

Why Jesus is the only source of true joy

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[0 : 00] taken from Luke chapter 18 verses 1 to 10 and you can find that on page 1058 of your church Bibles. So page 1058, Luke 19.

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And Luke 19. 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, half my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.

[1 : 47] 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.

Well, thanks very much for reading yesterday. As Simon said, my name is Benji and I'm on staff here. And I'm thrilled to be able to talk about this question with us this morning.

Why don't I lead us in a prayer as we begin. Dear Lord, thank you that you have made us. And therefore you know what it means for true human flourishing and joy.

Father, please would you show us in this wonderful story of the Lord Jesus Christ where true joy, lasting joy is found. Amen. Now we all want joy.

I think that's obvious, hopefully. And if we're here this morning thinking about that question, then I suppose that's evidence of the fact, isn't it? We all want joy. But I think we find it even more difficult to attain.

[3 : 02] There are ways in which it can come. Various different forms, I think. Family, perhaps, if you get on with your family. Although I'm sure some siblings are elbowing each other in the room at the moment. Holidays, Christmas, that warm fuzzy feeling with the turkey or chicken or nut roast, depending on your conviction.

Seeing a long-lost loved one, remembering cherished moments. We all want joy. And in an area like Dulwich and the surrounding places, I think it's safe to say that there are perhaps many reasons to be joyful.

Beautiful people. I don't include myself in that. Beautiful houses. Beautiful holidays. Rest.

Relaxation. Artisanal coffee. The list just goes on and on.

Yet, sadly, and strangely, and perhaps bizarrely, I don't think we've ever been less joyful as a culture. The Guardian recently released an article saying that young Brits, which they constitute as being under the age of 30, do without what you will, have never been more unhappy.

Worries over jobs, health, house prices, climate change, and energy costs have taken their toll. And before I worked at Grace Church, I was involved in student ministry for six years, and that was certainly my observation.

[4 : 17] There is very, very little joy in lots of people's lives. We get so close to it, though, sometimes, don't we? If we're honest, we get so very close to it.

We think we've almost found it. A beautiful piece of music, which for me is hip-hop, which don't ask me about that in the question time. A stunning scene in golden hour abroad, laughter with friends, the embrace of a young loved one.

But we quickly realise, don't we, that those things, those things are not joy themselves. These things are like an echo from a song we've never heard, a smell from a place we've never actually visited, and a taste from food we've never eaten.

If we mistake these things, wonderful as they are, for joy themselves, well, ultimately, they'll disappoint and destroy us. And we know that to be true experientially.

We know that to be true. The perfect relationship, it's so exciting, for the first few months, that soon shows itself not to be perfect. Our friends, wonderful as they are, let us down.

[5 : 24] The holiday ends, the music finishes, food runs out, never enough money, one more promotion, and on and on and on it goes. Where does true and lasting joy come from then?

Why does it never seem to last? Why is it so very hard to find? We are this morning here in Luke's eyewitness account. Luke was a doctor in the first century AD, and he put an account together for his friend Theophilus to give him certainty, certainty, of the things he has heard.

In other words, this is not myth. This does not present itself as some kind of nice metaphor or a fable of how to live your life. This is a claim that this happened in history.

And we're given here a window into one man's finding of true joy. If you've closed your Bibles, please open them up again at Luke chapter 19. We're going to be spending our time there.

The scene is set for us. Jesus, in verse 1, He entered Jericho, the city, and was passing through. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich.

[6 : 33] And in those very pithy few words, tax collector and was rich, Luke gives us all the information we could ever need about Zacchaeus, all the information we could ever need.

A bit of context is necessary. Zacchaeus is Jewish, and Jewish people were under Roman occupation at this point in time. They were a conquered and oppressed people. And the Romans, because they were particularly calculating and vicious, used Jewish men to collect extortionate taxes from their own people.

So tax collectors, in other words, were traitors, ultimate scumbags, helping suppress their own people. Think greedy bankers during, apologies, during the 2008 financial crash, paying themselves huge bonuses.

But worse, not only would they help oppress their own people, they would also extort the people they were collecting from and line their own pockets. And Zacchaeus, we're told, verse 2, chief tax collector, supreme scumbag, for want of a better word, senior, wealthy, a traitor, and a fraud.

It would be difficult to think of a man more hated and despicable to his own people. In a recent documentary, which I don't suggest you watch because it is vile, titled The Most Hated Man on the Internet, we were introduced to Hunter Moore.

[7 : 58] Now, Moore set up the infamous site, which is thankfully now taken down, called Is Anyone Up?, where he would encourage people to post explicit images of their ex-partners without consent.

Moore would go further, and he would employ hackers to hack into women's email accounts to find illicit content. And sadly, inexplicably, Moore became incredibly wealthy off the back of this website. And despite eventually being taken down by one very, very wonderful mother of a woman who was put on there, and despite his imprisonment, he is still very, very wealthy.

And when distraught women would implore him to remove the content, his stock reply was, lol, rich off illegal exploits and despised, here is a picture of little Zacchaeus.

Here is a picture of little Zacchaeus. In many ways, a man who had everything, yes, wealth, everything materially speaking, yet was despicable. That is my first point, the man who had everything.

[8 : 59] But my second point, the man who had everything gave everything away. The man who had everything gave everything away. We're going to jump to the end of the story to contrast the change between little Zacchaeus at the start, chief tax collector, and was rich, and see what happens at the end of the story after he has met the Lord Jesus Christ.

Have a look with me at verse 8. And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, not the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold. What happened between verse 2, chief tax collector, and was rich, and verse 8, I give away everything that meant this change. And let's be clear, he's bankrupting himself.

He won't have anything left after this point. Half of all my money to the poor, and then fourfold retribution. He means everything. He's giving absolutely everything away.

What changed? Rick Warren published in 2002 a Christian book called The Purpose Driven Life, which has sold more than 50 million copies worldwide in 35 languages.

[10 : 16] Behind the Bible, it's the greatest seller in book history. And this made Warren, understandably, an incredibly wealthy man. A responsibility that Warren did not take lightly.

He committed, when pressed, what he was going to do with this circa 80 million pounds that he had won for himself. He committed to giving away, to begin with, 91% of his income, and increasing that

number every year by 0.25%.

In other words, as Warren said in his own words, he has something worth more than the 80 million pounds that his book deal won for him.

and Zacchaeus now had that thing too, whatever it is. But his, I think, is even more radical act than Rick Warren.

Rick Warren was a pastor. He was already a Christian. Because for Zacchaeus, not only is it giving away all of his wealth, it's also an identity change.

[11 : 18] Think of all the things that Zacchaeus was willing to forego for the sake of being wealthy. The love of his friends, the love of his family, his national identity, acceptance by the wider society.

He was willing to give all of that up for the sake of extorting his own people. Yet he's gone from despicable thief and traitor to self-bankrupting for the sake of other people.

From scumbag to saint. What changed? The man who had everything gave everything away. Why verse 3? Because he found forgiveness in Jesus.

Returning to verse 2 and 3, these are jarring verses, I think, if we really pay attention to them and when we hold them together. They're jarring. Verse 2, and behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus.

He was a chief tax collector and was rich. Verse 3, and he was seeking. And he was seeking. It's jarring.

[12 : 22] He was rich. He had everything. And yet, he was seeking. It's worth pausing here, I think, to make clear that in the face of unbelief and forgiveness, man can have everything materially speaking.

You can have everything materially speaking. And yet, somehow, still be seeking. We know this, though, don't we? If we're honest with ourselves.

If we're really honest with ourselves, we can have everything and yet still be seeking. The famous film, which I've forgotten the name of, slipped my mind, apologies, but during the financial crash, a very wealthy banker was asked, when he just received this huge bonus, how much money is enough?

Because he went back to the office the very same day after receiving this enormous bonus. And his answer was, just a little bit more. Johnny Wilkinson, the famous interview, and apologies to any Aussies in the room, upon winning the World Cup for his country in the most, I have to say, iconic sporting achievement of all time, extra time, last play of the game, right through the middle of the uprights, again, sorry, any Aussies in the room, he said that as soon as he was in the dressing room, and this is his own words, he was utterly crushed by the question of, what now?

Utterly crushed. For many people, in fact, I think everyone, the worst thing you could possibly do to them is give them the goal they're seeking for.

[13 : 58] Because then, and always then, the inevitable question follows. Then what? Then what? And our seeking turns on to something else, and we make the exact same mistake again, and again, and again, thinking, oh, this time, this goal will satisfy.

Oh, this time, this goal will provide what I'm looking for. And again, and again, and again, we realise they do not satisfy. When I have that house, no.

That number, no. That promotion, no. That relationship, no. Yet we know that this is true, if we're honest with ourselves.

We know that this is true. And here is Zacchaeus, top of his career, rich beyond his wildest dreams, and yet, and yet, still seeking.

Still seeking. The next obvious question, though, of course, is what was he seeking? If he has everything that he could ever possibly want, materially speaking, what on earth is he still seeking?

[15 : 07] Well, specifically, Jesus, note with me verse 3, and he was seeking to see who Jesus was. We know from Luke's earlier record that Zacchaeus will have heard much, and I encourage you, please do take away Luke's account, and we'll have some at the back, and you can read his eyewitness testimony, and I reiterate, not myth, you have to do something with the historical claim that Luke is making.

And we know from Luke's earlier claim that lots of things will have been said that Zacchaeus will have heard. Did you hear Zacchaeus? Jesus is the promised saviour. Did you hear Zacchaeus? Jesus eats with sinners and lepers, maybe even you. Did you hear Zacchaeus? Jesus offers forgiveness to those who ask for it. And you can imagine, can't you, the hope sparked in

Zacchaeus' heart.

Surely this can't be true, that God is here, and he spends time with the vile, like me, that he really can offer me forgiveness. Not me.

Surely not me. I have led such an evil life. I've betrayed my own people. I've helped their oppressors. I've added to their misery. I've made myself rich on their pain. Surely, surely Jesus wouldn't have anything to do with me.

[16:29] And so, verse 3, what does Zacchaeus do? On account of the crowd, he runs. Verse 4, he runs. Now, make no mistake, you can imagine it.

I want us to picture this together. Jesus is walking down one of the main highways, and the road is flanked by crowds. Flanked. Shoulder to shoulder, no room, desperate to get an image of Jesus as he's walking along.

Both sides of the road. The queen's funeral was a wonderful picture of what that might have looked like. And make no mistake, there would have been children at the front of that crowd. Of course, there would have been children.

You can imagine friends in the crowd all facing forward, shoulder to shoulder, and then they turn and see another friend and their child who'd come to see the Lord Jesus, and they usher them forward. You want the children to be able to get a glimpse of Jesus.

Of course you do. Of course you do. But then they notice behind them little vile Zacchaeus on his own, and they close rank.

[17:26] And they close rank to make sure that he has no chance like the children of coming forward. No room here for a thief and a traitor. That's the response to this man.

And Zacchaeus is desperate at this stage, we see from verse 4. He runs along the outside of the crowd, desperately trying to find somewhere that he might be able to slot himself in.

And he's met by back to back, scornful shoulder to shoulder, no way through. Until finally, he spots a tree in verse 4. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Jesus.

But Jesus was about to pass that way. Ignoring the obvious shame, and I couldn't imagine a British person doing this, heaven forbid, scorning the obvious shame of climbing into a tree, the mocking spectacle he's creating of himself as he climbs above.

And you can imagine, can't you, the crowd there laughing that they haven't let little Zacchaeus in, and he's climbing the tree. You think, oh, classic, there's the traitor, there's the scumbag.

[18:34] And so he climbs into a tree. And what is he desperate for? He's desperate for a glimpse of Jesus. But I couldn't help thinking when I was preparing this passage, what happens then, Zacchaeus?

What's your end game? You've climbed a tree, you're trying to see this guy, what happens when you see him? Yes, fine, you catch a glimpse, but who knows what on earth Zacchaeus was hoping would come of this, climbing of a tree.

What happens after he sees Jesus? Then what? He sees his face, sure, but then what? Well, Zacchaeus doesn't care, he's just desperate to get up as close to Jesus as he can, so up he goes, verse four.

And then verse five, imagine the scene, Jesus making his way through the adoring crowd, people shouting adoration, asking Jesus to heal them, heal the sick, asking Jesus to give them forgiveness, and finally he walks under the sycamore tree that Zacchaeus is in, and he stops, stops dead in the middle of the crowd, and he looks up.

And what do you expect that first word to Zacchaeus to be? What do you think would be the first thing out of Jesus' mouth? Remember, Jesus is Jewish, Jesus has no reason to like Zacchaeus either.

[19:55] What would be the first word out of his mouth? What are you doing? Why are you up there? But the first word out of Jesus' mouth, have a look with me at verse five, is Zacchaeus.

His name. He knows Zacchaeus' name. You can imagine, can't you, at the hushed gasp, as Jesus, looking up, calls out Zacchaeus by name.

He knows this vile little man's name. what do you would give this worm any time whatsoever? And can you imagine how Zacchaeus must have felt in that moment?

He hoped for only a glimpse of Jesus. I just want to see his face. And instead, Jesus, here is Jesus, looking up at him, and he knows my name.

But it gets far more shocking, because Jesus continues in verse five, have a look with me, Zacchaeus, hurry and come down. For I must stay at your house today.

[20 : 59] So Zacchaeus hurried and came down and received him joyfully. You can imagine the stunned silence from the crowd. The man that they'd not even let into their midst, the man that they had shunned, has been invited by the person they came to adore for dinner.

And Zacchaeus, as we saw in verse six, hurries down. You can imagine him almost tumbling out of the tree, falling out the last couple of feet, desperate to receive Jesus totally beside himself, that this Jesus knows his name and wants to have dinner with him.

And when he tumbles out of the tree and rushes to Jesus, he feels this great swell of emotion that I'm sure he has not felt in a very, very long time.

Joy. Did you see that in verse six? Received him joyfully. Here, in the acceptance of Jesus, Zacchaeus finds joy.

The crowd hates this, as you see, in verse seven. And when the crowd saw it, they all grumbled. They said, he's gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.

[22 : 15] But Jesus rebukes them with the plain statement of verse nine and verse ten. And I don't think there are potentially any more glorious words in human literature. 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, that is Jesus, came to seek and save the lost. In other words, Zacchaeus, little vile Zacchaeus, the sinner with no joy, destroyed by his guilt, is exactly the person that Jesus has come for.

Jesus came for people like Zacchaeus. Jesus came for people like me. Jesus came for people like you. Three thoughts for us as we close.

joy is not found in things but a person. Joy is not found in things but a person.

I think if we're honest with ourselves, we know intuitively that that must be true. None of us actually think that the number in our bank account in and of itself brings us joy. and none of us would ever choose material, at least I hope not, would ever choose material things over the relationships most precious to us.

[23 : 37] We know that human beings are not good alone. We know that joy is found not in things. But here, the Bible is making a unique claim that joy is found in one person which is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Joy is not found in things but a person. second implication for us to be thinking about, Jesus is seeking you.

I wonder if you noticed that in verse 10. For the Son of Man, Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Jesus is not hard to find. I've recently started some NCT classes with lots of parents who are about to have a baby and it's fascinating to me the amount that they speak about star signs and horoscopes and personality types for their children as though there's this kind of mystical power somewhere out there.

Saturn's rings or something are going to determine the personality of their child. Luckily, I don't know what star sign I am or anybody else's for that matter but it was a conversation that lasted well over 45 minutes and I couldn't help but thinking that is fascinating that God is some mysterious power out in the rings of Saturn that somehow changes my child's personality.

The implication being that God is very hard to find. Very hard indeed. But do you notice that the Bible's claim is the exact opposite? Jesus is seeking you.

[25 : 12] It is not that you have to go and look at the rings of Saturn or whether or not Pluto is a planet or whatever the case may be to find God. Jesus is seeking you.

And the great testament to whether or not that is true that Luke goes on to tell us is the fact that Jesus Christ in history and I'm going to keep reiterating this because I do not want you to mishear me in history not in fable not in metaphor died on the cross and rose again three days later in AD 33.

That is the claim. That is the objective historical claim. So if you want to know that the Lord Jesus Christ has sought you you just need to look at the cross.

He knows your name and he died for you. That is my second observation. Jesus is seeking you. He is not hard to find.

Finally final thing for us to be thinking about salvation and therefore joy is only only found in Jesus.

[26 : 18] Only. that is an exclusive claim. Note how interesting it is that Zacchaeus gave away everything that many of us in this room will spend our entire lives trying to build.

Unimaginable wealth and prestige and career and in a place like Dulwich it is very easy and obvious to see that that is the idol for people here. Money wealth prestige career and Zacchaeus went from giving everything up for the sake of those things to meeting Jesus and giving it all away all away because Zacchaeus realized that joy identity meaning salvation is not found in those things.

It is only found in the Lord Jesus Christ. to my Christian brothers and sisters in the room I hope that this is a wonderful reminder to us about what the Lord Jesus Christ has given us in him but to those of us who wouldn't call themselves a follower of Jesus I am thrilled that you are here and thank you for giving me the time and listening to me I appreciate that that's not easy but I want to tell you a story finally as we close this is to those who aren't Christians in the room I was recently reading a retirement digest don't ask me why and it was describing a story of Bob and Gloria now Bob and Gloria Bob was able to achieve early retirement at 55 which sounds hideously far away for me but was able to achieve early retirement at 55 and him and his wife Gloria well they sold their house in the city in London and they bought a nice retirement home in Norfolk and then they bought a nice little boat and they set about pursuing their great wonderful joyous hobby which was collecting shells that's what they wanted to do in their retirement they wanted to collect shells it's wonderful to collect shells and they would categorize the shells and put them in this beautiful book and they would label them depending on the species and everything else they wanted to collect shells and that is the middle class dream isn't it let's not pretend retire early have the money that we want to pursue the hobbies that we want but I want to challenge

Bob and Gloria that when they die and meet the Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for them on the cross do they really want to be saying to him look Lord my shell collection look Lord what I did for 25 years of time I collected shells is that what they really want to be able to say and I have 20 to 25 minutes to speak to the non-Christians in the room to beg you to not buy that lie to beg you to not buy that lie that your life's peak is walking along a beach for 25 years collecting shells joy is found in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ he has come to seek you and to save you why don't I lead us in prayer dear Lord I thank you that in history the Lord

Jesus Christ died and rose again and that he knows everyone in this room by name father please do not let our pride and arrogance and love of this world get in the way of finding true lasting everlasting joy in the person of Jesus Christ Amen Thanks Benji 55 will come quicker than you think we're going to have an interval now as I said it's an opportunity to jot down a question there are question slips like this on the chairs there'll be members of the welcome team and we got quite a few questions to get through before the kids come back from Sunday Club so I think Benji's answers may be more headline answers than full answers and so apologies in advance for that if you want the fuller answer then you know where to go so go and talk to Benji afterwards there's one question I think which will demand a very long answer which is why do you like hip hop music so I'm not going to ask you that one Benji it's a complete mystery to me okay should we give away 50% of our money to the poor to show our new identity if we follow

[31 : 00] Jesus no so if you want to wonderful but this isn't prescriptive about what we should be doing with our money this is a response to what happens to our identity and priorities when we meet the Lord Jesus so for Zacchaeus obviously he lived for money and if we do live for money then we might need to think that through what it might look like to not but no I don't think this is prescriptive on money okay so presumably you'd say a similar thing to this question how would a house rising energy prices and kids can I give away half what I have similar kind of similar answer isn't it yeah exactly as in it is very good and godly and wonderful to look after our family so yeah if Jesus is joy and finding him is joy why does depression and other similar things find itself in those who follow Jesus so again I think I think I've said this before on question times that this is obviously a personal question and so any answer that I give I want to caveat strongly is going to sound cold by definition because it's

I don't know who asked this question and their context it's also worth saying I myself I'm a sufferer of depression have been for many years so please please do come speak to me afterwards if this was particularly pertinent to you I think two things first to say that I don't think joy is necessarily just a feeling I think joy is more than just a feeling it is a kind of satisfaction in life and identity I think so it's not just these kind of fluctuations of happy sad happy sad and secondly I think headline answer

the world is very very broken that's a picture of why sin is so awful and that things like depression and anxiety exist and in fact some of the great Christian preachers over the last three four hundred years have suffered with depression as well Spurgeon for example wrote a whole book on it so I would say we live in a broken world but actually I can be joyful in my depression because I know that one day I will see Jesus face to face and I will never be depressed again which is wonderful so but please do come speak to me afterwards thanks

Benji do take Benji up if you want to find out more and just think through that more a couple of questions here about what does Jesus want to save people for so is it to collect shells but to do so with joy and then how should Zacchaeus follow Jesus after giving up on wealth and previous identities so I guess it's kind of yeah so I'm sorry if you felt like I was particularly attacking you if you have a hobby of a shell collection I do massively question that but that's more on a personal level than anything else so the Bible is really clear wonderfully that we've been made for a relationship so Ecclesiastes would say that God has put eternity into the hearts of men Genesis 2 that we're made in God's image in other words every human being in this room is made for one thing and one thing only which is a relationship with Jesus and we try and fill that with all kinds of things all kinds of things and Zacchaeus was trying to fill it with money and all of us in this room if we're not a Christian will be trying to fill that with something and that will not satisfy so really it's the same answer so walking with Jesus knowing him more like I would know my wife more

I want to spend time with my wife it's exactly the same with my relationship with Jesus I want to know him be like him spend time with him love him have a bigger view of who he is live for him bring everything I do in alignment with what he cares about the list goes on and on so I think that's what Jesus saves us for what you are made for though it is a wonderful thing thank you and final question what must I do to experience the joy of knowing Jesus so I guess this is our excuse about how I begin to follow Jesus yeah thank you it is ultimately the acceptance of the Bible we call it grace which is Jesus' free gift of forgiveness for you and you can do that through praying I think it's a wonderful way I think that's the only way to do it actually to pray and ask that the Lord Jesus Christ would forgive you based on not what you've done but what he has done on the cross and I suppose

I want to say that that is the most thrilling liberating thing that you can ever do everything that we could possibly be ashamed of or be striving for is found in the fact that he will always answer you yes because he knows your name and if he knows Zacchaeus' name he certainly knows your name so I think that would be a good place to start and worth so we are going to be running a course called Christianity Explored which is a chance where we can actually ask these kind of questions in a more informal setting I mean there's people in this room who've been through that and found that very very helpful and we'll be starting that soon and if you want to find out more about that it's on the back of your service sheet please please please do take that jump you have nothing to lose other than having to spend a bit of time with me but I think that's a great privilege on your part so please I do commend that to you or take away one of Luke's gospels to read it about the Lord Jesus Christ for yourself I couldn't think of a better thing you could do with your time

[36 : 40] Benji thank you very much indeed so two ways then if you'd like to think a little bit further one is to take on the bookstall on the book table just at the back you'll see a whole pile of Luke's gospels have I left mine just next to you Jamie yep so they look like this so you're very welcome to take one of those away for free and then if you'd like to think about the Christianity Explore course it's just three different sessions then fill in the slip on the back of the service sheet there and there's a cardboard box again on the book table and just stick it in there and Benji will get in touch with you