

Walking with Jesus: Walking with Jesus in transformation

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[0 : 00] I bring my phone out just for the purposes of looking at the time.! I have lost my watch so I will be looking at it from here so I do apologize.

! I'm a firm believer that when we come to church we come with intention. We come to worship God of course but we come also to be strengthened and also to be convicted by the spirit in order that we can go from here in this place and worship him more and serve him in the world. So I pray that this morning I pray that for us that we would leave here in such a way that perhaps we've been transformed.

I want to just begin by setting the context a little bit. The reading was from Luke 19 the story of Zacchaeus. So Jesus is on a journey to Jerusalem for the Passover festival and he's intentionally headed towards the place where he'll be crucified surrounded by pilgrims on the way. These pilgrims who have followed him. So there's a crowd and prior to meeting Zacchaeus Jesus encounter is a rich young man in the chapter before. A young man who's rich who cannot give up his riches and follow Christ which leads of course to Jesus teaching that it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

And at this point as Jesus enters Jericho he sees this short man Zacchaeus hanging on the branches way up in a tree and that's where our reading began today. So from the outset I want to ask this question why all the hate for Zacchaeus?

Why all the hate for Zacchaeus? I think for us even as Christians there is this sort of flippant perception when we read about Zacchaeus we have this flippant kind of way of looking at him.

[2 : 30] So for Christians there's that flippant look but for the Jews there was more of a deep hatred for Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus is ultimately regarded as a traitor because he worked to collect the taxes that were enforced upon his people.

And not only that the taxes that are paid to the government that a government that doesn't worship Yahweh although they worship just about every other idol there is.

it's almost like if you can think about it this way parking attendants today now I'm sure Edinburgh's parking attendants are lovely people and not like Zacchaeus at all but there's this indignant kind of perception about parking attendants about the work that they do isn't there almost like I know you love catching me out I know you love charging me and so no one really likes the job that they do and it's much like our oh that Zacchaeus you know when it comes to the time to have this reading where we read about Zacchaeus oh I know this story I know Zacchaeus we do the same with parking attendants there they are coming to make my life difficult so Zacchaeus is regarded as one of the worst kinds of people a traitor but despite this

Jesus counters the common perception of Zacchaeus Jesus looking up in the street he sees a man who has had small enough faith to at least be curious a turncoat he may be a traitor maybe milking the Jews for all of their money however Jesus calls him down and seeks to sit and eat with him and perhaps this is a good place to pause think about it yourself you've been cheated injustice and rage rain in your heart and Jesus sits down to a lovely meal with your enemy how do you feel?

how do you feel? I'd be furious I'd be raging plus you're probably also thinking Jesus you've just turned up you don't have a clue what this Zacchaeus is really like you don't know what he's been doing you ever felt that before?

[5 : 23] if you knew what I knew you wouldn't be doing that but as the story goes Jesus does in fact know see Jesus sees you just like he sees Zacchaeus he knows your every good deed he knows the beautiful things about your character for my oh my does Jesus know the ugliness too of us all he knows the lies we tell the guilt we feel the shame we feel he knows the unworthiness the deceitfulness the selfishness yet yet yet he calls you by name and with joy and gladness he calls you down to come and sit with him and invites you into an encounter with him Zacchaeus' curiosity

has led him into this encounter with Jesus

Jesus says Zacchaeus I must stay at your home and we read that Zacchaeus welcomed him gladly now you would not be a fool to think that the encounter here is the act of sitting and eating with Zacchaeus the sinner after all that's what the crowd see isn't it he's gone to be the guest of a sinner they say but the encounter has already come about see encounter is not about us it's about Jesus it's not about the moment Zacchaeus sees Jesus it's about the moment Jesus sees Zacchaeus and calling him by name we see that Jesus knows him maybe you're here this morning and you know yourself you're not a follower of Christ but you find yourself to be curious let that curiosity in you signify that still small voice of God inviting you just like Zacchaeus into an encounter this encounter for Zacchaeus was his name being called and that resulted in him sitting in the presence of Jesus encounter encounter for an awful long time

I believe the church in the west have been believing that it can curate and it can construct a move of God but the scriptures are very clear Romans 3 Psalm 14 Psalm 53 allude to the fact that no one is seeking God not one second that belief and repentance and salvation are entirely coordinated by God himself and so if you find yourself curious today it's because God has actioned it if you find that a friend has become curious it's because God has actioned that curiosity maybe you find that family members are increasingly interested in what you have to say as a Christian or interested in how you're living how you're acting how you're behaving it's because

God has actioned curiosity and is calling them into an encounter so encounter is entirely God's doing and I think understanding that encounter is actioned by God for God's glory causes us to look at God in awe and wonder if we're honest how many times there are many of us when we are asked why we are Christians we begin to speak about what we've done that maybe we were at a service and we responded to an altar call or we say I'm a Christian because I believed none of us have been welcomed into the kingdom of God by what we have done but by everything that he has done and for

Zacchaeus we see this and how Jesus is the one who curates the encounter Jesus he says Zacchaeus he says come down he says I'm eating with you he says I'm coming to your house and he says salvation has come encounter as God's doing Zacchaeus says look Lord I give half my possessions to the poor and for anyone I've cheated I will pay back four times the amount you must be careful here not to mistake that what Zacchaeus is doing is not seeking salvation through good deed that's not what he's doing the point isn't the deed the point is his change in heart that's the important transformation that's occurred creating me a clean heart oh Lord something we hear often when we encounter

[11:22] Christ we are given a clean heart but as we go through this life we must continually be clean we know this because we all feel the same temptations don't we and we fall to similar sins Zacchaeus will have been no different temptation and sin will continue to plague our flesh all of our lives but has your heart been changed so as to desire that which is spiritual above that which is flesh Colossians 3 reads that believers will set their hearts and minds not on earthly things but on things from above that's the clear transformation we see in Zacchaeus his encounter with Jesus has caused him to count his earthly things for nothing in comparison to the presence and the encounter of Jesus

Christ Proverbs 23 that reads as a man thinketh in his heart so is he the inner thoughts the beliefs and the true motivations they define our actions so it is with Zacchaeus we see him over here a greedy man taken from his own people and then we see him over here giving back to those people we see a transformation and I just want to say you know something I find so incredible about anyone's faith in Jesus Christ is this that there are no ways to fool

God have you thought about that before there are no ways to fool God there are no ways in Christian faith to fool each other and there are no ways in Christian faith to fool yourself God has made it in such a way that if you are ever to have a true encounter with the Son of God that you would be unable to declare I believe without showing any proof just like a court of law confession alone doesn't fly you must be able to show what you confess is true faith in Christ is not simple belief but is repentance also God has made it in this way that salvation cannot be realized with confession alone one must like

Zacchaeus show their repentance and show how their heart has been changed repentance! repentance backs up our confession and this is true for new believers certainly but it's also true for current followers of Christ we must confess and repent our sin each day 1 John says that if we say

we have no sin we are liars and deceive ourselves Zacchaeus didn't repent and act generously because he thought it would be a good deed or the right thing to do as some sort of pull on his conscience he did it because of the overwhelming power and love of God and the encounter and transformation that compelled him so not only is transformation about a changed action it's more importantly about a changed heart and a mind that is renewed and a spirit that now lives within us strengthening and convicting us so I guess this Sunday perhaps this is the application for the week ahead perhaps we have a question to ask of ourselves have you been transformed have I been transformed by the renewing power of the

Holy Spirit and can you put your finger on the proof of that I wonder Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 7 verse 10 that godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation for the believer sin is no longer appetizing and of course the temptation to sin is powerful but when we succumb to sin it leaves a bad taste in the mouth where before we maybe would have had a second thought about it wouldn't have had a second thought about our sin but it's true that we should be grieved by our sin because the spirit that lives within us is God's spirit and God's spirit is grieved when we sin it has an effect on us there will be a visceral reaction to the sins we commit and this is what Paul is talking about when he said for I do not do the good I want to do but the evil I do not want to do this I keep on doing the flesh and our spirit the spirit of

[16 : 58] God that now lives in us is at war with one another and a sense of grieving within our spirit as a good gauge as to whether or not we have been transformed let me conclude with a couple of things you see in the last verses Jesus makes a point of Zacchaeus heritage doesn't he his heritage as a Jew and he will have shocked those who are listening because he affirms Zacchaeus status as a Jew and a son of Abraham but he also says that he's lost but how can it be that a Jew can be lost how can a son of Abraham also be lost that can't be possible a person is not saved by a good heritage nor are they condemned by a bad one faith is far more important than genealogy so what is it that makes you a son or a daughter of

Christ will it be because you believed will it be because your family were charitable to the church or will it be because you believed you repented and you can point to that work of the spirit of God in your life Zacchaeus saw the transformation in himself Jesus affirmed it by declaring salvation had come so where is the evidence have you been transformed when you see it praise God and thank him for the transformation and save in work that he has done in your life because it's all his doing we're now going to sing to him to him!
to him!