

Jesus and Zaccheus

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[0 : 0 0] And the first ten verses of this chapter, Luke chapter 19, verses 1 to 10. The major part of Luke's Gospel from chapter 9 through to chapter 19 here, from chapter 9, verse 51, through here to chapter 19 and verse 44, is taken up with the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem.

And Luke deliberately structures his Gospel so that that forms one of the major pieces in the structure of the Gospel, a description of this journey and the things that happened as Jesus was traveling all the way through to Jerusalem, where in chapter 19 here you find him finally arriving at the temple.

And through the various stages of that journey, he is teaching the disciples, though they're not able yet to take it in, of how necessary it is for him to go to Jerusalem and to actually be there examined and mistreated and eventually put to death.

And as you find here, he still has around about 23 miles or so to go, because the city of Jericho was about that distance from Jerusalem.

So he is well on the way, but he still has this bit of the journey left to go. And Luke gives us, again, a really interesting episode that took place at this particular stage in his journey.

[1 : 3 9] So Luke is really keeping us focused on Christ's journey to Jerusalem and the way in which his own ministry was carried out on that journey towards different types of people and, of course, finally culminating in his own death on the cross.

And as you come to this passage here, dealing with Zacchaeus, this is one of the best-known events, of course, in the Gospels, I'm sure.

And as Luke sets it out for us, we're reminded of something he actually said, wrote back in chapter 18, where chapter 18 and verses 25 to 27, where, again, Jesus, responding to the rich ruler, said, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person or rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Those who heard it said, then who can be saved? But he said, what is impossible with men is possible with God. He's the God of the impossible, if we can put it that way.

And that's what you find happening here. Here's something that's more difficult than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Here's a rich man entering into the kingdom of God.

[3 : 0 1] Let's look at three things. First of all, in verses 1 to 4, we'll see the man Zacchaeus was. And then in verses 5 to 7, we'll see the moment Zacchaeus was changed.

And thirdly, verses 8 to 10, we'll see there the man Zacchaeus had become. So the man he was, the moment he was changed, and the man that he had become after this meeting with Jesus.

And this is the next, really, as you realize, the next of our studies in conversions that you find described in the Bible. We've been in the New Testament, back in the Old Testament, now we're back in the New Testament with Zacchaeus.

So let's look firstly at the man Zacchaeus was, verses 1 to 4. It's a very brief but very telling description. There was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector, and he was rich, and he 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. He was a rich man. He was a chief tax collector.

[4 : 12] Not just a tax collector, but a chief tax collector. He would have been in charge of the tax collectors in that particular area of Jericho. And Jericho, being the very busy place it was, situated near certain trade routes that people took constantly back and forth from different places, it was very much part of that sort of route where people carried a lot of commercial goods.

It was near an area where there were certain trees that bore fruit, olive trees and so on, and all of that would have been taxed. And Zacchaeus had made a very good life for himself from being a tax collector and now being a chief tax collector.

And tax collectors were hated in the days of Jesus in Israel. I don't suppose tax collectors are still very popular, but you don't usually meet them on the road.

Here is a man who is really despised in his community because especially, as it was very often the case, as a Jew, as Zacchaeus was, he would have been seen as a collaborator with the hated Romans because he was collecting the taxes from his fellow Jews for these Romans.

And as he raked in the taxes, the chief tax collector especially had the ability to actually go that little bit extra and impose additional taxes and extort some more money from people.

[5 : 43] And it was not at all uncommon to have tax collectors and chief tax collectors as quite corrupt people and people who really made far more financial gain from their position than was warranted.

And you can understand in verse 7 there why it says that the people actually grumbled when they saw Zacchaeus going to be received by Jesus or Jesus being received by Zacchaeus into his home because their grumble was, this Jesus is going to be the guest of a man who is a sinner, a despised sinner at that.

That's where we begin. Very few people, if any, would have said on hearing the conversion of Zacchaeus, they would have, very few people have said, oh, he's a very nice guy, Zacchaeus.

He actually deserved something good in his life. They would have said the very opposite. But he's interested in Jesus. And you see, that reminds us, whatever a person is like in whatever background they have and however they've been living their lives, here is a man that you would not expect to be interested in Jesus, yet he is.

And again, it reminds us, as we've seen at other times in these studies and elsewhere, that we cannot actually judge a person by outward appearances, by what their situation in life is presently like, by what their life is about, even if their life is being wasted at the present time.

[7 : 17] Here's a man who is hated publicly, but is interested in Jesus. He is not yet a disciple of Jesus. He's not yet a converted, saved man.

But he has such an interest in Jesus that he wants to see him who he is. He's obviously heard a lot about him. There's been a great commotion as Jesus has made his way on this journey, accompanied by his disciples and a crowd of people.

It would be impossible virtually not to hear something about him and not to know that something significant or important was actually going on. So he's curious. He wants to see this Jesus.

So what does he do? He does something rather undignified for a man who's a chief tax collector. He runs quickly ahead of the crowd and he scrambles up a sycamore tree.

He has that intensity of interest and curiosity about Jesus that this, in fact, is what he does.

[8 : 20] And many people find their spiritual journey beginning there, a curiousness, an interest, a wanting to find out more about this Jesus because one of the things that Luke is presenting to us again and again in the gospel is the uniqueness of this Christ.

It is the character of this Christ. It is the person of this Christ that he is unlike anybody else, even though he is indeed a very real human being, but he's different to other human beings.

He's the son of man. He's the son of God. And Zacchaeus represents for us that interest in Jesus that may be your own interest tonight and my interest too.

At least it ought to be at least that. A curiosity and an interest in this Christ. Because, you see, what Luke is doing is saying, this Jesus draws your attention to him, doesn't he?

He doesn't allow you to think of him as just an ordinary human being. And when you read the gospel of Luke and your Bible and you come across this Jesus and the passages of the Bible lead you in some way to this Jesus, you realize that you're dealing with someone who is absolutely unique.

[9 : 39] Someone that your life is related to one way or the other, whatever we think of him and however much we want to think or not think of that relationship. Christ draws our attention to him.

The gospel draws our attention to this Jesus. You just cannot escape from an interest in some degree or other in this Christ. And maybe, indeed, you've come together here tonight, maybe some of you tonight here, have this interest in Jesus without having yet progressed to a deeper commitment to him, a trusting in him, a taking him, as we'll see Zacchaeus did, and receiving him actually into your life as your own Savior personally.

But your interest in Jesus is an interest that's brought you here tonight. And just as Zacchaeus was interested and climbed up into the sycamore tree, so you have taken up a position tonight in this church that shows that you have an interest in this Jesus too, that you want to know what he's about, that you want to further your interest in him by coming to see what he can do for you as well.

And so, you find yourself in a similar situation to Zacchaeus. And one of the great things about the Bible is that it gives us many, many opportunities in the descriptions it gives us of certain events to put ourselves where the likes of Zacchaeus is, to put ourselves in that sycamore tree tonight.

Because in the gospel, Jesus is walking by in this audience tonight. As surely as he was passing by that sycamore tree with Zacchaeus having climbed up into it for a vantage point, so in the gospel, so the gospel message is saying to you and it's saying to me, the Savior tonight is passing by your life.

[11 : 53] And he's passing by to life in such a way as draws your attention and your interest to him. So that you also and I will come to receive Jesus as Zacchaeus did.

through his own call in the gospel to receive him into our lives too. The man Zacchaeus was.

That's his station in life, but looking into his soul, into his mind, he has this interest in Jesus. It doesn't matter who you are tonight. It doesn't matter what your life has been.

It doesn't matter what your life is now. It doesn't matter whether you're new to church or have been coming for years. It doesn't really matter from this point of view particularly that your interest and your benefit is in Jesus Christ.

This Christ who has come to seek and save the lost. That's you and I. That's all of us. Let's look secondly at the moment Zacchaeus was changed.

[13 : 04] There's a few interesting and significant details in that as well. The moment Zacchaeus was changed, verses 5 to 7. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, hurry and come down.

The first thing of interest there is that Jesus actually stopped at that precise spot, looked up to Zacchaeus in this particular sycamore tree. There would have been many along the way.

Sycamore trees grew very often along these ways, these routes that people walked on. And this particular sycamore tree is of interest to Jesus because there's a man in that tree that at that very moment he is going to actually save.

And what is that telling us tonight about Christ? Well, it tells us that he knows the exact situation of your life and of my life as he looked up into this tree and knew who this man was and knew what his need was.

So he's looking up into your life and looking into it and turning it over in his mind as only he can and assuring you and assuring me that as he knew Zacchaeus so well he knows you equally well and he knows you like no other.

[14 : 21] Nobody else can look into your life and my life and actually detect there the thoughts of our mind the feelings of our heart the pulse that runs through our life the needs that we have as individuals our relationship with himself every single facet of our need as Zacchaeus represented is actually before us here in this Jesus.

Now that sometimes might make us feel uncomfortable and in fact there's certainly a degree to which it should because you cannot have God looking into your life and just leave you feeling comfortable that everything's alright because when Jesus looks into your life you know that he's seeing the things that are wrong in your life the sin in your life the bias of your soul the things that are still needing to be mended within you he's looking at all of that and it doesn't make you feel comfortable and the gospel is not meant to make you feel comfortable at least not to begin with just like a skilled surgeon has to deal with certain growths or whatever that need to be taken out of our bodies and there's an element of pain involved until the process is over and until we are mended again that's what you're like spiritually as well when Jesus lays his hand on us when his eye looks into your life and into your eyes and when you realize the Lord is looking into my life tonight that doesn't make you sit easy at least it shouldn't but on the other hand what an amazing comfort it is to know that there is nothing whatsoever of your need that escapes his notice you're not going to have to come back to

Christ and say Lord you didn't actually notice this particular aspect of my need so you need to go over my life again the Lord looked up at Zacchaeus he knew exactly who he was he knew exactly what his need was and so he's doing so with your need and my need tonight however great it is however varied it is however deep it is he's got it all within his grasp within his knowledge within his ability to deal with it whether you're a Christian or not yet a Christian whether you're just still at the early stage of interest or whether you've been following him for years here is something that comes to reassure your heart that all will be well with your soul when it's in the hand of this Jesus and it tells us too that Christ as he dealt with Zacchaeus he dealt with him in such a very personal way he called him by name he said

Zacchaeus hurry up and come down and that's also how he's addressing yourself and myself tonight you know he's speaking to you not to somebody else instead of you not to the person beside you but to you directly and to you because of his interest in you in the gospel he has sent you this gospel tonight you're here as he's passing by and he's looking up into your circumstances into your person he knows you by name he knows the very detail of your life and this really assures us that this man Zacchaeus whom he called by name is a lesson to you and to me whatever your name is tonight whatever your circumstances in life are Jesus is directly having his business with you and that means it needs as we'll see a personal response on our part but you notice what he's saying too when

Jesus spoke to him and used his name he's saying today Zacchaeus make haste hurry today I must stay at your house and you notice that must he didn't say to Zacchaeus Zacchaeus I'd really like it if you could receive me into your house I'd really like to share a meal with you today if you're up for it he didn't say could I do it he didn't actually suggest that he was hoping to do it he's saying Zacchaeus today I must he's in charge of the journey you see that's what Luke is telling us every single event on this journey that Jesus is taking to Jerusalem it's he who's in charge of it it's he who's controlling it it's not his disciples it's not the crowd around him it's not the religious authorities it's not the people in the temple it is this Christ and as he's in charge of his journey he's in charge of every event of the journey he's in charge of this man's life and this man's needs and this is why he's saying to him

[19 : 56] Zacchaeus I must today abide at your house you see when Jesus speaks to you he doesn't leave you with the kind of false impression that somehow or other he'd like to do something for you but it's only really if you are yourself willing to do it or it's really just a case of him wanting to do something but not quite able to do it for you this is the Lord this is the Lord who says I must it's an imperative he's insisting on it and when he draws near to look into your eyes and your face in the gospel you're aware of that imperative of that authority of that governorship of your life and of all things to do with it that's really what he's saying to us tonight as well you today

I must deal with you with your life and that's where the word today also comes in today Zacchaeus I must come to your house he didn't say to Zacchaeus I'd like to do it when you've got time could I come back next week no he said to him today Zacchaeus right here now I must come to your house I must stay at your house today where do you find in the Bible anything other than today when you think about the need to be saved when you think about a relationship with Jesus Christ where do you find in the Bible anything to suggest that we should conclude if we're hearing the voice of Christ tonight if he's looking into your life he's addressing you by name if you know that he's speaking directly to you then you know he's not going to say tomorrow

I must stay at your house because tomorrow I might be dead and tomorrow even if I'm not dead Jesus may not pass the way he's passing before me now and that's why you have to note and I have to note this not just authority but this note of urgency in the voice of this Christ in the gospel today tonight if Jesus the Jesus you're interested in if he is worth having as a saviour and I'm sure everybody here will say yes of course he's worth having as a saviour well he's worth having here and now isn't he why would anyone say about this Christ he really is worth having as a saviour but it's not the right time for me why is it not why is it not the right time to be saved why is it not the right time to come and receive him today into your life you don't have to answer that for me

I'm just a minister I'm not asking the question I'm not looking into your mind I'm not addressing you authoritatively in the gospel he is and your response and my response has to be to him friends it's far too important an issue to delay our salvation and if you're not yet safe in Christ here's your great opportunity Christ is passing by you in the gospel his very person is there he's speaking to you through his spirit and he's looking to your response to the word today please don't send him away and say I'll do it tomorrow and look at

Zacchaeus in his response first of all he came down hurriedly he hurried and came down and received him joyfully he hurried he actually responded exactly as Jesus had put it to him and isn't that important as well Jesus said to him hurry and come down and the next thing you read is he hurried and came down he responded exactly as Christ himself had required of him is that not how you and I want to respond as well in whatever it is Christ is addressing us for and whatever it is he's calling us to do for him whether it's to receive him as a saviour or to go and take further steps in serving him he will not want us to delay in that and our response has to be in terms that correspond to the insistence that he has on our doing it hurriedly and now and without delay and you see he came down and received him joyfully now isn't this interesting here is

[25 : 39] Jesus who's lord of the journey who's lord of this man's life who's showing this man that he has complete mastery and control of the situation and of his place in it and of this man's place in it as well and yet what he is saying is you must receive me into your house you think this is the wrong way round wouldn't you that Christ being who he is is going to be the host in that house that Zacchaeus is going to be the guest but that's not how it's put he made haste he hurried and came down and received him joyfully he received him as his guest into his home and that is hugely important in our understanding of salvation and conversion and what it is to be savingly related to and united to Christ Christ comes past us in the gospel he addresses us in the gospel he does what the catechism calls presenting himself to us in the gospel and he presents him to us as

Lord as one who is himself the master of our situation and life and yet we receive him we welcome him we reach out and take him in as Zacchaeus took him into his home we reach out and take him into our lives and not only that but he did it joyfully he received him joyfully there's no reluctance on the part of this Zacchaeus he is not saying well I better do it seeing he saying he is saying he is requiring it of me saying this is his command I better do it I better just comply he is doing it because he is just welcoming this Jesus gladly into his life and maybe sometimes we listen to those voices and to those opinions in society that tell us that the

Christian life is one that is very dull that is very restrictive that is really very damaging to human potential and all of that sort of stuff just look at these words he made haste and he came down and he received him joyfully how appropriate that word joyful is in the circumstances what else would you expect it to be but receiving him joyfully he's receiving a saviour he's receiving somebody who's going to look after his life forever more he's receiving one who's going to cover all his sins from his sight he's receiving someone who's going to restore him to a right relationship with God he's receiving somebody who's going to keep him safe when it comes to meeting God and his judgment of course he received him joyfully it's a mark of those who appreciate who Jesus is and what he's done for them that they rejoice to receive him that they're glad to welcome him to open their heart and life to him but not everybody is the people grumbled indeed it says they all grumbled when they saw it he has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner that brings us to the third point briefly the man

Zacchaeus had become verses 8 and 10 because there's a deliberate contrast here it says as we've read in verse 8 when they saw but they all grumbled he has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner but in the beginning of verse 8 that really should be the word but instead of and it would be better translating it with the word but and when you put that together you can see that Zacchaeus is a really great contrast to that grumbling crowd that are grumbling about him receiving Jesus into his house and that Christ has gone in to be the guest of this man who is a sinner the grumbling is really towards Jesus not towards Zacchaeus as much as Jesus himself but just read it through with that but he has gone in to be the guest they all grumbled but Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord he's a glorious contrast to a grumbling crowd because he is a glad saved sinner that's the proper response isn't it to the way that

Jesus is passing by and to what Jesus said to him but Zacchaeus look at what he's like he stood and said behold Lord half of my goods I give to the poor and if I defrauded anyone of anything I restored it fourfold how do you know Zacchaeus was converted because you see his heart coming through in the confession he's making to Jesus you wouldn't find a chief tax collector coming to say such a thing and to commit himself to such a thing a man who had made himself rich on the pigings that he had gathered over the years using all the force and the power that he had to actually extort money from many many people you would not find such a man coming to say Lord if I have defrauded anyone of anything I restore it fourfold and I give half my goods to the poor it's beyond what the law strictly required why is he doing it because his heart has been made new and because his heart has heart for the poor so are the practical issues of life for him we're not

[32 : 04] Christians just because we go to church we're not disciples of Jesus just because we have a formal confession or go to the communion table great all of these things are we give testimony that we are disciples of Christ because outwardly as well as inwardly we live a changed life we live a life that shows this Jesus to the world that sees us and as we do so people can see well whatever else I can say I cannot deny that that person that man that woman that boy that girl belongs to Jesus and has Jesus welcome in their lives and so he hears this wonderful statement from Christ himself Jesus said to him today salvation has come to this house since he also is a son of

Abraham for the son of man came to seek and to save the lost you see Jesus didn't just save this man as an individual he assured this man now that he was saved that he is indeed a recipient of the blessings and the promises that God gave in covenant to his people he also is a son of Abraham whatever his life had been whatever people thought of him even now here is something that overcomes all of that and that assures this man it doesn't really matter what people say of me in this sense I know that I am a son of God that I am someone with an inheritance and you know this is really saying pretty much this to us that for all the riches the money that Zacchaeus had gathered together over the years he's now got something far far more precious and valuable he's got an inheritance as a son of

God he's a son of Abraham he's entered into real possession of that inheritance that's awaiting him in heaven for said Jesus the son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost or the lost an interest in Christ a change in a moment in Zacchaeus' life evidence of that change in the way he spoke and then an assurance from this crisis all there and all that can be yours and is yours if you're in Christ Zacchaeus was a little man physically in stature he couldn't see over the crowd that's why he went to the sycamore tree but this was a big big day for a little man the day that

Jesus changed his life let's pray Lord our God we give thanks as we come to this gospel message that you have sent to us in your word that you are the Lord of life that you are the one who is in control of our destiny that you are the one who meets with us in the gospel that the same Christ who met Zacchaeus is meeting with us tonight here in this building Lord we marvel at this for we know that it is in your patience and long suffering that you have dealt with us thus far if we have not known you savingly till now bless your people also as they once again have experienced you passing by in the gospel nourish their hearts we pray strengthen their faith and give them to wonder anew at this great relationship that you have brought them into as being children of God with a glorious inheritance here as we pray for your glorious sake

Amen let's sing now in conclusion from Psalm 106 Psalm 106 this time in the traditional Scottish Psalter version that's on page 378 give praise and thanks unto the Lord for bountiful is he as tender mercy doth endure unto eternity God's mighty works who can express or show forth all his praise blessed are they that judgment keep and justly do always and then note these verses especially remember me Lord with that love which thou to thine despair with thy salvation O my God to visit me draw near that I thy chosen's good may see and in their joy rejoice and may with thine inheritance triumph with cheerful voice let's sing these verses both with praise and prayerfully to God's praise praise and thanks unto the

[37 : 50] Lord for bountiful is he this tender mercy he doth and you unto eternity what mighty works to none express for show for calm his praise blessed are they that judgment keep and justly do always remember me Lord with that love which thou need to mind us bear with thy salvation

O my God who missed and feed on here that I thy chosen's good may see and in their joy rejoice and may with thy imperatives and triumph with cheerful voice I'll go to the main door after the benediction and now may the grace of the lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and evermore amen going.

As talking to things, for the Bye exceptions and future M com J what a time i to chuy att party i