

Seeking Jesus

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[0 : 00] We're going to turn back to Luke chapter 19, and we want to bring some thoughts that may be relevant to ourselves from the experience of Zacchaeus, which we find in the first ten verses of chapter 19.

Now, shortly before he met with Zacchaeus, we read there in chapter 18 that a rich young ruler had come to him desiring to know how to enter into the kingdom of heaven, or how to be saved.

And when Jesus explained to him what was required of him, and how he was coming short of what was required, that there was something standing between him and his desire to be saved, which was of more importance, namely his riches.

And because he was unwilling to give up his riches, he was unable to be saved. And Jesus says concerning him how hard it is for those who have riches to enter into the kingdom of God.

And the disciples were amazed, and they asked him, who then can be saved? To which he replied, the things that are impossible with man are possible with God.

[1 : 35] And shortly afterwards, we see that being demonstrated here in the experience of Zacchaeus. Here is a rich man that it was not impossible for him to enter into the kingdom of God.

Now, at the end of chapter 18, we also learned of a blind beggar, Bartimaeus, who called out on Jesus and who received salvation.

So there we see the contrast of the beggar and the rich man. Because Jesus came to save people from all walks of life.

Not just those who are poor, but those who appear to be rich. Because although Zacchaeus doesn't appear to have any physical infirmities, he had a far greater problem than any of these things.

He was a great sinner. And he was needing salvation just as much as the poor beggar Bartimaeus was needing salvation.

[2 : 51] Now, this was going to be the last time that Jesus would pass through Jericho. He was on his way to Jerusalem, as we read there in verse 18, for the very last time.

Because he told his disciples that he was going to be put to death. Now, if Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus hadn't taken advantage of this opportunity of Jesus coming their way, then it would have been the last time that they would have been given that opportunity to see Jesus.

They weren't going to get the chance again. And today the offer of salvation is being proclaimed in the gospel of Jesus Christ here and throughout the world.

But there will be many who will hear it for the last time. There might be some in here today who will never be given the opportunity again.

Maybe this is the last time that Jesus is passing through in the gospel. Maybe this is your last opportunity to call upon him.

[4 : 19] Because Jesus is surely passing through in the gospel. Because he is where his word is preached. And he's here today because he promised that he would be here.

And if you haven't seen Jesus, and if you haven't discerned the presence of Jesus ever before in church, well, in case this is the last time, make sure that you will lay hold of this opportunity and call upon him.

This was going to be the last time that Zacchaeus was going to have this opportunity. And we want to consider this man Zacchaeus.

We want to, first of all, consider his occupation. We're told that he was a chief tax collector and that he was very rich.

Now, this is the only place in the New Testament where a chief tax collector is mentioned. There were three main tax officers in Palestine at that time.

[5 : 32] Caesarea, Capernaum, and Jericho. Now, he was obviously in charge of the entire tax district of Jericho.

And he was above all the other tax collectors that were working under him. Now, one of the things that Jericho was famous for was a balm that was derived from the balsam tree.

Now, this balm was very precious. It was very fragrant. It was used as perfume. But it was also regarded for its high healing qualities.

Now, the trade in this commodity and all the other commodities that were being produced in that region yielded high taxes for the Roman government.

And besides all of this, Jericho was at the heart and centre of a vast trade network. The city had trade connections with Damascus, Tyre, and Sidon to the north, Caesarea and Joppa to the west, and Egypt to the south, as well as many other cities that were in that location.

[6 : 59] So, Sir Caius was a very important man. He had a high position in society. However, he was a very hated man.

He was hated by his own countrymen, as all publicans or tax collectors were, because many of them robbed the people.

They didn't just take the tax that they had to pay. They overtaxed them, and they pocketed the difference for themselves. And their fellow Jews knew that many of them were doing this.

They regarded them as traitors. They didn't have any time whatsoever for anybody that occupied this position.

Then we want to look at Sir Caius and his desire. His desire was to see Jesus.

[8 : 10] So here's this very important person. Hearing about another very important person.

Because by this time, the fame of Jesus had spread, and great crowds were turning out to meet him wherever he went.

And we learn that Sir Caius wanted to see him. But he had a problem, as we considered with the children, because he was a small man, and because of the great crowd, he wasn't able to see Jesus.

Now, Sir Caius had no doubt heard all about Jesus. Maybe some of his fellow tax collectors had spoken of him, and maybe he had heard their testimonies, because Jesus had converted some tax collectors.

And Sir Caius, no doubt, would have come to hear of this man that was changing the lines of those that were in his employment. And he would have heard much about it.

And he decided that he wanted to find out for himself who this Jesus was. He wanted to see him.

But because of the crowd, and because he was so small, he knew that he wasn't going to see him.

[9 : 35] But that didn't prevent him from seeing him. He ran along the road, climbed up a sycamore tree so that he would have a good vantage point. Now, it could be argued that that little action that Sir Caius took, that his salvation depended on it.

Because had he not made that effort, he would never have seen Jesus. Now, no doubt, Satan would have told some of you, especially if you're infirm or not feeling too good today, that you shouldn't go out today because of the weather.

But because of the little action that you've taken, God willing, this may be a blessing for you.

Because it doesn't matter how small the actions we take in order to meet with Jesus, if we're sincere in our desire to meet with Jesus, it will not have been wasted.

Even if it took some effort to get here. Because there are some sitting at home who didn't make that effort. And one thing that I can be sure of, I might not be sure that you will be blessed, but one thing I am sure of, for those that stayed at home that could be here, they're not going to get a blessing at this time.

Because they've allowed that blessing to pass them by. Because they didn't make the effort. Well, Zacchaeus made the effort. Important, rich, despised by the Jews as he was, deep down in his heart he had a desire to see Jesus.

[11 : 39] And he made this effort to go and see him. And he wasn't going to allow anything to prevent him from seeing him. Now, he didn't consider his own high professional status for his riches as of more importance than the effort that he ought to make to see Jesus.

He didn't consider the danger that he might be in mingling with the crowd, a crowd that hated him. And might possibly lay hold of him and beat him up because of their hatred for him.

He didn't allow that to prevent him from seeing Jesus and mingling with the crowd and running ahead of the crowd so that he could climb up a tree so that he could see Jesus.
It's easy enough to go along with the crowd. If everybody in the crowd is in agreement but he wasn't somebody that fitted in with the crowd that gathered out to see Jesus that day.
He was odd and he would have stuck out because the Jews would have known who he was and he wasn't going along with the crowd.

[13 : 13] He had forsaken his Jewish heritage. He had gone against what he had been taught. So he wasn't going along with the crowd but he still went out against all the odds so that he could see Jesus.

And although outwardly he appears to have forsaken his religious heritage maybe deep down he had never forgotten what he had been taught in his youth.

And there are many in our own midst who were brought up in the church as children who may have belonged to Christian homes and as soon as they got the opportunity they rebelled against all of their rich heritage.

heritage and they may be seen as those that are outcasts in our midst because we didn't conform with what we were expected to conform with.

But deep down maybe we haven't forgotten what we were taught in Sunday school, what we were taught in school, what we were taught maybe in our homes by our parents or grandparents.

[14 : 39] Because although it appears as if Zacchaeus had forsaken everything that he had been brought up to believe, yet here he is turning out against all the odds mingling with a crowd that were against what he stood for so that he could see Jesus.

Maybe he hadn't forgotten and maybe deep down there was a longing in his soul, a longing to see for himself if this was the Messiah that he had heard of as a child.

Now all of us have heard about Christ. All of us have seen the miracles of Christ. we've seen people who like ourselves were out in the world enjoying the things of the world thinking that the riches of the world were the things that we needed to lay hold of, that this was what was going to give us satisfaction.

Some of you have climbed up the social ladder and made a good living for yourselves and have a respectable position in your occupations.

But has that really satisfied you? Is there a deep down yearning within your heart for something that you haven't yet encountered?

[16 : 16] A deep down sense that desires satisfaction because the things that you thought were going to give you the satisfaction have failed you? Is there a yearning in your heart maybe to meet with this Jesus?

And is that why you turned out to church today? Because although nobody else knows it, because nobody else expects that that's what you're desiring, maybe deep down, you want to see Jesus. Well, Zacchaeus, sought to see Jesus. And you can imagine the difficulties that he would have had knowing what the crowd would have thought of him as one who was wanting to see this religious leader that everybody was talking about, some of them believing that he was the Messiah.

well, the next thing that we want to consider, which is of more importance than the fact that he was seeking to see Jesus, and that is that Jesus was seeking Zacchaeus.

in verses 5 and 6 we read, when Jesus came to the place he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, hurry, come down, for I must stay at your house today.

[17 : 55] So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And in verse 10, the conclusion of the whole thing, for the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

Although Zacchaeus was eager to see Jesus, it's more significant for us to note that Jesus is the one who was doing the seeking and the saving.

Amongst the hustle and the bustle of the crowd, Jesus stopped at Zacchaeus. Because Jesus, as he passes through here this morning, is not looking at your outward circumstances.

He's not looking at whether you're rich or poor. He's not looking at your physical appearance, whether you're well-dressed or not. He's looking at your hearts.

And Jesus is no longer passing through Jericho. He's stopped. And maybe Jesus is no longer passing through in the gospel that you're hearing.

[19 : 17] Maybe he's stopped because you've realized that he's addressing you, that he's speaking directly into your experience.

that maybe he has described for you who you are and that he knows who you are. Because nobody told Jesus who Zacchaeus was, yet he called Zacchaeus by name.

Because God doesn't look at the outward appearance, he looks at the heart, and he found in Zacchaeus a heart that was willing to yield to him.

And if our hearts are not open to accept Jesus, then I can guarantee you, you're not going to meet with him here today. If you didn't come out here today with the expectancy that you were going to meet with Jesus, then there's little chance that you will meet with him.

But if you've come out here expecting that Jesus will meet with you, and if your heart is open to allow Jesus to speak into your experience, then Jesus is indeed speaking to you today.

[20 : 34] He has found you. And our Father shall crowd round about you. He's addressing you individually. He's speaking to you directly, because he sees your heart as an open heart.

And Jesus, as he passes through, every time that the gospel is proclaimed, is pronouncing, Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

And if any man hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him and he with me. If you've come here today with an open heart, Jesus is going to enter into that open heart. And he's going to dine with you. And he's going to give you a feast like no other feast that you've ever tasted. He's going to begin to help you to experience the joy of salvation, the joy of being brought into communion with God.

Because surely that's what we desire when we come to church. That we will meet with God, that we will have communion with God, that God will speak to us as individuals and that we will know that God has been hearing us because he is speaking to us according to our experience.

[22 : 03] The things that we've been praying about, he is now answering. And nobody knew what you were thinking throughout the week.

Nobody knew what was bothering you. And here you've ended up in church and you find that the Lord is speaking exactly into what you need to hear.

And to be assured that he's aware of your petitions, that he's hearing your prayers, and that he is now answering them because now he's speaking to you.

This is the only instance that we have recorded in the New Testament where Jesus invites himself to be our guest in anyone's house. Amongst the crowd he recognizes the cares and calls them by name.

And that's the sure evidence that you're one of those sheep. the sheep hear my voice and he calls his own by name.

[23 : 15] Jesus doesn't recognize us by what we appear to be. He recognizes us by what we actually are. And he knows every one of us by name, not the name that everybody else calls us by, but the name that only he knows.

Because names in scripture describe for us the person. The names of God in scripture gives us an insight into the attributes of God.

The names of the characters that we encounter in scripture describe very often the character of that person. And none of us are alike, so none of us have the same name.

But Jesus knows every one of us by name because he knows every character. He knows everything that there is to know about us.

And when he starts speaking and making clear to us that he does know us, then we hear his voice. and if we hear his voice, we will follow him.

[24 : 31] Now Zacchaeus means the righteous one. Well, the scripture makes it clear to us there is none righteous, no not one.

And certainly Zacchaeus was not a righteous one before his encounter with Jesus, but as a result of his encounter with Jesus, he became a righteous one.

Because nobody can earn his salvation by his own works, by our own outward righteousness.

It doesn't matter how diligent we are in attending church or how diligent we read our Bibles or how diligently we pray. That does not clothe us in our righteousness in which God is going to find satisfaction.

The only righteousness that God finds satisfaction in is the righteousness that comes from himself. The righteousness that we can receive through faith.

[25 : 39] And that's the evidence that Zacchaeus had this righteousness. righteousness. And that's the final thing that we want to look at. Because if we have had an encounter with Jesus, there will

be evidence of it in our lives.

And the evidence that we see in Zacchaeus' life is that there was repentance and faith. These are the two saving graces that accompany every work of salvation.

We are not and we cannot save ourselves by good works. But as soon as we're saved, we're saved to do good works.

Quote us in verse 8, Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I've defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it forefold.

There was unmistakable proof that Zacchaeus was a new creation. He's not speaking of what he intends to do and many of us often have these thoughts that we're going to do something.

[27 : 04] But unless we act upon them the moment that the Lord impresses our minds with them, then we will never do them. We have to do them instantly.

Zacchaeus is not saying, I'm going to do, he says, I give, I restore. He acted immediately. He is now renouncing his sinful past.

That's the repentance. Because there has to be turning away from the way that we live. And we need to turn into this new way that Jesus reveals to us.

He is the way. And we need to have faith in him. Because he's the one, he's the only one that can lead us back to God.

To give us the communion that we desire. And there must be evidence in our lives that we have stopped living the way that we once lived, regardless of whether we were living riotous lives or upright lives, we must stop it.

[28 : 21] Even if you're living an upright life, you've got to stop it. Because these righteousnesses are not going to earn any brownie points with God.

We must turn away from our old life, whatever our old life is. And we must turn into this new life. We must lay hold of Jesus by faith.

And if there's no evidence in our lives, then our faith is dead. Because faith without works is mere hypocrisy. There must be evidence in our lives.

We've been saved in Christ Jesus to do good works. We're not saved by works, but we're saved to do them through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now Jesus refers to Zacchaeus as a son of Abraham. Now he's not referring to his Jewish lineage.

[29 : 27] He's referring to his faith as the apostle Paul tells us in Galatians. These are the true sons of Abraham, those that have the faith of Abraham.

So if we have the faith of Abraham, we are the sons of Abraham. We are the ones that God has entered into a covenant with. And Zacchaeus has ratified this covenant.

And he receives the covenant blessings, not just for himself, but he receives blessing for his whole household. What a great privilege and a blessing to have a Christian in any family.

Not only is that person blessed, but he's the means of blessing others. He is a witness to those in the household. He is a light to that household.

He is a priest to that household as he prays on behalf of that household. He's a blessing to the whole family.

[30 : 39] And if you're a Christian, or if you become a Christian, not only will you experience blessings for yourselves, but you will also be a means of blessing to others.

Because God uses his own people to reach out to those that are still lost. And let us never forget that. Let us never be content with our own salvation.

Let us never give him any rest until he establishes Jerusalem in our homes and in our community.

Because when the children of God do go to prayer, when Zion is in travail, children will be born unto the Lord.

And that's what we've all been called to. This is what Zacchaeus was called to. This was his covenant privilege, and this was his covenant responsibility. that he would now come and eat with him in his house.

Or that day salvation came to his house. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. and when he finds us, he's not ashamed to call us his brethren.

[32 : 16] Now we might be ashamed of ourselves, and other people might be ashamed of us. But if we find Jesus, or if Jesus finds us, then he will not be ashamed to enter our house, because he is not ashamed to call us his brethren.

May God grant that we would all be in this family. Let us pray.