

Dependence and Repentance

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[0 : 00] Do keep your Bibles open there to the Gospel of Luke. We are encouraging people to bring their own Bibles, particularly the HTY Youth. HT Youth, actually.

Holy Trinity Youth Youth. Yep. And we used an NIV 2011 version. You could also look into your phones if you'd like.

There should also be an outline in your pew sheets so that you might want to use that to follow along as well. Well, if you look at the sermon outline, I begin with that question right at the top, which I want to start with today.

And that is, do you ever admit when you're lost? Or do you just pretend and carry on? Well, I have to confess that I hate admitting when I'm lost.

I still remember back in the day when GPS wasn't a thing, that even when I was lost, I'll pretend that we weren't. And so if my wife asked whether we were going the right way, I would simply tell her that we were taking the scenic route, all the while hoping that, you know, eventually we'll stumble upon the destination by chance.

[1 : 16] I mean, you've got to, right? I mean, after you wander around for a while, you've got to get to, and, you know, you go around in circles enough times, you will get to where you want to go. It was the same when traveling in a foreign city.

I never thought it was cool to be seen walking around with a map in hand and camera around the neck, although that was a bit unavoidable, because I didn't want to stand out as a tourist and be a target for touts or thieves.

And anyway, I thought, if I knew what the general direction was that way, then as long as we were headed in that general direction, then we would eventually find the destination, right?

Right? Yes? Now, of course, I mean, I may have thought that, but it only infuriated everyone else that was relying on me to get to where we wanted to go.

I mean, it would have been easy for me to just pull out the map, work out where we were and where we needed to go, but that would have meant that I had to admit that I was lost.

[2 : 25] Now, I guess I'm not alone when I say that we don't like to admit that we're lost. And I don't just mean about finding, you know, physical places, but a lot of times we don't want to admit that we're a bit lost in life as well.

We'd rather just muddle along than ask someone for help. Well, in today's passage, we meet two lost people. They're slightly different in their own way, but both are lost, but actually both do the right thing.

And so they end up being saved by Jesus. The first lost person is the blind beggar, which we start to read in verse 35 of chapter 18. I'm going to read it again.

And I want you to, as we do it again, pick up some of the detail that's in the story, because we'll delve into some of that. So as Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.

When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. He called out, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

[3 : 34] Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet. But he shouted all the more, son of David, have mercy on me. Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him.

When he came near, Jesus asked him, what do you want me to do for you? Lord, I want to see, he replied. Jesus said to him, receive your sight. Your faith has healed you.

Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God. Now the scene, as I imagine it, is rather like a procession of a dignitary into a city.

Just the other week, Gladiator was back on TV. I don't know where you caught it. But if you remember one of the scenes, the Empress' sister, Lucilla, was in that chair, whatever you call it, being carried through the city in a procession.

And as she was, crowds were lined on both sides of the route. People were clamoring for her attention, calling out. Some were begging, others were asking for favors.

[4 : 41] That's the kind of scene that I imagine Jesus was confronted with as he entered Jericho. Except Jesus wasn't a king, was he? Or dignitary, a political one that is.

But this blind beggar knew enough about Jesus to treat him like one. That's why he calls out to him, son of David. That's the term you use for one of the descendants of David, the king, a rightful king. Now, I don't think he was the only one. That's why people had to lead the way to clear the path for Jesus. It may even have been some of his disciples that was doing that job and therefore trying to shush the blind man.

And so in and among all that noise, Jesus could have easily passed this blind beggar. He was probably seated, lost in the crowd, and his voice would have probably been drowned out amidst the other noise.

But Jesus stopped and he ordered the man to be brought to him. Jesus picked him out from the crowd. And what the blind man asks, first and foremost, he does it twice, is mercy.

[5 : 55] Because he knew where he stood before Jesus. Totally helpless, totally dependent, with no basis to demand anything from Jesus.

I think that was how he felt in life anyway. It strikes me that being blind doesn't mean you need to be left by the roadside to beg.

But he was probably there because his friends and his family have abandoned him. No one was looking after him. And so being in that situation, he probably recognized how desperately lost he was.

And yet, though he was helpless, though he was at Jesus' mercy, Jesus still asked him what he wanted him to do for him.

Jesus gave him agency, didn't he? He gave him a voice. Now, why was that? I think it was to give this man an opportunity to express faith, which the man did by asking for his sight to be restored.

[7 : 04] But there was more than just a physical healing going on, wasn't it? Something more important was happening. This blind man got the opportunity to put his faith in Jesus, to show his trust in God's Messiah.

And so that's why when Jesus healed him, he said, your faith has healed you. Now, this word healed is the same that's going to be used later when it's translated saved or salvation.

And so we could have easily read the translation as, your faith has saved you. And so it's right to say that only Jesus or God saves.

That's right. He's the only one with the power to do so. But it's also equally true to say that our faith saves. That is, it requires something on our part to receive what God initiates, to acknowledge who God is by trusting in him.

Now, further, this blind man goes on not just to exercise faith in asking, but he also exercised faith by following Jesus and praising God afterwards. In other words, he wasn't just doing this as a one-time thing, asking God in faith and then that was it.

[8 : 29] No, he asked in faith and then he continued to live in faith, following Jesus and praising God. His life now is totally given over to the one he trusts.

Now, if you were with us last week online, it's actually similar to the thing that Jesus required of the rich ruler in our passage last week. For him, Jesus had said, sell everything, but also said, follow me.

And yet, unlike this blind beggar, the rich ruler failed to do that. And so what we have here is the first type of lost person. Someone who is lonely and humble in life, and we can tell, expresses dependence on Jesus.

And Jesus saves him as a result. But then, in our second story, we come to the second type of lost person whose need, initially, of God isn't that clear.

Now, many of you will know the story of Zacchaeus. And I must, I'm going to ask this question.

Many of you probably also know that the song that has been written about him. Put up your hands, anyone remember the kids' song, Zacchaeus?

[9 : 39] Okay. Well, well, I was put to that challenge at 10.30 this morning. Thankfully, they were not YouTubing, so I could actually play a video clip.

But because of copyright, and you know, if I play this clip, they'll probably, YouTube will probably ban us from the live stream. What I've got is the lyrics instead. And I would like to, I will sing it, but I would like the rest of you, actually, Michelle and Jen, would you like to come up and join?

Okay, I'll start, I'll start. I don't know if this is the right tune, but I'll start. And I hope you'll join me, please. Now, Zacchaeus was a very little man, a very little man was he.

He climbed up in a sycamore tree for the, he wanted to see. For the Lord, he wanted to see.

And when the Savior passed that way, he looked up in the tree and said, Zacchaeus, you come down.

[10 : 49] For I'm going to your house for tea. I'm going to your house for tea. And again, no. Did I get it right?

I don't know. Anyway, now this is a pretty good summary, I think, of the passage. But actually, if you look at the passage, there's more detail. So I think it's better that we read the passage again. And again, please pick up the things that the song missed.

So verse 1, Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short, he could not see over the crowd.

So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

And when Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, come down immediately.

I must stay at your house today. So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, he has gone to be the guest of a sinner. But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, look, Lord, here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor.

[11 : 59] And if I've cheated anyone out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount. Jesus said to him, today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a son of Abraham.

For the son of man came to seek and to save the lost. Now at first, Zacchaeus didn't seem to need Jesus. He was after all the chief tax collector and he was filthy rich.

But just like the beggar, he was drawn to Jesus. Now unfortunately, he was short and he was not well liked by the rest of the people. So I imagine no one was going to give him room, make room for him to get to the front of the procession.

But being a resourceful man, that he was, what he found was a sycamore tree to get above, which he climbed to get above the crowd. And these trees actually are quite ideal for someone like Zacchaeus.

So if you look on the slide, the tree, their branches are actually quite low. Low enough for a short man to just pull himself up and yet sturdy enough, as you can see, for it to hold his weight.

[13 : 08] So really, God's providence in some ways. But again, like the beggar, Jesus didn't need to stop for Zacchaeus. He wasn't even calling out for Jesus.

But no, Jesus sought him out and invited himself to his house for tea. So yet again, I think we see Jesus has chosen a very unlikely person to show favor.

So much so that people grumbled and said that he was eating with a sinner. Now when Zacchaeus heard this, he was actually happy to own that label.

And he said, yes, I'm a sinner, all right, but his Savior, my Savior, is coming to my house. You see, Jesus had accepted him even though he was a sinner.

And that was probably more than many people in the city had done for him or to him for many years. And that's the thing, isn't it? When Jesus finds and comes to sinners, they're not left feeling ashamed or ridiculed, are they, for their sin?

[14 : 19] But neither are their wrongdoings swept under the carpet. Instead, there is repentance. Here, Zacchaeus owns up to his sin and more than that, he turns his life around.

He makes restitution. He says, I'll pay back fourfold what I've taken wrongly. And more than that, he's going to give half his wealth away. Just like the rich ruler was asked to give all that he had to follow Jesus.

I think it was only half because he needed the rest of the half to pay back the fourfold. But he recognized, didn't he, the same thing that Jesus was saying to the rich ruler, that he was in this sinful occupation, quote unquote, because of his love for money in the first place, because of his

greed.

But whereas the rich ruler wasn't willing to get rid of his idol, Zacchaeus was. That's what repentance looks like. Walking away from the thing that binds us, walking away from our past life of sin and rebellion and living Jesus' way.

It's not just saying sorry, is it? But then it's living according to that sorry. And I do find it quite touching, actually, as I read this account, that here we have a despised tax collector.

[15:45] And we have his name recorded for us three times in this passage. He has a name. I suspect that he probably also moved around in the fellowship of the early church.

And, you know, perhaps as Luke was telling his story or they were rereading the gospel, people would be looking at him, oh, this is the Zacchaeus that Luke is talking about. This was his conversion story.

This was how Jesus found him. And by contrast, we have, don't we, the rich ruler from last week. And can anyone tell me his name?

No. He hasn't got one. Well, he has one, but it's not recorded. It's almost as if God is saying, I know who are mine. Zacchaeus, someone easily forgotten and despised by others, is remembered by God and saved, sought out.

And so we have here in Zacchaeus and the blind beggar a model, each, a different aspect, a model of what's required by those who are lost.

[16:57] In the beggar, we see dependence and faith in Jesus. But in Zacchaeus, we see repentance and restitution of wrongs. And both are necessary for salvation.

We need to recognize and own up to what we've done wrong. We need to say, yep, I'm responsible for that. And yet, we also need to recognize that there's nothing we can do to make up for that.

That actually, we need to depend on Jesus fully to save ourselves. Now, Zacchaeus did go after that to do things like give away his wealth, but these are responses of faith.

They are in response to Jesus reaching out to him first and seeking him and calling him down from the tree and coming to his house to eat with him. And as a response to that, Zacchaeus' act of repentance and his act of faith was to give away his wealth.

And so, that's why we have at the end of this story Jesus' declaration in verse 9 and 10 where he says, Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a son of Abraham.

[18:09] For the son of man came to seek and to save the lost. Now, to be a son of Abraham just simply means he's part of God's people. And he was, as a Jew, physically speaking, although people ostracized him, but now Jesus is saying that Zacchaeus is a son of Abraham spiritually, that Jesus has sought him out and has saved him so that he's now part of God's people.

But notice too that Jesus says, this man too is a son of Abraham. That is, as Jesus was saying this, he had others in mind, didn't he?

And so the question is, who might these people, other people be? Well, the blind beggar, I think, naturally, but I also think many of the others in the last few chapters that we've been looking at.

So, for example, the disciples who were clueless about Jesus' death, who didn't understand how anyone could be saved, they too were part of the sons of Abraham.

saw also the children that were brought to Jesus in chapter 18, or people like the persistent widow that Jesus talks about, who persisted in their faith through prayer, or the tax collector, who prayed as a sinner in the temple.

[19:28] I think all these people are what Jesus describes as the lost in this verse 10, humble, repentant people who depend on Jesus by faith.

And then, of course, by contrast, we also have examples of people who were lost, but who couldn't see that they were lost, like the rich ruler who thought that he was doing everything right, or the Pharisee in the parable who looked down on others as he prayed.

So, I think this verse 10 here, we get to the point here where actually this is a summary verse for all that's gone on over the last two chapters. I think what Jesus is doing over these chapters as well is to fulfill what was read in Isaiah chapter 42 by Enoch, that Jesus has been coming and seeking out the lost to save them.

The people like the blind beggar, he's given sight, as it says in Isaiah 42. But also people that have been bruised, the Isaiah passage talks about the bruised reed not being broken.

These are the lost people that Jesus has been seeking out, finding and saving as a result of his ministry. But I want to say that we need to see clearly what this salvation entails.

[20 : 50] It's easy to read the stories and think, oh, the salvation is physical healing like the blind beggar, or it shows acceptance like Zechariah when Jesus came to his house.

But no, actually, Jesus was saving them from much more than that. And to understand what he was saving them from, we have to look back at the passage right before this, right before these two stories because here we see Jesus using this very specific phrase, Son of Man, and it's deliberate because it links back to verse 31.

If you look back there on the slide, Jesus says that we're going up to Jerusalem and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man, that same phrase, will be fulfilled. He will be delivered over to the Gentiles.

They will mock him, insult him, spit on him. They will flog him and kill him. And on the third day he will rise again. Jesus is talking about himself as this Son of Man who will die for their sins.

That's the kind of salvation for the loss that Jesus speaks of in verse 10. Zacchaeus was a sinner, all right. But the type of salvation Jesus was saving him from was more than his ostracization from society.

[22 : 13] Jesus was coming and seeking him and saving him from his sin. And Zacchaeus, by being repentant, was exactly the type of person that Jesus was seeking out.

And so as we read verse 10, the question that's put to us is, are we willing to admit that we're lost? That we, like Zacchaeus and like the blind beggar, need salvation which only Jesus can provide? That we can't save ourselves? Now, I know many of us already have. And so, for us, the question will then also be, when we look at our family and our friends and, you know, like Amanda, colleagues in the workplace, is the most urgent thing that we see that they need is the salvation from that kind of lostness.

And if we do, do our hearts ache for them so that we pray and ask that their eyes be opened so that they can see this lostness and then see Jesus as the savior they need and repent to be saved?

I think it's sort of natural sometimes to just think that people aren't that bad, are they? They're not as lost as the Bible says they are.

[23 : 33] After all, if you look at some of them, they're probably getting along quite nicely in life, aren't they? Doing quite well, thank you very much. Even those who struggle, sometimes we think, you know, if only they get over their financial problems or if only those relationships in their lives get sorted or, you know, that poor health that they're struggling with, if that gets fixed, then, you know, they'll be okay.

But that's not what the Bible says, is it? For all of us. No, we are lost and we can't save ourselves. And I know many people, I'm sure like you, many family and friends in that situation.

And I know how you guys feel that sometimes it is hard, isn't it? We don't want to jeopardize the relationship. we don't know what to say that wouldn't seem to offend them.

So, yes, I think we do need wisdom. We do need patience. But most of all, I think we mustn't give up. We mustn't think just because they say no now or they seem resistant now that that would be the end of it.

But rather that we ought to continue to keep praying for the opportunity, for the wisdom, for the tact, and then finally for the courage to speak up and say, you need Jesus.

[24 : 54] You are lost. And I want to encourage you to keep thinking like that, to keep doing that. I know there are people that are probably in your lives that you probably think of them like that and you seem a bit, you know, perhaps at a loss as to what to do.

Don't give up. Keep praying and asking for God to keep guiding you. But then, I encourage you as well to keep supporting one another to do that. Talk about it with people in your growth group or among your Christian friends.

Tell them, I'm thinking about such, such and such that they will become Christians. Will you pray with me over this next year or so or however long it takes? Support one another in that.

Give counsel and courage. Help one another not to give up because that is indeed the most important thing, isn't it? For lost people to be sought out by Jesus and to be saved.

It is more important than anything else, isn't it, in life. And if you are here today and you haven't turned to Christ as yet in faith and repentance, then can I please encourage you to do so.

[26 : 07] Come and talk to me afterwards. part of being a pastor is seeing the joy of people come to faith in Jesus and how that changes their lives.

And for me, that is one of the biggest highlights to what I do at church. Just when they do that, they realize that the most wonderful thing has just happened to them.

Notwithstanding initially their fear or hesitation, but when they put their faith in Jesus, something wonderful happens in their lives because finally they realize that Jesus has sought them out and have saved them from their lostness for eternity.

So come do that as I pray right now. Father, thank you for sending your son to come to die for us so that he may save us, all of us who are lost.

Thank you that you found us when the word of God came to us and the good news of Jesus was preached to us. Thank you that you opened our eyes to see our sin and to show us the destructive path that we were on.

[27 : 18] Thank you for giving us the gift of faith to believe in Jesus and to turn back to you in repentance. Please help those we love and know to do the same and give us the wisdom to show them the way.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.