

Jesus and the disciples were on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover feast. It would be Jesus' last journey there. After the healing of blind Bartimaeus, Jesus entered the city of Jericho. The city was already crowded with priests and other Jews on their way to Jerusalem, but the crowd surrounding Jesus packed the streets beyond their capacity. ¹ *He entered Jericho and was passing through.* ² *And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich.* ³ *And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature.* Luke 19:1-3 Zacchaeus oversaw a number of men he hired to collect taxes at various geographical points such as river crossings and intersections of major roads as well as gates of the city. Jericho was one of the wealthiest cities in Israel with its dates and balsam fields, control of the Jordan crossing, and the intersection of travel to the east. To be given the authority over the tax collection in these various points, he had to pay in advance what Rome required from these locations. What his men collected in excess was his profit. This made him a very rich man.

Wealth can become a god called Mammon (Matthew 6:24ⁱ). It is a god that promises everything but only delivers on a small portion of its promises. It fails to satisfy the heart, while promising that a little more will surely bring such satisfaction. Zacchaeus had tested the promise and found that more was never enough. Realizing that would always be the case, he wanted to see who Jesus was. Maybe He had the answer to the void in his heart. Perhaps Zacchaeus had heard the accusation that Jesus was "a friend of tax collectors and sinners" (Matthew 11:19ⁱⁱ). It was meant to be derogatory title, but to Zacchaeus it sounded like music. That title was unlike other rabbis who scowled at him.

The crowd was impossibly dense, and being a small man, there was no way he could get through or see over all the bodies that were between him and Jesus. One noted scholar suggests this crowd was similar to the one Jesus would meet when He came into Jerusalem at the triumphal entry. The sides of the streets were packed, as if waiting for a parade in hopes to see and laud Jesus as He passed.

⁴ *So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way.* Luke 19:4 Zacchaeus had an idea. He would run further ahead and climb a tree so he could get a glimpse of Jesus. For a man of his wealth and position, to climb a tree was quite undignified, even childlike, but hadn't Jesus just recently spoken of the greatest in heaven being like a little child (Luke 18:17ⁱⁱⁱ; Matthew 18:3^{iv}). That is because they recognize they are helpless and that all their need is met by another. They are totally dependent on their parents and trust them.

Zacchaeus had a hunger in his heart that money was not filling. He was willing to humble himself in hopes that Jesus of Nazareth had what he was missing. That is the merciful work of the Holy Spirit in lives throughout time and geography causing people to look past the physical realm to the Creator to fulfil the longing He has placed in our hearts.

In the streets of Jericho today there is a large sycamore-fig tree. I would guess it would take about three men's arms stretched out to reach around the trunk. A plaque in front of the tree says this is the tree Zacchaeus climbed. Well, I don't know about that. It

is hard to believe that tree was well over two thousand years old, but it gives one an idea of the tree he climbed. The sycamore fig has a short trunk and broad thick branches with thick foliage. Maybe Zacchaeus thought he could remain hidden and save his dignity while still catching a glimpse of Jesus.

⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” Luke 19:5 In our previous passage we saw Bartimaeus had next to nothing and was at the bottom of society. Yet the faith of Bartimaeus and his plea for mercy stopped Jesus from his determined march to Jerusalem. Now, in stark contrast, we see a man financially at the top of society. He was completely secure in his ability to buy any physical need. Yet, he expressed the same kind of faith and desire for mercy which stopped Jesus again. It doesn't matter to Jesus if we are rich or poor. He is looking for those who realize they need the mercy He came to give and who have the faith to reach out to Him for it.

The need for Jesus is universal. Culture, language, position, or status do not change that. We'll see later in Luke that even some religious leaders find the same kind of faith that Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus expressed (Luke 23:50,51^v). No condition of man can change the need within us to be forgiven and accepted by God.

Education today tries to tell young people they have no need of forgiveness, but the burden of guilt is still there, and the emptiness still nags at us all. Most students today say that loneliness is a prevalent feeling in their daily lives. When we realize that no number of friends or social media will take that emptiness away, and that the void in our hearts was created for God alone, we discover what drove Zacchaeus to climb that tree and seek to see Jesus.

I've heard testimonies of people who were ready to take their life because they thought there was no hope, and then the television or radio or a phone call suddenly interrupted them and invited them to know the only One who can fill our hearts. It happens around the world in every culture and language. For others, it is not as dramatic a moment, just a realization that the world can never satisfy us. One dear sister in our town had wealth, homes, and fame as a New Age leader, but she knew there was something more. The Holy Spirit led her to a church where she heard and understood the Gospel, and her life was transformed. She matured in Christ for a time here at Wayside. Jesus sees the seeking heart. It cannot be hidden from Him no matter the conditions or location.

Imagine how Zacchaeus' heart began to race when Jesus stopped and looked up. Surely the whole crowd was wondering what in the world Jesus was doing. Jesus told him to hurry up and come down because he was going to stay at his house. Jesus and the disciples needed lodging for that night, and Zacchaeus had a large enough home and hungry heart.

Surely Zacchaeus wondered how it was that Jesus knew him by name. Jesus tells us the Good Shepherd knows His sheep by name and calls them out (John 10:3^{vi}). An evening with Jesus would transform his life. Zacchaeus filled with anticipation of what was to follow hurried down the tree. Zacchaeus must have thought, “The friend of tax collectors and sinners is coming to *my* home, and He knows my name!”

I think we should notice the word "must". "I must stay at your house." It first caught my attention in John 4:4^{vii}. It is the Greek word *dei* means a necessity. It was necessary for Jesus to go through Samaria, a route not taken by rabbis. It was necessary for Jesus to stay at Zacchaeus' house. Was it a physical necessity or a spiritual one? Because we know that Jesus only did what the Father showed Him (John 5:19^{viii}), The answer is clear. The Spirit led Jesus in both cases and Jesus knew it was necessary to obey for the salvation of those souls. Zacchaeus was seeking Jesus and Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10^{ix}). Divine providence puts Jesus and individuals together. It happens every day all over the world.

We too must meet certain people and share with them at the leading of the Holy Spirit. The ripple effects from these salvations was going to impact many and go down in history as evidence that Jesus' arms are open to all who will come to Him from every status and culture. May God help us to hear the leading of the Holy Spirit and find obedience to be a *must* in our lives.

I'd also like to emphasize that Jesus knew His name. One week later the temple guards would blindfold Jesus and strike Him, and then ask who it was who hit Him. They were mocking His claim to be the Messiah, for Isaiah declared that the Messiah would judge not by the sight of His eyes (Isaiah 11:3^x). He did know their names, but He would not make them more accountable by speaking them out. He knows your name, even before you were born. His relationship with each of us is individual and unique. In the Gospels He called many people by their name. He is not a God who sees us as an insignificant mass of people, but a God who loves us as individuals. That is greatness!

⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." Luke 19:6,7 Zacchaeus was overjoyed and gladly brought Jesus and the disciples to his home. The crowd who had been so excited to see Jesus now murmured that holy men don't allow themselves to be the guest of sinners. To dine with someone was to have fellowship with them, and a rabbi would not fellowship with a filthy tax collector. Little did they know that one of Jesus' disciples, Matthew, had formerly been one (Matthew 10:3^{xi}). Perhaps Matthew was the only one who did not grumble.

Jesus doesn't care what people think of Him. He is only concerned with faithful obedience to the Spirit of God. That needs to be our only concern as well. The crowd was looking for a physical deliverer. Zacchaeus was looking for a spiritual deliverer. Today is no different as most seek for some kind of physical answer to their emptiness.

Some people come to churches, to Christendom, hoping that Jesus will answer some physical prayer, health, finances, relationships, and go away disappointed and rejecting Jesus because they didn't get what they wanted. The brokenhearted who are seeking forgiveness and the love of God are never disappointed. Jesus didn't come to be our Santa Clause and grant every request. He came to save our souls. This is why the prosperity gospel is so damnable. It presents Jesus as One who meets financial expectations, and when it doesn't come about disappointment causes people to turn from Jesus as the One whom they need to seek.

⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." Luke

19:8 I imagine verses 8 to 10 to be in Zacchaeus home, but it may have been right there under that fig tree. Zacchaeus made a public declaration and confession. He was giving away half his wealth to the poor and paying back all whom had defrauded with four times what he had taken. The requirement in the Law for theft willingly restored was 125%, if the thief was caught first it was double (Exodus 22:4^{xii}), but theft that was especially harmful was fined four times (Exodus 22:1^{xiii}). That would have probably used up the other half of his wealth. He was ready to go above and beyond the Law. Unlike the rich young ruler who when He heard Jesus' invitation to discipleship and call to give away his wealth and then went away sad (Luke 18:23^{xiv}), Zacchaeus knew his wealth would not bring happiness and gladly parted with it. He had found the real treasure (Matthew 13:44^{xv}). The camel went through the eye of a needle! What was impossible with man was possible with God (Luke 18:24-27^{xvi}).

Real faith is followed by works (Luke 3:8^{xvii}). Our sister who came out of New Age destroyed her crystal filled tooth and New Age books, gave away much of her wealth, and went to those she had misled and told them about Jesus. If we are in Christ, we will renounce the old ways. We will act on our faith and show the love of Christ to others. Faith without works is dead (James 2:26^{xviii}). Works cannot save us, but they do evidence the sincerity of our faith.

⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. Luke 19:9 Jesus declared that Zacchaeus was saved! Was this declared before the grumbling crowd? If so, it was to a wonderful declaration of how God can save the lowest con man. It was an announcement of a con-version. :-)

What does it mean that he is also a son of Abraham? Well, it could mean he was of Jewish lineage, but that was obvious. It was what the Apostle Paul explained in his letter to the church in Rome. They are not all Israel who are of Israel (Romans 2:28, 29^{xix}; 4:12^{xx}). The people of faith are the children of Abraham. If you are in Christ you are Abraham's offspring for, He is the father of faith (Galatians 3:7^{xxi}, 29^{xxii}). Zacchaeus had faith like Abraham to seek God, repent, and obey God's leading.

We have read several of Jesus' warnings in Luke to those who trust in their riches (Luke 12:20,21^{xxiii}; 16:13^{xxiv}; 18:25^{xxv}). Zacchaeus illustrates for us that a heart after Jesus holds his or her wealth loosely and is ready to let go of it at God's direction. Their trust is in Jesus, not their wealth (1 Timothy 6:17^{xxvi}). Generosity should be one of the evidences of our faith. I've heard it said that a man's wallet is the last part of himself to be converted. Zacchaeus was a little man, but he grew rapidly into a big man when he spent that evening and probably the next morning communing with Jesus.

Zacchaeus is an illustration of how people find salvation. First God moves our hearts to look for more than the world can offer. We make a real effort to search for something to fill that void in our hearts, which is humbling because we realize we are needy and don't have the answers we seek. Zacchaeus shows us that it does not matter how low we have sunk. We hear Jesus call our name, and we do not delay receiving His invitation with joy. We receive Him into our home and our lives. We don't care what others say, for we have found the greatest of treasures (Matthew 13:46^{xxvii}). Finally, we demonstrate our change of heart by making things right with others, which is the fruit of our repentance.

¹⁰ *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*” Luke 19:10 This one line sums up the last three accounts of the rich young ruler, blind Bartimaeus, and now Zacchaeus. Each was unique in their way of life and approach to Jesus who declared His mission is to seek and to save the lost (Luke 5:32^{xxviii}). We are all lost until He finds us recognizing our need to receive Him. He is seeking out those willing to receive the conviction of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, willing to repent of their sins, and in childlike desperation willing to become dependent on Him. He wants to make us all children of Abraham, heirs of faith, recipients of the salvation that He alone can give (John 14:6^{xxix}). Think of it. The One who set the stars in space sought you out like a shepherd seeking his one lost sheep (Luke 15:4^{xxx}). He orchestrated the providential intersection of your seeking heart and His response of love. After all, He was the One who put the hunger in your heart. What wonderful mercy and grace!

Our response should be nothing less than total abandonment to Him (Philippians 3:8^{xxxi}). Kent Hughes concludes his commentary on this passage with these words that we should consider: *Is God seeking you? If so, you will know it by an interior unease. Nothing satisfies, and that goes for the most privileged delights. You are never really comfortable anymore. You lack wholeness. You lack a clear conscience. You lack peace. But understand this: "The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of man, and His compulsion is our liberation." Christ is seeking you.*^{xxxii}

The chair you are sitting in can be your fig tree branch. He calls you by name. Won't you come down. He wants to dine with you (Revelation 3:20^{xxxiii}). I would like us to end this message by singing together, Pass Me Not O Gentle Savior. If your heart is longing for more and you recognize this world is never going to satisfy your heart, and if you are ready to trust Jesus like a child trusts his or her parents for forgiveness and as your hope in this life and the next, then Jesus is calling to you by name this morning.

In our circumstances today some of you are worried about your finances in the up and down stock market, others of you have lost your jobs, and those who are retired are worried that printing all this money will cause inflation that will affect your savings. Do you not know what a shepherd does for His sheep? Our gentle Savior knows your circumstances. He will see you through. You won't starve. Every change He will work together for your good (Romans 8:28^{xxxiv}). He wants to come to your house today. Will you come down and welcome Him into your home?

Questions

- 1 Describe a chief tax collector's position.
- 2 What must have been going on in Zacchaeus' heart?
- 3 How was he like Bartimaeus?
- 4 Whom is Jesus seeking out?
- 5 What is significant about the word "must" in verse 4?
- 6 Whose name does Jesus know?
- 7 What is Jesus' main concern? Yours?
- 8 What were Zac's fruits of repentance?
- 9 Who is a son of Abraham?
- 10 Is Jesus calling your name?

ⁱ **Matthew 6:24 (ESV)**

²⁴ “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

ⁱⁱ **Matthew 11:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.”

ⁱⁱⁱ **Luke 18:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.”

^{iv} **Matthew 18:3 (ESV)**

³ and said, “Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

^v **Luke 23:50-51 (ESV)**

⁵⁰ Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, ⁵¹ who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God.

^{vi} **John 10:3 (ESV)**

³ To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

^{vii} **John 4:4 (ESV)**

⁴ And he had to (must) pass through Samaria.

^{viii} **John 5:19 (ESV)**

¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.

^{ix} **Luke 19:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

^x **Isaiah 11:3 (ESV)**

³ And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear,

^{xi} **Matthew 10:3 (ESV)**

³ Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;

^{xii} **Exodus 22:4 (ESV)**

⁴ If the stolen beast is found alive in his possession, whether it is an ox or a donkey or a sheep, he shall pay double.

^{xiii} **Exodus 22:1 (ESV)**

¹ “If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.

^{xiv} **Luke 18:23 (ESV)**

²³ But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

^{xv} **Matthew 13:44 (ESV)**

⁴⁴ “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

^{xvi} **Luke 18:24-27 (ESV)**

²⁴ Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, “How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶ Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁷ But he said, “What is impossible with man is possible with God.”

^{xvii} **Luke 3:8 (ESV)**

⁸ Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.

^{xviii} **James 2:26 (ESV)**

²⁶ For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

^{xix} **Romans 2:28-29 (ESV)**

²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ But a Jew is one

inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

^{xx} **Romans 4:12 (ESV)**

¹² and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised.

^{xxi} **Galatians 3:7 (ESV)**

⁷ Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

^{xxii} **Galatians 3:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

^{xxiii} **Luke 12:20-21 (ESV)**

²⁰ But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹ So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

^{xxiv} **Luke 16:13 (ESV)**

¹³ No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."

^{xxv} **Luke 18:25 (ESV)**

²⁵ For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

^{xxvi} **1 Timothy 6:17 (ESV)**

¹⁷ As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

^{xxvii} **Matthew 13:46 (KJV)**

⁴⁶ Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

^{xxviii} **Luke 5:32 (ESV)**

³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

^{xxix} **John 14:6 (ESV)**

⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

^{xxx} **Luke 15:4 (ESV)**

⁴ "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?

^{xxxi} **Philippians 3:8 (ESV)**

⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ

^{xxxii} - Preaching the Word - Luke, Volume II: That You May Know the Truth.

^{xxxiii} **Revelation 3:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

^{xxxiv} **Romans 8:28 (ESV)**

²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.