

When the Really Lost are Really Found

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Date: 17 May 2009

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[0 : 00] While we remain standing, let me pray. Father in heaven, we heard in that reading that when you spoke, when Jesus spoke to his disciples, they could not understand, they could not grasp because the truth had been hidden from them.

We pray, Lord, that you would help us today understand, that you would help us grasp the truth, that it would be revealed to us that we might see the real Jesus and put our faith firmly in him. We pray this in Jesus' name and for his glory. Amen. Please sit down and it would be very helpful to have your Bibles opened where the second reading finished on page 78.

Last week I talked about being saved and I like these kinds of expressions just to keep us feeling a little less Anglican than we are. And I'd like to start with the question, Are you saved? Now don't think of the person next to you. I am asking you the question, Are you saved? I'm starting with that question because that is the key idea of the passage that we had read to us today.

[1 : 21] You see in verse 10 of chapter 19, Jesus said, The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

Jesus came with us, lost people in view. He came to seek us out and then save us. We know one thing for sure, we're all lost.

That's the whole picture. We have wandered away and are lost. Jesus said, I've come to seek you out, find you and then save you.

Last week we heard, as we saw in chapter 18, the marks of a truly saved person. I'll just remind you if you weren't here, we saw that someone that's really saved, a real Christian we call it, is someone that basically has said to God, God have mercy on me, I am a sinner.

A real Christian says that. Not, I am without sin, but God have mercy on me, I am a sinner. And then we saw that a real Christian is someone who then puts their faith in God.

[2 : 31] Faith like a child. And finally we saw that a real Christian is someone who then says, I am going to follow Jesus. My life is now his.

He is my Lord. I will follow him. They ask for mercy. They put their faith in God like a child and they follow Jesus. And a real Christian is a saved Christian. In fact, there's only one kind of real Christian.

Now it's very important to listen to what Jesus says he came to do. He did not come to save us from our low self-esteem.

He did not come to save us from our anxiety about our futures, let alone provide all the things that we'd like. He came to save us from our sins and the judgment we deserve for them.

Now with that in mind, I want to ask three questions of the passage today. What does it actually mean to be saved? And we'll see some examples, concrete examples.

[3 : 33] How is it possible that I can be saved and you can be saved? And then finally, what should we do about it? Well, what does it mean to be saved?

Are you saved, brother? You know, you have in your minds how people say it. Well, being saved is first raised by the disciples.

Jesus mentions it in 19 verse 10, but it's back on the previous page, page 77, in verses 26 and 27. A rich man has refused to follow Jesus.

He's walking away. Jesus says, boy, it's really hard for rich men or rich people to go to heaven. And then the disciples say, verse 26, those who heard it, then who can be saved?

I mean, if he can't be saved, who can be saved? And then Jesus gives a very wonderful answer. What is impossible with men is possible with God.

[4 : 39] It's impossible for you to save yourselves, but God can make it happen. Now, what I want to do is look at three examples that are right before us, right here, of people being saved.

And we'll see there are common things about it. And then you can say, oh, well, am I like that? They're real life examples. And the first example is obviously the disciples themselves. Just following that verse, we come to verse 28, when Peter says, verse 28, Lo, we've left our homes and followed you. And Jesus said to them, Well, truly I say to you, there is no man who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive manifold more in this time and in the age to come eternal life. If you follow me now, then in the next life you have eternal life. You are saved. It's the same expression. See, the disciples had chosen to put their faith in Jesus. And Jesus says, If you put your faith in me and follow me, if you trust and obey me, you are saved. You have eternal life. Now, we could say, well, that makes sense. [5 : 52] That first example is the disciples. You'd sort of expect that. But the next two examples are the great reversals. We've been hearing this throughout Luke. Look, we see in the next parts of the Bible that often the ones you think would be saved, like the rich man, aren't.

And the ones you think wouldn't stand a chance, like you and me, are. And the two examples are the blind man, in verse 35, and the chief tax collector. So we're on page 78 now. Let me just quickly read again the story of the blind man. As he drew near to Jericho, this is verse 35, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. And hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant. They told him, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. And he cried, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. Those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. [7 : 04] And when he came near, he asked him, what do you want me to do for you? He said, Lord, let me receive my sight. And Jesus said to him, receive your sight.

Your faith has made you well. And immediately, he received his sight. And followed him, glorifying all God and all the people. When they saw it, they gave praise to God as well. Now, did you notice the marks of the true Christians there? He's calling out, God, have mercy on me. And then Jesus says, you receive your sight because of your faith in me. And then we see the man who has put his faith in Jesus, rise up and follow Jesus. Have mercy, put trust in, follow. It's a marvellous event. He's saved, if you like. But I want you to notice more, it's Jesus that seeks him out and saves him. There were no doubt hundreds of people lining the road. [8 : 09] We're told in verse 35, there was a multitude. And so, no doubt, he was used to sitting by the edge of the road and conscious of people walking past, but now there was a crowd of people in front of him.

So, he cries out, have mercy on me. the crowd say, be quiet. Jesus stops and commands he's brought to him. And in the midst of so many wanting his attention, it's Jesus' decision, I'm going to save that man. Jesus was the one that sought him out. Jesus was the one that rewarded his faith. Like a child, Jesus sought him out and saved him. Now, the third graphic example and by far the most dramatic is Zacchaeus. Chapter 19, now from verse 1, we hear this story that Jesus is now going into Jericho. You know the story. Apparently, this man was short, wealthy and wanted to see Jesus but there's an enormous crowd. [9 : 17] He would have been frightened to be in crowds because any person would have loved to have put a knife between his ribs and no one would have known it. So he climbs a tree. Levi, one of Jesus' disciples, used to be a tax collector.

Maybe Zacchaeus was thinking, well, if a tax collector is following him, who knows? Whatever the case, while he's up in the tree, no doubt there are now thousands of people. We read in verse 5. Follow with me. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down for I must stay at your house today. So he made haste and came down and received him joyfully. And when the crowd saw it, they all murmured, he's gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner. See, Jesus sought out one man, a truly lost man, so lost that everyone without exception murmurs, him of all people, him.

[10:24] But verse 8 shows us salvation. Jesus is now in the home of Zacchaeus. Time has transpired. They've most likely already had a meal.

Jesus has spoken to Zacchaeus and we have this amazing account of what happens to Zacchaeus in verse 8. Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.

Friends, this is a man who is transformed. He once lived for money. That was his God. That was his meaning. But now it has no power.

It just doesn't matter because he's found a new treasure which is actually a true treasure. We see before our eyes salvation.

Now, everyone saw it. If Jesus was going to make an impact in Jericho, what better way to do it? To transform the worst, most horrible man to start generously giving money away.

[11:33] we see in a man liberty, joy, generosity, humility, repentance, faith, all wrapped up and demonstrated in unmistakable actions.

He gives his money away. Not all of it. He pays those that he has defrauded four times and he gives away half of his wealth. He now is probably wealthy but nowhere near as wealthy.

He gives his money for God. You remember John the Baptist said to the Pharisees, bear fruit that befits repentance. Well, that's what he's doing. John the Baptist is demon.

I repent. God, forgive me of my sins. My greatest sins is I have been a fraudster and I have been greedy. I am repenting. So, Jesus can say remarkable words in verse 9.

He said to him, today salvation has come to this house since he also is a son of Abraham. And then Jesus says, for this is why I've come.

[12:36] The son of man has come to seek and to save the lost like this man. This man is a true believer says Jesus. This man is a real Christian.

This man is saved. Now you notice Jesus seeks him out. Jesus finds him. I doubt Zacchaeus had in his mind, I think I'll become a Christian today.

I doubt Zacchaeus had in his mind, I'm going to totally change everything I live for as a result of talking to this man. But once Jesus seeks him out and speaks to him the gospel, he's changed. He believes. He follows. He repents. Each of these examples, the disciples, the blind man, Zacchaeus, they all ask for their forgiveness, they all put their faith in Jesus and they all end up following him.

Well, I started with a question, remember? Are you saved, brother? Are you saved, sister? Seriously? Are you?

[13:39] If that is why Jesus came to seek and save the lost, are you saved? In an Anglican kind of way. Is heaven your home?

Is Jesus your treasure? Has he found you and saved you? Have you come before Jesus and said, Lord, I am a sinner.

Have mercy on me. In communion, we're going to do it. We're going to say confession. If you've said it for a hundred times and never mean it, mean it today as you say on your knees, have mercy on me.

Forgive me. Have you put your faith in him and his words. Have you chosen to follow him no matter what the cost? To help you be sure, I thought I'd ask the second question which is important.

How is it possible that we are saved? Is it by us being really good? By the way, the answer is no, just in case. How is it possible that God can save someone like me or you?

[14:41] Well, you remember Jesus having said about the rich man who walks away. Oh, boy, it's hard for rich people to be saved and then the disciples say, man, if he can't be saved, who can be saved?

And then Jesus, well, it's impossible for you but God can make it possible and that's when Peter and the other disciples say, well, Lord, we've left everything and we're following you and that's when he says, yeah, that's okay.

You have eternal life. You're saved. But, and he goes from verse 31, just flick back again to see where we are. You are following me, Peter and disciples, but let me tell you where I'm leading.

I'm not going to the place of rose petals where everything's lovely. I'm not going to the fantasy world where all your prayers are answered and, you know, everything's comfortable and everything's sweet and nice and pretty and comfortable and, no, no, no, you need to be clear where I'm heading.

I want you to know how it is possible to make the impossible possible. I, as your leader, your saviour, have to do something.

[15:57] Verse 31, taking the twelve, he said to them, behold, we are going up to Jerusalem and everything that is written of the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.

Notice that word. for he will be delivered to the Gentiles, he will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. They will scourge him, they will kill him and on the third day he will rise.

Let me tell you where I'm going. I'm going to my death and resurrection. But, verse 34, they understood none of these things.

This saying was hid from them and they did not grasp what was said. Now, I want to talk about this not understanding, not grasping and it being hidden a little bit later but just understand Jesus told them this amazing thing and it didn't sink in.

What I want you to notice though is Jesus is telling them how God is going to make the impossible possible. how it is possible for you and I to be saved.

[17:08] Jesus says, the Son of Man will go and he will die and he will be raised. And remember, I asked you to look at that word, verse 31, accomplished. Everything written about Jesus, the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.

It's not just the word fulfilled, you fulfill a prophecy. It's accomplished which means completed. It's the word, it's come to the end or it's finished. finished. It's the word, not used often, that Jesus cried out on the cross.

When he finally is about to die he says, it is accomplished. It is finished. Everything that needed to be done from my birth now to my death has finally been achieved.

It is finished. And Jesus is saying in this particular passage, everything that was written about me in the prophets has to be accomplished. There are things that God said would happen to the Saviour. We were told in our Bibles, their Bible, the Old Testament, we were told how God would make it possible. Well, everything that has to happen is about to be happened and about to be accomplished.

[18:23] In fact, the major thing, my death and resurrection, the ultimate things are just about to happen. You realise this is about a week, probably eight days before Jesus dies on the cross.

They don't understand it, they still don't understand it. But you realise this is the end of his three years of ministry and he says, you know, I've done a lot of things but there's just a few more things and actually they're quite big things that have to be accomplished before the impossible is made possible.

I have to die and rise. Do you remember though how he began his ministry? After being baptised and tempted by Satan in the wilderness he returns to his hometown and do you remember what he did?

He picks up a prophet, a scroll of Isaiah. He finds a particular place in a prophecy written 600 years before he was born and these are the words or some of the words he reads to the people there.

The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor.

[19:37] He keeps reading of the prophecy of this one, this Spirit anointed who will bring sight to the blind and release to the captives and when he finishes reading that prophecy of one who is to come we're told he rolled up the scroll gave it back to the attendant sat down the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him and he began by saying today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.

Right now you have just heard the prophecy of Isaiah fulfilled in your presence I am the one who is spirit filled I am the one who has come to proclaim good news to the poor and release to the captives it has begun.

It's all in the scriptures and throughout the next three years and as you read the gospels they'll often say this is to fulfill what the prophet said. How is it that we can be saved?

God had a plan before the beginning of time his son would come and die before they even created us that was his plan that God would send a suffering servant and the son of David and he would be the Christ.

Now what should we do about it? Remember how the disciples did not understand could not grasp the truth it was hidden from them I actually think that's God being gracious as they're just about to face his imminent death to be told it was going to happen maybe God has been gracious to them but what you need to do now friends listening to me is we need to make sure we do understand we

need to make sure we have grasped the truth that it's no longer hidden from us because we're on the other side of the resurrection they understood it on the other side of the resurrection we need to today so let me give you a strong warning the place to find the understanding the place to find the truth about the Saviour the place to get your knowledge so you can grasp all that God has revealed is the scriptures

[22 : 10] Jesus constantly said look at the scriptures look at the scriptures can I say I am staggered when I meet Christians who talk to me about a Jesus that never even existed where are they getting this from some people seem to think that they can believe in a Jesus they like to believe he's the subway Jesus I'll have that that and that but no that I want that I don't want that it's as if they can choose the Jesus they want I don't like to believe in a Jesus that has that I certainly don't want a Jesus that believes that but I would really like a Jesus that has this and I know it's not in the Bible but it would be really nice if he's like that it may be their Jesus didn't physically rise from the dead it may be their Jesus wasn't born of a virgin Mary come on it may be their

Jesus didn't die a death on the cross as an atonement for my sins that's sort of divine child abuse isn't it have you heard that latest one I might have a Jesus I like to think is but my friends I am staggered because often these are believers or people are claiming to believers and what they have done is they have made up a Jesus he's like the tooth fairy he's like Santa the only place he exists is between their ears because where do they get it from I don't know the world maybe so you end up hearing these believers saying we can learn a lot from Confucius you know Buddha was pretty good come to think Gandhi was too I say hang on hang on what makes you think Jesus is anemic and weak oh oh I see you have a subway Jesus no wonder no spice I

I'm particularly staggered when I hear it from believers because we have been given a fool proof way of knowing God fool proof God has revealed to us crystal clear there is no doubt about it the first biographies of the life of Jesus were written by his disciples by the apostles they were there we're going through Luke who was the closest friend of the apostle Paul who had visions of Jesus and basically endorsed him and said brother you have access to every eyewitness you can find write down the most accurate account of what we saw and what we did each of the gospels have such an amazing foundational credibility if you want to know the real Jesus read his story in the biographies and do what they do in those biographies even here they keep quoting back to their bible in the new testament and in the gospels they keep quoting their bible which is the old testament they keep going back to the prophets they keep going back to Moses they keep going back to the psalms because that is where god revealed him and so we as christians when we read the letters that are written to christians we do what both the gospels and the letters do we go to the old testament as well and there it is revealed this is the way god has made it possible for even little children in sunday school to know the real

Jesus it is not rocket science sure there is some bits you can't understand but I guarantee if you do and believe what you can understand you will be mother Teresa ok it is clear as day it is when you don't want to believe it that you become someone else I just want to quickly show you this I have gone over time so I will tell you it instead of showing it to you after the resurrection in Luke 24 you may recall there were some men walking home to Emmaus sad because Jesus had died even though they had been told the tomb was empty and that some of the women had seen him do you remember Jesus appears to them he says oh you slow of faith you are so foolish slow to believe all that the prophets had spoken did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory it is all there and then verse 27 beginning with Moses and all the prophets he explained to them what was said in the scriptures concerning himself he opened their eyes it is there and then they say that wonderful thing did not our hearts burn within us while he walked with us on the road while he opened to us the scriptures as he opened the scriptures

I have been reading this bible all my life it has come alive I can now see and then later Jesus appears to the disciples in the upper room he says this is what I told you while I was still with you everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the law of Moses the prophets and the Psalms and he opened their minds so that they could understand the scriptures and then he told them that Christ must suffer where do you have your mind opened where do you gain your understanding it's open as you read the scriptures I get very cross when people try to talk to me about Jesus but say let's keep the bible to one side and I just sort of go well you can imagine how I go so so what this is what I want to finish with friends so what put your faith in the real Jesus the court case that is about to happen is not about some of the issues that have been thrown in our

faces the issue is

[28 : 25] Jesus who is the real Jesus we would say there's only one way you can be certain it's found in the scriptures they would say oh no we're far more insightful and wise and spirit led than you let's put the scriptures to the side let's just see what we really feel you are not following the real Jesus I want to exhort you brothers and sisters if we win the case or not make sure you are following the real Jesus wherever he leads it may be out of this building praise the Lord I think but I can trust my Lord the case is not about anything but the real Lord and where he can be found we're about to have communion can I encourage you if you're not saved make sure you are come to communion and say the confession come and kneel at the table take the elements and say

God I am a sinner I need forgiveness your body and your blood was broken and shed so I can be forgiven I put my faith in you now and from now on I follow you the real Jesus that rose from the dead if you're not sure do Christianity explained this little brochure blue on the top and each exit the white parish life note you have tell you about it do the course it's how many people I've seen have had their eyes opened you know why because we teach the scriptures let me pray father have mercy upon us we are sinners but Jesus you made it possible for us to be forgiven father we want to put our faith in Jesus like children we are weak we believe but help our unbelief we put our trust in

Jesus and what he has done not in ourselves and Lord we pray that we would be willing to follow the real Jesus wherever he leads at any cost for you promise that you will not leave or forsake any who put their trust in you this is our prayer and as we take communion today may we as one body honour you and demonstrate our faith is in you and you alone Amen let us pray there will be periods of silence between the spoken prayers when you may add your own intercessions in the quietness of your hearts our heavenly father we thank you this morning that we can draw close to you and receive from your hand that which we need this day we thank you for all the gifts you so generously give us our lives our health the strength to work the opportunity to rest and all that is lovely in creation and in the lives of all people and as

Richard has led us through these verses of Luke we give thanks that you continually seek us and desire to meet us the lost ones the sinners to love us to forgive us father help us to receive salvation you offer to us and to follow you faithfully and to understand fully all that you have done for us through your son's death and resurrection now we'll take a few moments to just thank God for his good gifts to us and to turn to