

Luke 19:1–10

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[0 : 00] That's Luke 19, 1-10. He entered Jericho and was passing through, and there was a man named Zacchaeus.

! He was a chief tax collector and was rich.! And he was seeking to see who Jesus was. But on account of the crowd, he could not, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. 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.

So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled. He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.

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.

[1 : 04] And Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning. Let me add my word of welcome to Christ Church Chicago this morning. So glad that you are here. Also, we will most certainly miss you, Ruby.

And our prayers are definitely with you. Thank you, Amy, so much for your eye opener this morning. Have you ever had someone show up at your house completely uninvited and unexpected? You're just lounging in your sweats, what my kids used to call my soft pants.

[2 : 16] Maybe there are a few dishes in the sink. Toys are everywhere. Some crumbs on the coffee table left over from last night's snack attack.

And then the doorbell rings. You peek through the blinds to see someone from the church. Maybe it's just a neighbor. Maybe it's a relative. And you pause for that brief moment because you have a decision to make.

Do I open this door? Look at my house. And while you are pondering that decision, your kids blow your cover loudly.

Hey, mom, I think it's Pastor Bing at the front door. Instant panic sets in. You call out to everyone to institute operation fast clean.

[3 : 33] You know, you sweep everything off the table into a laundry basket. You light a candle and pray that it's stronger than the smell of the fish you cooked last night.

You throw a blanket over the mess and call it new decor. Toys get thrown into a closet and you answer the door out of breath, smiling like, Hey, good to see you.

We were just about to pray. Come on, some of us could win Olympic gold medals in panic cleaning. Why? Because generally we don't like people to see the real mess. We want them to think everything's clean, neat, under control, even when it's chaos behind the scenes.

In our final story of our series, Jesus Changes Lives, we meet a man named Zacchaeus, who despite outward appearances, might have had some chaos in his life behind the scenes.

[4 : 43] We just wanted to see Jesus, not knowing that Jesus was going to invite himself to his house.

No warning. No time to clean up. No time to hide the mess. And yet you'll see in our text that Zacchaeus welcomed him in.

And when Jesus comes in, so does change. This church is the message this morning.

It's what happens when change comes to your house. Luke 19 verse 1 tells us of this life-changing encounter that took place as Jesus was passing through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem, some 17 miles away, with, as usual, a crowd of people flocking to see him.

The end of Luke 19 records the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, which begins the final week of the life of Jesus, culminating in his crucifixion and his resurrection from the dead.

[6 : 06] This conversion story of Zacchaeus is the climatic end of the public ministry of Jesus.

It closes in verse 10 with Luke actually recording the mission statement of Jesus. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

The conversion of Zacchaeus illustrates the good news of what change looks like. There are just three ways I'd like to point this out to you this morning.

First is the prospect of change. Then the proof of change. And finally, the promise of change.

We're formally introduced to this man named Zacchaeus in verses 2 and 3 of our text. The name Zacchaeus means pure or righteous, but he was definitely not walking in the meaning of his name at this point.

[7 : 32] The text says he was a chief tax collector. Tax collectors, as you heard earlier in our series, were notoriously wicked and hated for two reasons.

First, to partner with the Roman government in collecting taxes from other Jews was a betrayal of one's family, one's nation, and God.

They were traitors. Secondly, the business of tax collecting was inherently corrupt. The only way to profit from tax collecting was through mafia-like extortion that bribed the rich and muscled the poor. Charging and collecting more than even the government required to line their own pockets.

Charging and collecting more than just the people, the people, the people, the people, and the people, as he was a chief tax collector.

Charging and collecting more than just the people, as he was a chief tax collector. He was not some mere street thug that did the crime. No, he was the godfather. He was the Don Corleone, the El Jefe, who kept his hands clean of the crime while keeping his hands on the dirty money.

[8 : 55] Now, let's be clear. Zacchaeus was not misunderstood. He was not a victim of his circumstances.

He was genuinely a bad, crooked, greedy person who chose to work for Rome and defraud his own people. And as a result, the text says, he was rich.

Yet, verse 2 says, he was seeking to see who Jesus was. This statement reveals the neediness, emptiness, and lostness of Zacchaeus.

He would choose a path in life that would make him wealthy, connected, influential, powerful, and successful. But still, there was something missing.

When he heard about Jesus and just the possibility, the prospect of change, he determined that maybe if he could just see who Jesus was, it might fill the void in his life.

[10 : 14] Saints, you can be rich but unhappy. You can be powerful but unloved. You can be successful but unsatisfied.

This civil war between appearance and reality raged in Zacchaeus' heart. He had to see Jesus.

The prospect of change was so strong. His desire was so sincere, earnest, and desperate that he was willing to lose his dignity in order to see Jesus.

Verse 4 says, so he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. Zacchaeus felt that seeing Jesus was more important than maintaining his image. So this man ran ahead and waiting for a glimpse of Jesus as he passed by.

[11 : 15] What grown man still climbs trees? What wealthy, dignified, powerful man climbs trees?

What man dressed in his fine, tailored, tax-collecting garments would be caught climbing a tree? I'll tell you who.

A desperate man. A man who realizes that there's something going on internally that all this external stuff just can't fix.

A man who needs change to come to his house. This is a word to unbelievers here today.

You can't let anything get in the way of you seeing Jesus. You need Jesus. No matter who you are, you need Jesus.

[12 : 16] No matter what you have, you need Jesus. No matter your career, your image, your education, you need Jesus. No matter what your past is, you need Jesus.

Look, you don't have the tools, the skill, or the experience to deal with life, sin, death, judgment, and eternity on your own.

You need Jesus. This is also a word for believers. That word is don't give up on anyone.

If you took a poll of the residents of Jericho and asked who was the most notorious sinner in town, Zacchaeus would have won by a landslide.

He would also be voted the one person in town who most likely did not want to see Jesus. Zacchaeus was a notorious sinner whose family, friends, and neighbors thought he was helpless and hopeless.

[13:22] But God was working in his heart. This is a reminder, saints, for those of you who are concerned about some hard-hearted husband or wife, son or daughter, mother or father, brother, sister, friend or neighbor.

You've been praying for them. You've been witnessing to them. And you've been waiting on them to change, but they seem to only be getting worse. But don't give up on them.

Don't stop praying. Don't cut down any sycamore trees. Because just because you can't seem to reach them right now doesn't mean that Jesus won't reach them later.

Zacchaeus is moved to do some radical things at the very prospect of change. Now that proof is evidenced as Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but he didn't necessarily want to be seen by anyone.

Certainly Jesus. Verse 5 says, Can you imagine how Zacchaeus felt when he heard these words?

[14:51] First, how did he see me up here? And secondly, how does he know my name? And if he knows my name, then what else does he know about me?

The crowd had been pushing him, but Jesus saw him. The crowd despised him, but Jesus saw him. That's good news for us, church, because the people may see you, but Christ sees what you can become. The people may see your reputation, but Christ sees what you can be after he gets his hands on you.

Then Jesus, Jesus commands him, Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.

In other words, you don't know it yet, but you've got a divine date with destiny.

[16:00] And change is coming to your house. Now, in the full spirit of disclosure, I do have to relate my own not so stellar tree climbing moment as a kid.

We had this big oak tree in our neighborhood down the street from our house. It was the tree every kid wanted to climb. It was literally our Mount Everest.

This particular day, I decided it was my time, and I was going to scale this tree successfully. And it all started off very well.

I skillfully made my way up the tree, branch by branch, focused on getting to the very top, and there I was.

And then I looked down. And I realized I didn't know how to get back down from this tree.

[17:15] Panic set in, and I started yelling for my friends to run and go get my parents. And by now, a small crowd had started to gather around this tree.

My mom and dad came, and all my dad could say was, boy, get down from that tree right now. My mom, my response to my dad was, I don't know how.

My mom then says, just come back down the same way you came. And I said, I don't know how.

I'm going to go. So after another hour, and a fire truck, I finally made my way back to the ground.

Thankfully, Zacchaeus wasn't me. Or Jesus would have been waiting quite a long time.

[18:23] No, verse 6 says, after Jesus called for him to come down, Zacchaeus hurried and came down and received him joyfully.

Jesus called Zacchaeus to himself, and Zacchaeus received him. He didn't stay up in that tree.

Jesus said, he must go to Zacchaeus' house today, not later.

Not when Zacchaeus cleaned up his house. Not after Zacchaeus changed his ways. Zacchaeus didn't tell Jesus, you can come to my house later after 5.

Come after I've finished my career. Come after I've done having a good time. Come after I've changed my ways and cleaned up my act. No, just as quickly as the Lord extended grace, Zacchaeus received it.

Saints, Jesus doesn't need a perfect house to walk into. He just needs an open door. And once that door opens, once Jesus takes up residence, his presence evokes transformation.

[19:41] Jesus does not require that Zacchaeus change his life before he comes in. He just comes in and his very presence changes Zacchaeus' life.

That's the difference between Christianity and all other so-called religions. They want you to get yourself straight first.

Jesus just says, let me in and I'll do the work. That's the proof that a real change has taken place in your life.

Your relationship to Jesus changes. You receive him and let him in. He becomes your savior and your Lord.

Not only did Zacchaeus receive Jesus, the text says he received him with joy. This is what it means to receive Jesus.

[20 : 42] Jesus is not dragging people to heaven against their will. Joy in Jesus is the mark, the proof of true conversion.

Does Jesus bring you joy? First Peter verse 8 says, though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Being a Christian is joy. I don't do what I do out of a sense of obligation or responsibility. I do it joyfully because I realize God didn't have to do what he did for me.

Anybody ever experienced a mean Christian? I mean, a Christian who never smiles, never laughs, just like evil on their face all the time.

[22 : 00] We used to have them in our choir. I used to tell them all the time, I just never seen such mean choir members at all. It all just has God done anything.

You know the saints. Is God good to you? And you're just like, no. Has God done anything for you? No. Don't you love him? Don't you want to pray?

No. And on their face says, I don't love the Lord and I get no joy out of my life with him.

That, saints, is not what Christianity is. That is not what change looks like. Change is written all over your face. And the joy, inexpressible joy, exudes from your pores and you can't contain it when you talk about the goodness of Jesus.

Now I don't just give him praise for the stuff I have. Because if I lose all the stuff I had tonight, I still have joy. My joy resides in the fact that when this life is over, my name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

[23 : 16] You can say amen to that. That brings me joy. Verse 7 says, and when they saw it, they all grumbled. He has gone in to be the guest of a man who was a sinner.

Back at Luke chapter 7, verse 34, the people called Jesus a friend of tax collectors and sinners. This was an indictment.

It was not a compliment. Jesus is willing to go and sit with Zacchaeus. This was just proof of what they said.

How could Jesus be a man of God if he's willing to go home with someone like Zacchaeus? See, the problem was that Zacchaeus had an image problem and probably needed a good publicist.

He'd been a crook for so long, getting rich off the backs of so many people that there seemed to be nothing redeemable about this man. And certainly no reason for Jesus to be hanging out with him.

[24 : 31] The problem is that people are looking at the old Zacchaeus. They're judging him by the old standards. When they see Zacchaeus, all they see is the man he used to be.

They don't understand that the man that came down from that tree was not the same man that went up that tree. Change has come to his house and he has a brand new life and a brand new set of spiritual values.

Now, what transpired between verses seven and eight, what Jesus said to Zacchaeus, we're not told. I wish we knew.

I wish Luke could have written more, could have recorded the conversation between Jesus and Zacchaeus that went on behind closed doors. We just don't know.

All we know is that when those doors opened again, Zacchaeus is a changed man. And verse eight, Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.

[25 : 44] And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold. Zacchaeus cheerfully offered to do more than even the law demanded.

Under the law of Moses, the restitution law was to return what was defrauded plus 20%. Yes, I get to get you all the way back to Leviticus chapter five.

Zacchaeus has experienced such a transformation that he is willing to give it back four times what was defrauded. Was a generous pledge to make restitution to anyone he had wronged.

And considering the way he made his money, this was not going to be a short list. This promise threatened to put Zacchaeus' entire fortune in jeopardy.

Yet transforming grace changed his value system. Greed may not be your issue, your weakness, but whatever it is, the reality of your new life in Christ is proven, evidenced at the point of your weakness.

[27 : 05] His problem was greed. What was yours? Just imagine if you lived in Jericho and heard about Zacchaeus' life-changing experience with Jesus, but the next day he came back to rob you as he collected taxes.

You would conclude Zacchaeus was a hypocrite and Jesus was a fraud. It's the same with you. If Jesus has truly changed you, it ought to show up in how you live and how you act and how you deal and treat others. And that's something that ought to be different.

Nobody would have believed he changed unless he had changed at the point of his weakness. The proof of a change is that you lay your weakness at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There's the prospect of change, the proof of that change. And now there's the ongoing promise of change.

[28 : 24] In verse 8, Zacchaeus vowed to give half of his estate to the poor and make full restitution to anyone he defrauded. In verses 9 and 10, Jesus responds to these generous vows Zacchaeus makes.

These verses tell us the basis upon which Zacchaeus was saved. The divine promise of amazing grace, not the human performance of good works.

In verse 5, Jesus says, Zacchaeus, hurry and come down. I must stay at your house today. In verse 9, Jesus says, today salvation has come to your house since he also is a son of Abraham.

No one in Jericho would have dared to go to Zacchaeus' house. They even grumbled against Jesus for going to the house of a sinner. But Jesus declared that salvation had come to Zacchaeus' house.

Salvation had not come because he promised to give half his money to the poor or to repay anyone he had defrauded. Jesus said, salvation has come to his house because he was the son of Abraham.

[29 : 44] Jesus called Zacchaeus' house. Jesus called Zacchaeus' house. Jesus called Zacchaeus' son of Abraham, not because of his birth certificate, but because he exercised saving faith as Abraham did.

Abraham believed the promise of God. By faith, righteousness was accredited to the account of Abraham and he was justified.

Zacchaeus was a son of Abraham. Jesus had not yet died on the cross, but Zacchaeus believed the promise and was saved.

This is how we're all saved. And it's part of our ongoing promise, church. For not only have we been changed, today we are being changed.

And one day we will be changed when we see him face to face. In verse 9, the fact of Zacchaeus' conversion is stated.

[30 : 58] Then in verse 10, the foundation upon which Zacchaeus was converted is stated. For the son of man came to seek and save the lost.

This is really the golden verse of Luke's gospel. Author Joseph Parker comments here, the whole of the gospel is in these words.

And yet there is not a word amongst them of two syllables. You cannot revise them into anything grander. If you touch it, you'll spoil it. In this verse, Jesus calls himself the son of man.

This is the term Jesus uses more than any other to identify himself more than 80 times in the gospels. It is a statement of both the humanity and deity of Jesus.

As the son of man, Jesus came to earth with a divine purpose. He did not just show up in a barn in Bethlehem.

[32 : 05] He came to earth with a mission from God the Father. To seek and to save the lost. Both verbs are important.

Jesus seeks sinners and Jesus saves sinners. In Matthew chapter one, the angel told Joseph concerning Mary, she will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus for he will save his people from their sins.

Jesus confirms this angelic prophecy by declaring for the son of man came to seek and save the lost. The conversion of Zacchaeus illustrates the mission of Jesus on earth.

It also represents what happens when change comes to your house. Even though Zacchaeus sought Jesus, it turns out that he was the one who was lost.

Zacchaeus was lost to his parents, lost to religion, lost to his community, lost to whatever friends he might have.

[33 : 22] And yet in a sense, not lost to God. His seeking Jesus in verse three turned out to be the result of Jesus first seeking him in verse 10.

God so wanted Zacchaeus saved that he placed a tree along the pathway in Jericho. And God so wants you saved that he placed a tree on the slopes of a skull shaped hill called Calvary, where Jesus died for your sins.

He died for your sins so that change could come to your house. Help me, Jesus. When change comes to your house, the past gets evicted.

When change comes to your house, shame and sorrow lose their power. When change comes to your house, chains are broken. Purpose gets revealed and salvation walks through the front door. What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought since Jesus came into my heart. I have lighted my soul for which long I had sought since Jesus came into my heart.

[34 : 59] Thank God for Jesus who still changes lives. Let's pray.

Father, we thank you. For changing so many lives and still being the God. Who continues to change lives.

Thank you for seeing us when others. Would disregard us. Thank you for still having your arms open wide.

Ready to receive us. In spite of us. In spite of us. In spite of how we act. In spite of our past. In spite of the things we've gone through and been through. You still stand ready to come in and bring change to our house.

I pray now for those who are still struggling. You stand at the door and you knock and all we have to do is open the door.

[36 : 04] You'll come in. You'll come in. And when you come in. And when you come in. Change comes in. So Father, we thank you and we praise you. For still being the God that changes lives.

Your son's name we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.