

# The Generous God

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Preacher: Rev. Aaron Roberts

[ 0 : 00 ] and they could kind of charge what they wanted extra because they had the backing of the Roman army. So it wasn't like you could complain to anyone. So what kind of person would do that to their own enslaved people?

Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was that kind of person. Not only was a tax collector, he was the chief tax collector. So he was good at extorting money.

He taught other people how to do it. He managed them. And he was rich because of it. So for all these reasons, Zacchaeus was on the lowest rung of the social ladder, as we said.

He was a pariah. And you guys hear that? The buzzing? Is that bothering you? Slightly? It's this one right here.

There we go. There we go. There we go. Do you remember to plug that one in? Otherwise Emma's going to be... That's your monitor, by the way.

[ 1 : 05 ] All right. All right, let's start again. So... Do you guys remember Pharma Bro?

Does that ring any bells with anyone? Pharma Bro? Martin Screlly. So he owns this pharmaceutical company. So this was like news, big news, like 2017.

So he's a young guy. They called him Pharma Bro because he was kind of like, kind of young, white guy, but kind of white guy, you know. And Wu-Tang, the Wu-Tang Clan made this album where they only produced one.

They made one copy of the album. And that's all they're going to... He bought it, millions of dollars, put it in the safe. Anyway, Martin Screlly, Pharma Bro, he had this product, which was a life-saving product called Daraprim.

Life-saving product for people with HIV. And he jacked up the price of his pill 5,000%. Legally, he could do this. He became the most hated man in America.

[ 2 : 13 ] And he was hated because of that. And he was hated because when they took him to court for sort of securities fraud, he smirked his way through the court case. More recently, the mantle of most hated man has been picked up by another guy called John Kapoor.

Has anyone heard of him? John Kapoor. Billionaire, indicted just last week for a scheme where he bribed... Pharmaceutical company again.

He bribed doctors to prescribe this highly addictive fentanyl mouth spray. And the doctors, he bribed them by paying them speaking fees for talks they never gave.

And he had this... So he had these doctors writing prescriptions for people who didn't need this very, very addictive fentanyl, right? And he had this... And his company had these teams of people that would ring up the insurance companies and say, like, totally, this person totally needs this fentanyl spray.

They totally, totally... Would just lie to the insurance company to pay for this costly drug for patients who didn't need it. So his company was doing all of this. This is all current news. This is like current, current.

[ 3 : 25 ] His company has been doing all of this in the midst of an opioid epidemic. So John Kapoor saw this miserable situation, this epidemic, and saw it as an opportunity to make a whole lot of money.

And he didn't care that what he did made the situation worse. In fact, he was banking on it. He was banking on it being worse because it made him more money.

Anyway. This is Zacchaeus. This is who we're talking about. This is not a cute story about Jesus loving short people.

So let's keep going. So that's very important. So Jesus, he's on the way to Jerusalem, and he's on the way to the cross, and he's passing through Jericho, and the crowds are lining the streets.

They want to see him. And why not? After everything they've heard, maybe he's going to do one of his things. Maybe he's going to give this amazing, life-changing sermon, or maybe he's going to do one of his miracles.

[ 4 : 30 ] So they line up to see him. Of all the possibilities, of all the things he could have done, the least likely thing took place. He passed through, and he stopped, and he picked out the most hated, the most socially outcast person in that place and said, I really want to go to your house.

Now, as we stand back and look at this story, there are actually some signs that Zacchaeus was ripe for the picking. He did actually do what we all have to do to get salvation flowing in our life. First, he climbed a tree. We all have to do that. This is what I mean. One of the greatest barriers to receiving Christ is pride.

Becoming a Christian is not a dignified thing. It can set you up for some ridicule sometimes. But this man, Zacchaeus, he was a wealthy man. It was a formal culture. But he climbed a tree.

He did a childlike thing. He risked the mockery of that because he wanted to see Jesus. It's something we have to do. Second, he didn't let the crowd get in the way.

[ 5 : 39 ] See, the crowd was the thing that was blocking him from connecting with Jesus initially, and the grammar of the sentence suggests that they basically wouldn't make room for him. They self-righteously sort of closed ranks because they didn't like him.

They hated him. He didn't deserve to see Jesus. I remember back in the old country, my old church, there was a guy. I went to church with who was a bit rough around the edges.

He was sort of, had a lot of tattoos. He had these big booty dreadlocks. And he was into the hardcore scene. And there was a woman at the church who would literally grab her purse every time he came into the church.

And I know this because she told me. She didn't like having him around. And it's amazing he stuck around, actually.

When faced with that sort of indignation, faced with that sort of self-righteousness. See, Zacchaeus didn't let that get in the way. He was determined, he was determined to see Jesus for himself.

[ 6 : 48 ] It's quite wonderful. So, Zacchaeus. So, there were some signs, right? He was right for the picking. But, still a really horrible man. So, story.

Here we go. Jesus is passing through the town. And he doesn't pick out the respectable person to give his time to. And he doesn't even, like, pick the person that is kind of low on the social ladder. But you feel a bit sorry for. It kind of plays quite well with the crowds. Like, it wasn't like he's walking in the street. And the little orphan girl climbed up under the tree.

And Jesus picked her out. I mean, that would preach, right? That would be amazing. That would be great. That would be a great sermon. No. So, he picks out, like, you know, in Vancouver, he picks out the white supremacist he's just got back from Charlottesville, basically.

And Jesus says, Zacchaeus. He knows his name. He knows him. He knows all about him. Zacchaeus. I must come and spend some time with you.

[ 7 : 53 ] And the language used here is not, I want to touch base. I want a quick catch up, cup of tea. The language here suggests that I want to stay at your house for a while.

I want to be with you. And what happens to Zacchaeus? We see here joy, repentance, salvation. It's amazing. I want to talk for a moment about repentance because it's just an amazing response. Verse 8. Which is great.

It's fantastic. It's more than he needed to do. Tithing was 10%. He was giving away 50%. In the Old Testament, if you cheated somebody, you gave them back their money plus 20%. He's giving back fourfold.

It's incredible. But how do you account for a heart that is so reordered? How do you account for this? Did Jesus threaten him?

[ 8 : 56 ] No. Did Zacchaeus do like a cost-benefit analysis? You know, was he going, okay, I give half my goods, I get eternal life. Yeah, it's pretty good. There's no suggestion of that.

Let's look at what we'll call the order of grace in the passage. I think that's the key. The order of grace. Jesus didn't call out the most hated man in Jericho and say, hey, clean up your act and then maybe we can work something out.

No. Jesus says, in spite of who you are, in spite of your sin, in spite of your record, I want to be with you. I want to be with you.

See, religion says be good and God accepts you. And this is the opposite, isn't it? It's the other way around. Jesus first offers acceptance and we respond by becoming generous.

We respond by a change of heart. Now think about this for you. Think about this for you. Jesus says to you, despite all you have done, I absolutely love you and want to be with you.

[10:05] What does that make you want to do? So Jesus first gave himself to Zacchaeus and then grace changed him.

And I love this bit here. Behold, Lord. Behold, Lord. Half of my goods, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. I love that first book. Behold, Lord.

I was playing in the playground with my daughter B on Saturday and she was climbing this big thing. And she says, look, daddy, daddy, look.

Look what I've done. That's what behold, Lord means. It's like, look, Lord. Look, daddy.

Look what has happened to my heart. It is a miracle. This guy loved money. He trod on other people to get it.

[11:00] He was willing to be hated to get it. And now he's transformed. How? Because he found something in Jesus more precious than money.

Because he found the love of Christ. Don't you want to be able to say, this is what I've been thinking about this week. Don't I want to be able to say, don't you want to be able to say, look, Lord.

Look, daddy. Look, look, look. Look what I have done. Look how you've changed my heart. It's a miracle. I've changed the way I use the internet.

I've overcome lust. I'm no longer addicted to this or that. I'm no longer fixated on money or popularity or whatever it is. Look, daddy, look.

Look what's happened to me. It's a miracle. This is what I want to say to God. We're all a work in progress, right?

[12:02] But how do we get there? How does that happen? Well, it comes in part from knowing that Jesus loves you and wants to be with you before you can say those words.

I'll say it again. How does this happen? And it comes in part by knowing that Jesus loves you and wants to be with you before you can actually say any of that stuff. Let me finish up.

Very quickly. Verse 10. The Son of Man has come to seek and save the lost. That is the story. This is Jesus' job.

This is Jesus' job to seek and save the lost. And Zacchaeus is just such an incredible example of this. Zacchaeus did these things. He was kind of ripe for the picking.

He was curious. He wanted to know. He wouldn't let people get in the way. Zacchaeus went up a tree to see Jesus. And in the end, as the story goes on, we see Jesus go up a tree to save Zacchaeus.

[13:01] It's wonderful. This is the gospel. It's astonishing generosity. How are we going to respond to this?