

# Mercy for the Unmerciful

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Preacher: Mr Ian Murdo Macleod

[ 0 : 00 ] Well, we turn back with me then to the reading we had. We'll read from Luke chapter 19. Luke chapter 19. And we'll read the verses 3 to 5.

We'll take that as a text. And Zacchaeus was seeking to see who Jesus was. But on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today. I've entitled this sermon, Mercy for the Unmerciful, for a particular reason, and I'll explain that to you very shortly.

[ 1 : 06 ] There's little doubt that the story of Zacchaeus, which happened as Jesus was passing through Jericho, on his way to Jerusalem, that this was an appropriate illustration, and a clear contrast, of what Luke had recorded a few verses previously.

And that was the account of the rich ruler. And although we didn't read it, I'm sure most of you will be aware that that rich ruler, when Jesus met with him, Jesus asked him to give up all that he had, and to follow him.

And the rich ruler was unwilling to do that, because he clearly considered his personal wealth, to be the most important aspect of his life.

And in verse 1 here, in chapter 19, amidst all the activities, of Jesus' ministry, of teaching and healing, he is now on this final stage, of his journey towards Jerusalem, towards the cross at Calvary.

And Jesus' healing of Bartimaeus, which we read, the blind man, that had taken place as in near Jericho, as it's mentioned to us there.

[ 2 : 35 ] And we're now told here, that Jesus has entered Jericho, and is passing through. Now Jericho was a major city, very different to the Jericho, of the Old Testament.

And it was a hub for goods passing back and forth, and it was a major toll, collection point, for taxes, on the goods, that were passing east and west, both ways.

And in verse 2, then, we're taken straight to this character, Zacchaeus. We're told about him, and, with what we're told initially, he appears to be, a man who, had it all.

He was a rich man, and, he was a man of position, he was a man of power. And we're told, that he was a chief tax collector.

Now, this is the only time, that this title is mentioned, in the New Testament. And it emphasizes, the hugely, elevated position, of Zacchaeus, in that society.

[ 3 : 49 ] Because, he may have been, small in stature, but he was a prominent person, in the community. However, and there is a big but here, or a big however, these tax collectors, they were despised, they were hated, by the people.

And for good reason. And, the people would not have considered Zacchaeus, to be righteous, or honourable, in any way, shape or form.

Now, these tax collectors, they were employees, of the Roman government. Now, the Roman government, were suppressing, the Jewish people. They were, they were ruling, over these areas. The Jewish people, were suppressed under them. And, these tax collectors, employed by them, they were, notorious, for overcharging, the people.

If Rome, for example, levied, a 5% tax, on the people, the tax collectors, could charge, an extra 10%, an extra 15%, or really, whatever they wished.

[ 5 : 05 ] And, as a result, the tax collectors, they were guilty of, gross, extortion of the people. They were viewed, as the worst of sinners, at that time.

Now, the Roman, government, didn't really care about that, so long as they got, the 5%, that they, had put in place, as taxes.

Now, irrespective of that, Zacchaeus, was a man of power, because of his position, and his contract, with Rome.

People, probably walked in fear, of this little man. Excuse me. Now, in worldly terms, Zacchaeus, was very wealthy.

But, in spiritual terms, he was a bankrupt sinner, without God, and without hope, at that point. So, what I'd like to do, is, just consider this passage, under three headings.

[ 6 : 15 ] Briefly, we'll consider, the obstacles, that were in, Zacchaeus' way, his meeting, with Jesus, and then, the outcome, of that meeting.

So, let's look at the obstacles, first of all. verse three, we're told, that this man, Zacchaeus, he had a desire.

And, it appears, that, Zacchaeus' power, and position, couldn't, really satisfy him, deep down. It seems, that something, in his life, was missing.

And, then he hears, that Jesus of Nazareth, is passing by, that way, and he decided, that he wants to see him. He's inquisitive.

Which, makes me pause, and ask the question, is there anybody here, who is inquisitive, of Jesus? Because, just as it was, with Zacchaeus, that day, where Jesus, passed by, physically.

[ 7 : 20 ] So, Jesus is passing by, here, today, right now, in this congregation, because, his word has been read, and his word has been considered. He's passing by, in his word here.

And, I just wonder, is there anyone here, who is inquisitive, to see Jesus? So, Zacchaeus was, he was, he had this desire, but there was a problem.

Because, before this man, could get to Jesus, he had to overcome, great obstacles. Because, he is physically, a small man, in stature.

He's not able, to see the road, for the crowds, that have gathered, to see Jesus, passing by. Very similar, in a way, to, Bartimaeus, in the previous passage.

So, we have this, with Zacchaeus as well. And, isn't it amazing, how this crowd, comes up so often. And, it's this crowd, that keeps people, from coming, to Jesus.

[ 8 : 29 ] Jesus. The crowd, still keeps people, from seeing Jesus, today. Because, there are people, who allow, for example, perhaps, their circle of friends, or, some family members, or, some work colleagues, to keep them, from going to Jesus.

Jesus. That still happens, today. And, I know that, from my own, personal experience, because, with, with my circle, of friends, I had at that point, before I came to faith, and, my work colleagues, I had a fear, that I was going to lose them.

I had a fear, I was going to lose my job. I know, what it's like, for the crowds, and I'm quite sure, there are others, in here today, who know, what it's like, for the crowds, or a group of people, who are in the way, and, keeping them back, from seeing Jesus.

And, I hope there's nobody, like that today. If there is, all I can say is, you know, Jesus is more valuable, and, what Jesus offers, is more valuable, than, anything, you can ever have, in this world. And, if you know, today, in here, that you need Jesus, in your life, please, please, please, don't let, anything, or anyone, stand in your way, of going to Jesus.

[ 10 : 07 ] So, we might ask then, what was it, that made this, this man, this powerful man, humble himself, like a little child, to climb a tree, so that he might see, above the clouds.

What was it, that God was so interested, in this man, Jesus? I believe, it was his desperate need, his desperate condition.

And, perhaps, even at that point, Zacchaeus, may not have fully understood, all that was happening, in his heart, and in his life.

That's very possible. But, he still, he's been given, this real desire, to see, Jesus. And so, in verse 4 here, we see, that he makes, a decision, and he's persistent, because, he climbed a tree.

He climbed a tree, to get a glimpse, of the Lord, as Jesus passed by, that day. Whether that tree, was overhanging the road, or to the side of the road, we don't know. But he, he climbed a tree, to be able to see, Jesus passing by.

[ 11 : 24 ] This man, Zacchaeus, he didn't allow, anything, not the cloud, not his condition, to stand, between him, and Jesus. And, this Jesus, he is the only one, who can make, the difference, where, you spend eternity.

He is, the only one, who can save your soul. So, Zacchaeus, he overcame, these obstacles, in the way. And that, leads secondly, to the meeting.

And we're told, that as Jesus, passed the path, the place, where Zacchaeus, was up that tree. Jesus stopped, and began to speak to him, and he called out, to the man, in a way, that resulted, in an eternal, change, in him.

It was life changing, for him. From that moment on, when Jesus, called out to him, Zacchaeus' life, flipped upside down. Totally different, to the way, that he was before.

And there are, particular reasons, for that. And the first one is, it was a personal call, because Jesus, called, Zacchaeus, by his name.

[ 12 : 42 ] He said, Zacchaeus. And, it may well be, that Zacchaeus, would up that tree, and, he would just watch, Jesus go by, and then, climb down again, and go home.

That may well be the case. But, one thing's for sure, he would never, have expected, Jesus, to stop, and to talk to him.

Why did Jesus stop? He stopped, because, he saw, that Zacchaeus, was, a needy, sinner. And, when I ask then, well, how did, Jesus speak, to this man, who was so despised?

Well, he spoke to him, with love. And, he spoke to him, with compassion. He spoke a word, to him. And, it's just like, he's doing, with you here today, with this word.

He's speaking to you. You may not, you may not, take that in properly, today, but he's speaking to you. And, there will be, a decision for you, somewhere along the line.

[ 13 : 56 ] Because, when Jesus calls, a person to come to him, he doesn't issue, a blanket call. When Jesus calls, it's personal, it's one to one.

So, that was the first reason. The second reason was, it was a plain call. It was very clear. Jesus, made it very plain, make haste, and come down. Jesus, told the case, exactly, what he was to do. And, there's no debate, about what was said. There's no need, for second guessing. Jesus, is very clear. And, Jesus, leaves no doubt, about, what he expects, you and me, to do either.

You may not know, how to pray, when you go, before the Lord. But, you certainly know, what your need is. Because, you hear it, week after week.

And, I'm quite sure, you read it, day after day. If you haven't come, to faith in Jesus, you need Jesus, in your life. And, you know that Jesus, is your only hope.

[ 15 : 08 ] And, you know that, following him, is the only way, for salvation. Because, Jesus tells us, in John's gospel, I am the way, and I am the truth, and I am the life. And, nobody comes to the Father, except, through me.

This obedience, is critical. So, secondly, it was a plain call. Thirdly then, it was a call of promise. You see, Jesus promised, much more, than a casual meeting, under a tree.

Jesus said here, he says, I must stay, at your house today, Zacchaeus. And, what he's effectively, saying to him, is, that, it may well be, that, none of your neighbours, will, go to your home, with you. It may well be, that no one in this town, will have anything, to do with you, Zacchaeus. But, I, the Lord of glory, am coming, to your house, today.

what a promise, that is. What a beautiful promise. And, it applies, to every one, of God's people, because, when we're saved, our relationship, it isn't confined, to the church building, because, Jesus comes home, with us, doesn't he?

[ 16 : 33 ] In fact, he comes, everywhere with us, from that moment, onwards. He comes, and he never leaves us, his Holy Spirit, comes, to dwell within, each one of his people.

And, when he comes in, he changes everything, just as it was, for, I say, Zacchaeus' life, that day, where, it was turned upside down, so it is, for every believer.

He makes, everything different, he makes, everything better, and he makes, everything new, because, they are born again.

So then, fourthly, we see here, it was also, an urgent call. Make haste, he tells Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down, hurry up, come down.

And that call of the gospel, is still as urgent today, as it was then, and it always will be. Because, the Lord may come, or death may come, and all I plead with you is, please don't play around with salvation.

[ 17 : 52 ] Come to Jesus, now. Now is the time. Not tomorrow. Not next week. Not another time, when you might find it, more convenient, as I say.

But please, come now. Because this is, an urgent call. And fifthly, it was an unmistakable call. Because Zacchaeus knew, that the Lord was looking for something more, than just, a place to visit, for that day.

Jesus was, and is, interested, in one thing. He is after our heart. He wants all of us.

And he wants everyone, to be saved, by his grace, and power. And that's, re-iterated for us, so beautifully, in John 3, 16. For God, so loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whoever, will believe in him, should not perish, but have, everlasting life.

So we see here then, that Jesus truly is, the seeking, saviour. As we have it, in verse 5. Jesus came, to Zacchaeus.

[ 19 : 06 ] And this is how, it always comes about. Jesus comes, to us, and offers salvation, through himself. Just like we have, here today, this offer of the gospel, before you, once again.

When Jesus, stopped, under that tree, that day, he knew everything, there was to know, about Zacchaeus. And yet, he still loved him.

And he had compassion, on him. And, you may not realise, this today. But, Jesus knows, everything there is, to know, about every one, of us as well.

Isn't that amazing? And yet, he still loves you. Despite the faults, despite the flaws, despite, whatever may have been, in your life, he still loves you.

And he will save you, by his grace as well, if you will obey. Just as we sang, in Psalm 139, he even knows, the thought, in our minds, before we think them.

[ 20 : 11 ] How awesome is that? I doubt finite minds, cannot grasp that, can we? But we are assured of that, from his word. And so, Jesus calls Zacchaeus. Jesus, on the way to Jerusalem, where he is to die, on the cross, for the sins, of his people.

But he still has his time, to reach out, and to stop, by this man, Zacchaeus. Who was Zacchaeus, that Jesus should care for him?

He was a sinner. He was a sinner. Yet the Lord loved him, just like he loves you and me, because every soul, is precious to him.

You see, when Zacchaeus, climbed up into that tree, that day, he was a lost sinner. But by the time, he got back to the ground, I believe he was a child of God.

I believe that God, had worked in him, by the time he came down. Because God didn't send his son, into the world, to condemn the world. But that the world, through him, might be saved.

[ 21 : 18 ] So there we have, all of these reasons, with Zacchaeus, and, the call to Zacchaeus. The outcome, of all of this, is just as marvellous.

Zacchaeus is a new man, and, notice what happened, in his life here. It's really important. He received Christ. He was saved by grace, and grace is what happens.

Jesus gives us his grace. That's what happens, immediately, when we're brought to faith. And it's by that grace, that we are given faith, to believe, in him.

Zacchaeus received Christ, he was saved by grace. Firstly, then, so important, he obeyed the call. He obeyed the call, of Jesus. Zacchaeus did exactly, what Jesus told him to do.

He made haste, and he came down. And, perhaps this verse, is summarized, very well, in, in Revelation, chapter 3, and verse 20, where, we're told there, behold, I stand at the door, and knock, and if anyone hears, my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and eat with him, and he, with me.

[ 22 : 46 ] Zacchaeus, the door to Zacchaeus' heart, was opened, and he received Jesus, by grace, and he came down. He obeyed with an open heart, he freely gave himself, to Jesus.

And, you can never be saved, until, you open the door, of your heart, and allow Jesus, into, your life. Zacchaeus received Jesus, into his heart, joyfully, we're told.

It was joyfully, she received Jesus, and what joy, there must have been, that day. He had heard the claims, he had heard the call, and now Zacchaeus, has made that commitment.

It's almost as if, he has gone, this extra mile, if you like, and he's made, that commitment, to Jesus. He's obeyed, Jesus' voice. He's, he's moved, towards Jesus, and, he's made, that commitment.

And that's key. That's a decisive factor. And, Jesus so, wants you, to respond, in exactly, the same way, today as well, to be saved.

[ 24 : 01 ] You also, need to come down, from the place, wherever you are, wherever you are, you need to come down, from the place, where you are, and you need to commit, to Jesus.

And that place, could be anywhere. That place, could be, even the material things, you have in this world. Would you worship, in this world? Would you look at, in this world?

And it's almost like, you're putting yourself up, to, to, to, just hold on, to these things. You need to come down. And it's got to be downwards, to come to Jesus.

Because, the ultimate downwards, of coming to Jesus, is bowing the knee, before him. We have to come down, from where we are, to Jesus, to answer the call, and to commit to him.

The Bible's, crystal clear. It's only by faith, in Jesus, that you can enter, into a saving, relationship, with the Father.

[ 25 : 04 ] So he obeyed the call. Secondly, he demonstrated, a change. And it doesn't take long, for the new Zacchaeus, to appear. And he makes, a really bold promise, doesn't he?

So different, to the rich ruler. He makes, a bold promise, to give away, half his fortune, and not just that, but to restore, fourfold, to anyone, he has taken, anything from, under false pretenses.

There's the new man, for you. There's the new creation. And that new creation, is in, Christ Jesus. What a contrast, to the way he was before.

And I just wonder, I wonder, where Zacchaeus's ears, actually shocked, to hear, what he was saying, right there and then.

Because what he is doing, is, he is publicly, renouncing, his old life of sin. That's gone. That's by and by. And now, he is embracing, this new life of faith, in Jesus Christ.

[ 26 : 13 ] Christ. And so wonderful, so lovely, to have that, and to see that, and to, to experience that. Zacchaeus displayed, the kind of change, that Jesus makes, in the lives of everyone.

He saves. You see, when Jesus comes, into a person's life, they will never be, the same again. They cannot be, the same again. It's impossible, for them to be, the same again.

And, when we see, verses seven and eight here, because of this change, Zacchaeus' life, was just turned on its head, in a marvelous way.

And there are two, absolute proofs of salvation, that are needed, both in Zacchaeus' life, and in ours as well. There was confession. He confessed, he was a sinner, he confessed, he had done wrong, and there was repentance.

He turned, from his old ways, and, he promised, to restore fourfold, anyone he had done wrong. So there was confession, of that he was a sinner, and there was repentance, and that repentance, is a turning, towards Jesus.

[ 27 : 27 ] And until you come, to the place, where you are willing, to call out to God, confess your sins, and turn your life, around toward Jesus, you will never be saved. That's what's required.

confession, and repentance, and the grace of God, in your life. So he obeyed the call, and he demonstrated, that change.

Thirdly, he received confirmation, and we have that, in verses 9 and 10 here. He knew he was different, but it was confirmed, by Jesus' words. And it's always confirmed, by the word of Jesus. Our salvation, is always confirmed, by the word. Nothing else matters, except the word, confirming, our salvation.

And Jesus, told Zacchaeus, he was a saved man, he was a new man, in the Lord, and Jesus went home, with him. And, you know, it's marvelous, he declares him to be, a son of Abraham.

[ 28 : 29 ] That is, that is, a, a, a holy title. Just as the woman, with issue of blood, when she was healed, and by, because of her faith, Jesus, said to her, you are a daughter, of Abraham.

So it is, with, every one of God's people, they are either sons, or daughters, of Abraham, because Abraham is, the father of the faith. We are children of God, and sons, or daughters, of Abraham, in that line.

Now Jesus, closes his remarks, with a clear mission statement, and he says, for the son of man, has come to seek, and to save the lost.

And he said that, to everyone who was there, and he's saying it, to every one of us, here today. And here you see, the love of God, in Christ Jesus, displayed in a truly, marvelous way.

You don't have to, climb a tree, to, to, to meet Jesus. What you have, to do, is respond to his call, and to go to him, right now. Zacchaeus, wasn't saved, because, because he promised, to do good works.

[ 29 : 50 ] He was saved, because, he responded, by faith, in Jesus. And Jesus, will save you, regardless, who you are, of who you are, and regardless, of what you have been, or what you have done.

when a day begins, you know, you just never know, how it's going to end. For Zacchaeus, that day ended, in joyful fellowship, with Jesus, because, he was now, a new man, with a new life, and a new direction.

Zacchaeus, looked for Jesus, and, he got closer to him, than he could have, ever hoped for. And the Bible, says very clearly, that if you seek him, you seek Jesus, truly seek him, then you will find him.

For the son of man, has come, to seek, and to save, the lost. May he bless, these thoughts to us, may he bless, his word to us.

Well, let's close, with a further singing, and we'll close, with singing, in Psalm 130, and sing Psalms, that's on page, 173, of the Blue Psalm books.

[ 31 : 11 ] Page, 173, of the Blue Psalm books. Psalm 130, we'll sing, the whole of this psalm, Lord, from the depths, I call to you, Lord, hear me from on high, and give attention, to my voice, when I, for mercy, cry.

Sing the whole of the psalm, to God's praise. Amen. Lord, from the depths, I call to you, Lord, hear me, from on high, and give attention, to my voice, when I, for mercy, cry.

Lord, in your presence, you can stand, if you are sins record, but yet forgiveness is with you, that we may fear you, Lord.

I wait my soul wait for the Lord, my hope is in his word, more than the watchman waits for dawn, my soul waits for the Lord.

O Israel, put your hope in God, for mercy is with them, and full redemption from their sins, his people yield, redeem.

[ 34 : 14 ] Can I just say, please, the hall next door is open for tea and coffee, please come through, you're very welcome to come in, and share a time with us there just now, and after the benediction, I'll go to the door to my left side here.

So now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, rest upon, and abide with each one of you now, and always.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.