

# Seeking and Saving Luke 19v1-10

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[ 0 : 00 ]     through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short, he could not see over the crowd.

So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and he said to him, Zacchaeus, come down immediately.

I must stay at your house today. So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, he has gone to be the guest of a sinner.

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, look, Lord, here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor. And if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.

Jesus said to him, today's salvation has come to this house because this man too is a son of Abraham. For the son of man came to seek and to save the lost.

[ 1 : 08 ]     Thank you, Louise.

Well, let's pray as we look at his word. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Father, we reminded ourselves at the very outset this morning that you are the creator God.

The one who sits enthroned, who is Lord over all things. And so we come afresh and, as it were, bow before you in our hearts.

Father, we submit to you because we want to listen to your voice. We do not want to have a hardened heart, but a humble heart.

[ 2 : 17 ]     Father, speak your truth into our lives. And change us as we seek to follow you.

In your name we pray. Amen. The other day I received a really nice phone call.

Johnny, I'd like to welcome you to come and watch Munster. We're going to meet beforehand for a pre-match dinner, meet some of the players, and then watch the game afterwards.

And I arrived and I met my host. Johnny, it's great to see you. You are so welcome. I'm glad you could make it. And to top it all off, it was free.

I didn't have to pay a penny for the whole night. It was all paid for by my host. It's great to receive those kind of welcomes.

[ 3 : 25 ]     And we love it when somebody says to us, you are so, so welcome. Well, as we journey through Luke, we have received a great welcome.

Look at chapter 19 and verse 1. Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. He's passing through Jericho because Jesus is on the way to somewhere else.

Well, where's he going? Well, just have a look back a few verses. Chapter 18, verse 31. Jesus took the 12 aside and told them, We are going up to Jerusalem.

That's where Jesus is going. And everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man, that Jesus will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles.

They will mock him, insult him, and spit on him. They will flog him and kill him. On the third day, he will rise again.

[ 4 : 38 ] You see, Jesus is on the way to the cross. He's on the way to Jerusalem. At Jerusalem, Jesus is going to die.

He's going to die for his people. And as he makes his way to Jerusalem, he's inviting people. He's welcoming people. Saying, come to me.

Chapter 19, verse 10. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

Jesus has come to find people like us. To save us through his death. He's come to welcome people. People from all kinds of different backgrounds and nations and languages.

People from all over the world. He says, come, I want to welcome you. Well, let's see how this welcome is true.

[ 5 : 38 ] First, Jesus welcomes the lost. Let's have a look at the lost. Verse 2, chapter 19.

A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus. Now, Zacchaeus means righteous one. But he lived nothing like it. Despicable one would have been a better title for this guy.

He was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. Now, when you hear tax collector, just think scumbag. They worked for the enemy.

The occupying Roman authorities. The job of a tax collector was to collect tax from anyone coming into the city to do trade. So you could imagine, here's Alex coming in with all his freshly cut logs.

Ten bags worth as he makes his way into the city. Meet Zacchaeus. He says, ah, I'll take some of them. Take one bag for the authorities and I'll have two for myself.

[ 6 : 43 ] And as a chief tax collector, Zacchaeus saw over the whole region. And what was worse was how he made money.

Oh, he said it was for the authorities. But always pocketed a bit more. They charged people an extra amount. And if anybody disagreed with you, well, you just got in touch with the Romans.

You wouldn't mess with them. You gave what Zacchaeus asked for. Now, Zacchaeus might have been hated by the people, but it made him an extremely wealthy man.

But for all of his wealth that he had gathered, the position and power that he held, he was not content. He was lost. Money he has, but he's not satisfied.

Power he has, but he's not fulfilled. Well, how do we know that? Well, look at verse 3. He wanted to see who Jesus was.

[ 7 : 52 ] Well, people who have everything, have everything. They don't need to see somebody. But this guy wants to see Jesus. Not what he looks like, but what Jesus could do for him.

For Zacchaeus, his life is empty. He has needs that money can't buy. He wanted to see Jesus, verse 3, but because he was short, he could not see over the crowd.

Zacchaeus was used to looking down on people because of his position and power. But once he's in the crowd, once we see him amongst the people, we see him as he really is.

He's not just small in stature. He's small in himself. He is nothing. He has nothing. He's a lost soul amongst all the people.

Second, the welcome. Verse 4. So we ran ahead, climbed the sycamore tree, which could grow to about 60 feet tall.

[ 9 : 09 ] They were evergreen trees. Climbed the tree to see Jesus since Jesus was coming that way. Now, when we read that, and we've probably, some of us heard that and seen pictures in our little story books from home, you kind of have this picture of this little guy in a small tree kind of making himself visible to Jesus.

So as Jesus comes along, Jesus kind of sees him before he even reaches there. But remember, he's a chief tax collector. He's hated by the people. Jesus would want nothing to do with people like him.

So he thought. The point is, he's up in the tree hiding himself. He can see Jesus, but he thinks Jesus can't see him.

Verse 5. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, come down immediately.

I must stay at your house today. We've got to get the picture here. Jesus is walking along. He stops, looks up, and says to him, come down.

[ 10 : 22 ] What a welcome for Zacchaeus to have received. Come down. I must stay at your house. Now normally, it's the other way around, isn't it?

You welcome people to your house. It's a bit rude to say, if I were to turn around and say to you, I'm coming to your house for dinner. But here, Jesus stops and welcomes him.

He says, Zacchaeus, I'm coming to your house. You see, it's not that Zacchaeus is seeking out Jesus. In some sense, he is. But it's Jesus who is seeking out Zacchaeus because, verse 10, the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.

Jesus knows he's there. He's not hiding from Jesus. Jesus can see him. Jesus has come to welcome him.

So the lost are welcome because, third, of God's grace. Look at verse 7. All the people saw this and began to mutter, he has gone to be the guest of a sinner.

[ 11 : 36 ] Jesus, you can't welcome people like that. This shouldn't happen. He's a cheating thief. He's a scumbag. Rather than be welcomed, he needs to be condemned.

Rather than grace, this guy needs to be punished. Now, this is not the first time people have objected to Jesus welcoming people.

Keep your finger there in chapter 19 and just jump back a couple of chapters. Chapter 15 and verse 2. It introduces a very well-known section about the lost coin and the lost son, the lost sheep.

chapter 15 verse 1. Now, the tax collectors, those notorious stealing thieves, and the sinners, all those people who were thought of as morally dubious, well, they were all gathering around to hear Jesus.

But the Pharisees and teachers of the law, the religious folks, the good people, muttered to themselves, this man welcomes sinners and eats with them.

[ 12 : 57 ] And in response, Jesus would tell three stories to explain that Jesus comes to seek and save the lost. Jesus has come for sinners, people like Zacchaeus, people like you and me.

Because the point is, we are just like Zacchaeus. we are all lost people. We all find our identity in things and other people.

We all search for joy and happiness in people, in places. We're lost until Jesus finds us. Just last week, a young man by the name of Cain McCormack was found murdered in a field in County Meath.

You might have seen it on the news. He's linked to the notorious Hutch gang involved in the drugs trade, awaiting trial for being in possession of a gun and ammunition.

Now, how would you feel about Jesus coming along and welcoming somebody like Cain McCormack? Oh, I mean, welcoming for some people, but people like that?

[ 14 : 13 ] that shouldn't happen. He's a cheating thief. He's a scumbag. Rather than welcomed, he needs to be condemned. Rather than be shown grace, he needs to be punished.

Well, Jesus came for people just like Cain. And he came for lost people like you and me. You see, unless we see ourselves as lost, as long as you see yourself better than everybody else and kind of look down on those who don't quite have it together, we will never ever experience that warm welcome of Jesus who says, I'm coming to stay with you.

So first, Jesus comes to welcome the lost. Second, the lost welcome Jesus.

First, look at how Zacchaeus responds. Jesus said to him in verse 5, Zacchaeus, come down immediately, I must stay at your house today.

So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. Now, when Jesus says, I must stay at your house, Zacchaeus, he's literally saying, Zacchaeus, I need somewhere to lodge.

[ 15 : 52 ] I don't have somewhere to stay, I need somewhere to sleep. He's not just popping in for a five-minute cup of tea and then off again. Jesus needs somewhere to stay.

He hasn't got a home. It's the same idea when we read at the very beginning of Luke's gospel, when Mary and Joseph were looking for somewhere to lodge, there was nowhere to stay, nobody who would welcome them.

You see, Jesus has come seeking those who will welcome him, who will receive him. So not only does Zacchaeus turn around to say to Jesus, you're welcome to my house, Zacchaeus in a sense is saying, Jesus, you are welcome to my life.

He is obeying the call to follow Jesus. When Jesus says, come down, what does it say, verse 6? He came down at once, immediately.

There's no delay. It's an act of obedience to the call of Jesus. He's now going to follow the priorities of Jesus. No longer is he saying, what do I want?

[ 17 : 08 ] What can I do with my life? But it's now, what does Jesus desire for me? Zacchaeus will learn as he begins to follow the road of discipleship, I now die to self and live for Christ.

So Zacchaeus gives the welcome. He receives Jesus. But not only that, look at the joy, verse 6.

He came down at once and welcomed him gladly or joyfully. You see, welcoming Jesus is not a drudgery, it's a joy.

No longer does he have to hide from Jesus, he can now welcome him gladly. The fear, the guilt, the shame of hiding away, it's now all gone, do you see?

And in its place is acceptance and belonging and salvation. salvation. When we come to Jesus, when we receive him as saviour, we are truly fulfilled and satisfied for we experience forgiveness of all our sins and peace floods our life.

[ 18 : 29 ] Zacchaeus may lose his position and power, but you know what? He's gained new life and eternal treasures.

it's not judgment in meeting Jesus, it's joy. It's not condemnation when we welcome Jesus, it's celebration.

So Zacchaeus welcomes and it is a joyful occasion. transformation. But third, look at the transformation.

Look at what happens when we welcome Jesus. Look at verse 8. Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, look Lord, here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I've cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.

the law actually said if you look in Numbers chapter 5, I think it is verse 7, it said that you are required to pay back a fifth. But here it's like four times the amount.

[ 19 : 46 ] This is well over and above all that he should be paying. What a transformation to this man's life. He has been completely and utterly changed.

Again, look at verse 8, he says, right now, here and now, I give half of my possessions to the poor. All that I've accumulated, I'm going to go and give all of that to those who don't have.

And more than that, I'm going to pay back four times the amount to anybody I meet now and in the future that I come across a meat on the road that I've cheated or diddled with, I am going to give them everything back four times the amount.

So Alex, you're going to get extra logs, don't worry. It'll all be paid back. So no longer is Zacchaeus a lying, greedy, cheating scumbag.

He is a joyful, generous, giving child of God. You see, it's impossible for us to welcome Jesus and receive Jesus and not be changed.

[ 20 : 59 ] He transforms us into people who are generous givers rather than greedy hoarders. He releases our pockets.

He opens our wallets. He enables us to give in ways that we never thought possible. He changes us from the inside out.

Now what Jesus did for Zacchaeus, he does for us. We can't literally welcome Jesus into our home, but we do welcome him into our lives.

As he seeks for us and looks for us and welcomes us, the way we respond is to say, yes, I receive, I welcome you. In John's account of the gospel, Jesus makes a promise to all who receive him.

It comes from John 14, verse 23, it's on the screen. Jesus said, anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. my father will love them and we will come to them and make our home with them.

[ 22 : 21 ] The father and the son, by the holy spirit, will take up residence in our lives.

When we turn our life over to the lord Jesus, it's saying he will come to us. God literally lives within us. He moves into our lives.

He comes into the home of our lives, not just to leave us the way that we are, but by his holy spirit, he begins to change us and transform us to obey Jesus and to live for his glory.

God now, do you see how all this happens? Jesus didn't just come along to Zacchaeus and spy him up the tree and say, you know, Zacchaeus come down, I want to come to your house, I want to stay with you, but first of all, I want you to go and tidy your life up a bit because it's a desperate mess.

I possibly couldn't be seen with somebody like you. Start giving to the poor, start dealing with people in the right way, let me see that you're living the right way and then I'll come and stay with you.

[ 23 : 36 ] No, Jesus says, I'm coming to your house today, right now, the way you are, the mess that you are, the way people think of you, I am coming to you right now.

And then the change in his life begins. You see, God never ever says to us, look, you need to change your life first.

You need to sort out that mess and that sin in your life, get it all organized, get it all right, and then I will come to you. No, he first comes and takes up residence in our lives, and then he begins to change us bit by bit, changing us, transforming us to be more like him.

You see, if we have welcomed Jesus, the sorts of things we will see in our life is ongoing radical change. And that's a good question for us to ask right now.

Do you see radical change in your life? Because Jesus is at work within you. To those closest to you, does your spouse, do your children say, you're changing, you're different?

[ 24 : 50 ] that's what happens when God moves in. He goes into every room of our lives. No door is left closed.

And he changes us. That is something to be joyful about. So, Jesus welcomes the lost.

The lost welcomed Jesus. And this is surprising salvation. This account of Zacchaeus, perhaps well known to many of us, is really surprising.

We can understand Zacchaeus wanting to see Jesus. But just think about it. Jesus wanting to stay with Zacchaeus? He's a notorious thief and a traitor.

You could never trust him. Everybody hates him. He deserves condemnation, not salvation. But, look at verse 9, Jesus said to him, today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a son of Abraham.

[ 26 : 07 ] Jesus is saying, I accept him. I welcome him. God to God. How could Jesus possibly say that? Well, look at verse 10.

Because, or for, the son of man, that's Jesus, came to seek and to save the lost. That verse 10 is so crucial to the whole of Luke's account.

It summarises what the whole gospel is about. this is the mission of Jesus. This is why he came. This is why he died. He came to welcome those, the kind of people we think should be excluded and written off.

Let's look at verse 10 just a little bit more closely. Do you see what it says there, the son of man? We've come across that a number of times. It's the way Jesus refers to himself.

He calls himself the son of man. It's a title given to somebody who comes before God. And we're told where that first happens.

[ 27 : 17 ] If you go back in your Bible, keep your finger in chapter 19 of Luke and go back to Daniel chapter 7. Daniel chapter 7.

I haven't got a page number. If somebody gets it, that would be great. Daniel chapter 7 verse 13. 8, 9, 3.

Daniel chapter 7 and verse 13. So Daniel was one of God's prophets and he has this vision.

It's like a dream and in his dream he sees someone. So Daniel chapter 7 verse 13. In my vision at night I looked and there before me was one like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven.

He approached the ancient of days, that's God, and was led into his presence. and so this son of man, this character is now coming before God.

[ 28 : 33 ] And what happens? Verse 14, he was given authority, glory, and sovereign power. All the nations and peoples of every language worshipped him.

His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed. Now go back to Luke chapter 19.

So you see this person, this son of man, is one with absolute power and authority. All the nations worship him. Now Jesus enters the scene in Luke's gospel, and he says, verse 10, I am the son of man.

I am this one with all power and all authority. authority. And the expectation is that as Jesus comes, he is going to use this power and use this authority to clean up all the mess and get rid of all the vile people that are wandering around the world.

Judge the sinners and condemn the sinners. All those criminals, let's round them all up, put them in prison, get rid of them, why not execute them as well? And all those people who don't contribute to the state and just kind of take everything for themselves and don't work and are really lazy, let's get rid of them as well.

[ 29 : 58 ] Let's just keep all the good people. And all those people who are sexually immoral, let's get rid of them and only the nice people will keep all the nice people. But what do we see Jesus doing as he comes into the world?

We find him in Luke's gospel anyway, sitting down a lot, eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners. These are the people who he hangs out with.

We see him meeting people like a notorious sinner, like Zacchaeus, saying, I'm going to come and stay in your house. It's not what we expect.

He has come to welcome the people we would push and turn away. But more than that, the Son of Man, not only does he welcome people, he has come to give his life for people.

Remember, chapter 19, verse 1, Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. The Son of Man is on the way to Jerusalem to die on the cross, to die for people like you and me, for my sin, for your sin.

[ 31 : 19 ] As one writer poetically put it, the only reason Zacchaeus could come down from his tree and be friends with Jesus was because Jesus climbed his own tree.

I'm quoting 1 Peter 2, he himself, that's Jesus, bore our sins in his body on the tree. The only reason Zacchaeus could be welcomed by Jesus was because Jesus took the penalty of Zacchaeus' sin.

That's what he's done for the world. That's what he's done for you and for me. He's come to seek and save the lost by going to the cross to die. I mean, the application is straightforward for us, isn't it?

If Jesus has welcomed you, and if you have welcomed Jesus, then we are going to be the kind of people who welcome others.

Rather than judge, we show mercy. Instead of condemning, we offer grace. Like Jesus, we too go to seek and save the lost, for there's nobody outside of God's limits.

[ 32 : 41 ] There's no sin that is so great that cannot be forgiven. There is no person that God writes off and says, too late. We are to go into our community, amongst our friends.

We are to sit down with sinners just like Jesus did, to sit down with people just like me, and just like you, people who get things wrong and mess up and fail.

We are to sit and eat and drink with them and offer them the welcome of Jesus. Christmas time is a time of welcome, isn't it?

Welcoming people to our homes, welcoming people as we're out and about. Who are the people that we're going to be welcoming this season?

The people that are nice, those just within our nice little community who we get on with. Or we welcome those who've never ever heard, never really understood.

[ 33 : 54 ] Jesus has welcomed the lost, and lost people like us can go and welcome others too. Let's pray together. Let's pray together.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.