

A Lost Man

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Preacher: Matt Brooks-Lloyd

[0 : 00] This is the evening service at Holy Trinity on the 4th of May 2003. The preacher is Matt Brooks Lloyd.

His sermon is entitled A Lost Man and is based on Luke chapter 19 verses 1 to 10. Well good evening.

Nice to be here. I want to tell you what I want to do tonight. I want to explain what we must do in order to be forgiven and to have a forgiven relationship with God.

We're going to be looking at that story that's just been read, the story of Zacchaeus, a lost man. And you might like to keep that open in front of you, that story, because I'm going to be referring to it as we go along.

Well let me pray for us as we begin. I want to enable us, Father, to hear your voice, to hear the voice of the Lord Jesus as he comes to each one of us this night.

[1 : 18] Open each of our hearts to welcome him. Amen. Well, have you ever had any well-known figures come into your suburb, come passing through?

About three years ago, I was living in the suburb of Glenbrook. And it was on August Sunday. We were going to have a special figure coming through our suburb.

Now, Glenbrook, for those of you who don't know Glenbrook, it's in the lower blue mountains of Sydney. And so, of course, this well-known international figure was coming through and we were all very expectant because you don't always have a well-known, famous international figure coming through.

So the news of the arrival was in through all the newspapers and expectancy, you know, grew. And the day came that the figure was coming to town.

So the people gathered in the park and as the ETA came closer and closer, the tension built. And finally there it was.

[2 : 28] Passing through before our very eyes was the Olympic torch, the international figure. And I can't remember who was actually carrying the torch, but I suppose it may have stayed perhaps maybe five minutes.

There it was. It was just gone. Passing through. And I guess this story tonight is about a well-known figure. He's come passing through town.

His name is Jesus. And he comes to this town called Jericho, which is on a major trade route. It was a significant city for export trade and a place where customs would be paid.

It was really a terrific place for a chief tax collector to set up his shop and to do his stuff. Well, our story has such a fellow. His name was Sikis.

He was one of these chief tax collectors and he was wealthy. Now, of course, tax collectors were not very popular in the first century of Jewish society. I mean, they're not very popular today, are they?

[3 : 38] But really they were just the pits. They were the outcasts. They were sinners. And you see, they not only collected taxes from the Romans, but they actually collected their own commissions on the side as well.

So they were getting their money from the Romans, but also collecting a bit on the side. So they weren't very popular in society. And so sometimes these tax collectors would hire subordinates under them.

So they'd actually get a little network of tax collecting, of which Sikis was one of these chief ones. Well, we come to this fellow, Sikis, a chief tax collector, and he was getting his wealth from all these dodgy commissions that he was charging.

The system was full of abuse. It was robbery. It was cheating. It was dishonest. The Jewish people knew it, and Sikis was getting away with it.

I mean, he would have been as popular as an Essendon supporter at a Hawthorne board meeting. Well, if you've tuned into the media recently, you would have heard about that story of Major Charles Ingram.

[4 : 51] You know, he was the guy that appeared on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* with his wife, Diana, and a colleague lecturer called Tequan Witock. The thing was, they were found guilty by a British court of trying to win a million pounds on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*?

Now, Tequan, who was sitting in the audience, she used 19 strategic cops to let Charles know the correct answers throughout the program.

I mean, obviously, I mean, there's just some things you've just got to get off your chest, right? Well, anyway, the trio were fined, which they have to cough up, and they were given suspended jail sentences, which is not something to be snoozed at either.

And apparently, as they left the court, there was so much media attention that everything was congested in the courtroom, because there were so many locked passages in the courthouse. But what do you do with a person who gets away with it, and they're cheating all the time? Because that's what Zacchaeus was doing. He was dishonest, and he was getting away with it.

[6 : 09] Well, it seems that the reports about all that Jesus had been doing and teaching preceded him. And Zacchaeus, like most people, was intrigued and curious.

A well-known figure coming to town, wanted to see him. He had two problems, however. There was a big crowd there. He'd come out, and he was short.

I know the feeling. I remember being 12 years old, and I was trying to see a cricket match. Greg Chappell was playing in the West Indies at the Sydney Cricket Ground, 1970s. There weren't any big screens. I couldn't see hardly anything.

But what I did do, I remember finding these two steel beer cans. And I propped them up there, and I stood on them. And I saw bits of the game. Great innings. Well, Zacchaeus, he may have been short, like I was when I was 12.

Short in stature, but not short in invention. Because he runs ahead of Jesus and the crowd. He gets his secure vantage point up the sycamore tree.

[7 : 14] And this tree, of course, in sycamore trees. I've probably even seen sycamore trees around in Doncaster. But what they're like are short trunks, and they've got spreading lateral branches. So just beautiful. It's a big short climb up.

And then you're on a branch, and you just climb out on the branch, and there you are, perched above the crowd. Perfect spot for a bird's eye view as Jesus comes walking by.

But little does he know that Jesus has come to do his own seeking. To seek, to save what was lost. Well, as quickly as Zacchaeus had run to the tree, does he now come down from the tree in response to these words of Jesus?

Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today. Well, Jesus is inviting himself over for dinner. And Zacchaeus is quite thrilled about it.

[8 : 17] But he's the only one. For as Jesus goes to be at the house of this chief tax collector of the region, the people all around are muttering to themselves about Jesus.

He has gone to be the guest of a sinner. All of a sudden, Jesus' character is being called into question.

Can you imagine this scandal? Can you imagine the outrage that's being felt by those who think that they are the victim of this tax collector? Jesus' character now saw that the one who'd been ripping them off is receiving special treatment from the Lord Jesus.

Jesus having dinner with that man, of all people. It didn't add up. How could Jesus approve of this outcast and this sinner?

Well, why would he do such a thing? Well, we get more than a clue from the last sentence in that reading. Now, you might like to look at that reading now.

[9 : 30] It's the last sentence there in the passage that was read. I'm just going to read it again. It says, For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. Let's just consider this little bit by bit as it deserves. Firstly, the Son of Man came. See, Jesus came into the world.

He came into the world at just the right time. Being fully human, he lived in perfect obedience to the will of God.

But he came into a world that had largely rejected and ignored the will of God and still does. He came from heaven into a world for a reason.

And that is, secondly, to seek and to save. Jesus came to suffer and to die. To die in the place of many.

[10 : 32] And then to rise to new life. He came to save people. To make salvation available today.

And to rescue us from the anger of God being poured out because of our rebellion against him. He came to find people.

And to bring them into a forgiven relationship with God. And thirdly, the object of his coming. The lost.

It's people without Jesus as Saviour and Lord. You know, the outcasts. Like Zacchaeus. The lost are those who have never repented.

And people don't repent because Jesus has not come to them in the personal sense. The lost are those who don't realise just how perilous their situation really is.

[11 : 46] The lost are those under the judgement of God and unable to save themselves. Well, Zacchaeus was one of the lost.

But his response reveals that today salvation came to him because Jesus came to him.

And Zacchaeus knew that the one he met that day was the Lord. The one that every single one of us here in this room will meet one day.

Just listen again to what Zacchaeus says. 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. See, having acquired all his ill-gotten gains and ripping people off from tax collecting.

[12 : 50] Now Zacchaeus is going to use his wealth to serve people. He didn't simply say sorry for all his shonky tax collecting.

Nor was he just going to be this new honest tax collector on the block. He responded by receiving Jesus as the Lord of his life.

He did a U-E, the U-turn. If you like, he's been on the wrong highway and he's going the wrong way. And he's found the exit point.

He's found the road that's going the right way. Jesus was now his Lord. A whole new direction, a whole new attitude and purpose would be his.

For Jesus' words said to him, today salvation has come to this house. The day the Lord Jesus came to Zacchaeus.

[13 : 58] He sees his whole life would now be committed to what Jesus wanted. No wonder Jesus told Zacchaeus to come down quickly.

Come down quickly from that sycamore tree. No wonder Jesus said to him, I must stay at your house today. For today was the day of salvation for Zacchaeus.

The day Jesus came to him. It was a matter of great urgency. Well let me ask you then.

Has Jesus come to you? And have you met him? See the many are here tonight that have already come to the Lord Jesus.

And Jesus has come to them in the personal sense. Personal sense of repentance and faith. And for those of us, we know that salvation is ours today.

[15 : 09] And yet, there may be any number of us here tonight who are still at the stage of having only encountered Jesus from a distance.

We may have heard and read things about him. We've come to some conclusions. We may even be curious. But we're still not ready to make that first step.

And for other of us, these guest services are a bit like going over in ink what is already there in pencil.

Just helping to clarify how we can come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as my Lord and my Saviour in that personal sense.

And still it might be the case. There are some of us here, perhaps for the first time. Well maybe we've been coming here for quite a bit. And we've never responded with repentance and faith.

[16 : 15] And never known in that personal sense forgiveness of my sin in Jesus. Well tonight might be a day of salvation for you.

You know, if you see yourself as being pretty pleased with how your life is without Jesus then really this story probably won't mean a great deal to you.

But if you see yourself as the sinner and the outcast and the one who is lost without Jesus then this story is for you.

For as you and I reflect on Jesus coming to Zacchaeus of him passing through Jericho on his way to the cross stopping and singling out Zacchaeus that little man that sinful outcast then there's a possibility that Jesus could stop and single out you and me.

In a few moments I will lead us in a prayer to give you the opportunity to respond to the Lord Jesus and to become a Christian. It's really an ABC prayer.

[17 : 43] A. We're going to admit that we've ignored Jesus and we've been living our own way and need to repent. B. It's for belief that we can come trusting only in all that Jesus has done dying and rising to new life and that that has been made possible for you to have a forgiven relationship with God.

C. It's for confirm that God would confirm to you that you have been forgiven and that you belong to the Lord Jesus and he'll help you as you begin to live his way.

It's really the sort of prayer I prayed about 20 years ago where I made the discovery at a camp a sort of need for repentance and forgiveness. I was trying to live a pretty good life I was alright respectable and I knew they were far worse than me but my thinking was all wrong I knew God was there but I was ignoring the Lord Jesus and his right to be in charge and so I prayed a prayer in similar terms to what we're about to do.

I didn't feel any different really after that but I was aware that that day I'd made a decision I'd taken a step to welcome the Lord Jesus who came to me that day.

Well that might be you tonight you might like to do that tonight for the Son of Man did come to seek and to save what was lost and today's salvation like for Zacchaeus might come to your house.

[19 : 46] Well if that is you and if you'd like to respond then please why not respond with this prayer and what I'm going to do is pray this prayer phrase by phrase and just pause if you want to live commit your life to the Lord Jesus Christ tonight then just just echo it silently in your heart and God will hear that so let's bow our heads and let's pray to God Dear God I admit I have ignored you and have lived in a way that suits me I need to repent I believe you sent Jesus to seek and save the lost I believe that by his death and rising to new life he made it possible for me to be forgiven thank you for doing that

I turn to Jesus today please come into my life please confirm me in your forgiveness and to know that I belong to you enable me to live your way with Jesus as my Lord Amen well friends if you've prayed that prayer tonight for the first time then congratulations that is such good news and this is a great night you came here tonight as someone who was once lost but now you have welcomed the Lord Jesus and you're beginning life following him well just for starters

I want you to hear these two promises from the Bible Jesus said for my father's will is that everyone who looks to the son and believes in him shall have eternal life and another promise in scriptures here if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation the old is gone and the new has come you and I don't but I