go back to Luke 19 and wrap it up. Listen carefully. What He's saying here is he, too, is a son of Abraham. He doesn't mean he's Jewish racially. He means he is a true son of Abraham by faith. And, beloved, you've got to understand that's where the acknowledgement of saving faith comes in to the story. Otherwise we could assume maybe that it was salvation by works. But Jesus says today salvation has come...how do you know?...because he has a changed mind about Christ and His Lordship, he has a changed heart, he wants to give instead of take, he has

a changed behavior, he is extravagant in his obedience of the law and all of that because he has become a true son by faith. You see? So all of this is the product of saving faith. So we do not violate the law of God given in Ephesians 2 which says, "For by grace are you saved through...what?...faith that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." God seeks you. "Not of works lest any man should boast." Saved by faith without works but it says you are created in Christ Jesus unto good works. So it was his faith and the product of the faith was the transformation in his life.

What is this all about? Jesus seeking to save a sinner and showing us that He went after the man, his heart was prepared by the Spirit, He drew the man to Himself and the man believed, as indicated in the phrase "because he is too a son of Abraham," and it issued in a transformed mind, a transformed heart, transformed behavior.

And that's how it is. John the Baptist in Luke 3 said if you want to show your true faith and your true repentance, then bring forth the fruit of repentance. Demonstrate it. He said to the Jewish leaders, don't say we're Abraham's children, God can make Abraham's children out of rocks. Don't say that. Don't claim your racial heritage. And He said to the tax collectors, if your repentance is real, then stop taking more money from people than you're supposed to take. In other words, show your repentance because if it's true faith it's going to result in a transformed life.

Jesus came to save. Do you know even His enemies knew that? I was reading on...yesterday, in Matthew 27 and I came across a verse that didn't ever hit me this way. You remember what the crowd said to Him around verse 41, 42? They said He saved others, Himself He what? He cannot save. Isn't that interesting? They said He saved...you know why they said that? Because they knew that that was the number one priority of His life. Oh, He's always going around saving this person and saving that person but He can't save Himself. Even His enemies knew that He came to seek and save the one that was lost. Isn't that wonderful? That's why He came. That's why He came.

Bow your head for just a moment. Man has such deep need. He is spiritually dead, he needs to be regenerated. He is spiritually defiled, he needs to be cleansed. He is spiritually a slave of sin, he needs to be free. He is spiritually dark, he needs light. He is spiritually ignorant, he needs instruction. He's lost. As a sinner he needs a prophet to tell him the truth. He needs a priest to represent him to God. He needs a king to guide, protect and provide for his life. He needs a shepherd to feed and secure him. And Jesus came to do all of that. The perfect seeking Savior who comes to make you alive, to cleans you, to free you from sin, to give you light, to be your prophet, priest, king and shepherd, He came to seek and to save the one who is lost, the one who is a sinner, the one who is cut off from God, the one who does not possess eternal life.

Look at your own heart, where are you? Are you lost? Are you cut off from the life of God? Are you without the forgiveness of sin, without the hope of heaven? If you're lost and you sense He's seeking, you sense the Spirit moving in your heart and calling you to faith in Christ, respond like Zacchaeus



did, confess that He is God and Lord, ask Him to change your life and empower you to bring forth the fruit of repentance, demonstrate it in your generosity and love toward others and in your extravagant eagerness to obey the law of God.

Father, we pray that You'll do Your work in all our hearts. We bless Your name for all the good things You've given us and the best thing, the very best unspeakably glorious and undeserved, salvation through Christ. O Father, may it be the gift that You give to some in this congregation even today. And may You say today salvation has come to this house, to that end we pray for the Savior's glory...amen.

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