

Becoming like Jesus by being concerned for the Lost

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Date: 29 October 2023

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Grab the first slide up, Josh, please. We're at the final session, I believe, of Vision Month this month.

I think for the next few weeks, on my sheet of paper anyway, it said Preacher's Choice, which sounds to beer drinkers like a really nice real ale, you know. Yes, landlord, I'll have a pint of Preacher's Choice, please.

It really sounds like a nice pint of English ale. But this is the last of the Vision Month, which we're looking at becoming like Jesus by being concerned for the lost.

And we're going to begin by reading from Luke's Gospel, chapter 19 and verses 1 to 10. And it's the story of Zacchaeus, who was a very small man by all accounts.

And it reminded me of a story that Anne told me of a cousin of hers. And his mother used to say to him, apparently, when he was growing up, Do you know, if you were just a little bit bigger, you'd be such a good-looking man.

[1 : 02] What a really nice thing to say, isn't it, really? But we'll see, I hope, that Jesus doesn't treat Zacchaeus like that. So 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 being a short man, he could not because of the crowd.

So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. 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's 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, and if I've cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.

[2 : 06] 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 what was lost.

Next slide, please, Josh. So I just want us to look briefly at three things this morning. Jesus as our role model, as a role model for concern for the lost.

How do we develop a concern for the lost? And what can we learn from the story of the lost man, Zacchaeus? So next slide, please, Josh.

There's a number of stories in the Gospels that we're all, or many of us, most of us are aware of, that highlight Jesus' concern for the lost.

But I want to take this one, which is the parable of the lost coin, from Luke's Gospel, chapter 15. And it says, Next slide, Josh, please.

[3 : 29] So, Jesus tells these parables, the lost sheep, the lost son, the lost coin, to highlight his concern for the lost.

Now, the lost coin, the woman with the lost coin, I understand that often women would wear coins around their necks, as a symbol of their marriage. And so, if this woman had lost a coin, it was really something quite important, and it would be financially and probably socially embarrassing if she didn't find it.

So, she looked carefully for it. She looked everywhere for it. And I'm sure we've all been in that situation, where we've lost something or dropped something. You know, we've been cleaning up or Hoovering or whatever we've been doing, and we've lost something, and we look for it carefully.

We don't just sort of, you know, look around and say, Oh, well, it's gone. You know, that's it. It's too bad. If it's something valuable, we look carefully for it. We search for it. Move the furniture out the way.

We check what's in the Hoover sometimes. You know, rumble in among the dust, which is a lovely thing to do. But you want to find the valuable thing.

[4 : 42] So, she searched carefully. She did whatever it takes. Whatever it took. She wanted to do whatever it took to find that coin again, because it was so valuable to her.

And God does whatever it takes. God does whatever it takes to find us when we're lost. If we're lost, God just doesn't sit there and go, Oh, well, you know, he can find his own way out of this.

He can do it in his own strength. No, God doesn't do that. God searches for us. God wants to find us. He doesn't leave us to ourselves.

He searches carefully, diligently, because we're valuable to Him. And that's an amazing thing, isn't it? That we are valuable to God. But we are.

We're valuable. And so, God searches diligently. And the woman found the coin. She found the coin, and then she didn't just sort of say, Oh, well, that's great.

[5 : 44] I'll put it back on my necklace, or wherever she kept it. No, she decided she'd have a party. Throw a party. You know, this is something worth celebrating. I've lost this coin.

It's so valuable to me. I've found it again. I'm going to call on my friends to come, and we'll have a get-together and a party, and just celebrate that something that I'd lost, that was valuable, has been found.

And in the Gospel, it's compared to the joy of angels, at one sinner who repents. Can you imagine that? You know, it's amazing, isn't it?

It's absolutely amazing, that when one of us repents, the singing of the angels in heaven, one sinner who repents.

And that's like the one with the party. So in heaven, they have a party to celebrate when a sinner repents, and comes to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Next slide, please, Josh.

[6 : 44] But the Pharisees couldn't celebrate. They just couldn't celebrate, because the woman, Zacchaeus and the woman, they're unworthy. They're not worthy.

They're not the right social class. They're not in the right position. And Jesus swept that away. He said, no. I'm here for the lost, for the poor, for the brokenhearted, for the sick, the deaf, the lame, the blind, those who cannot see, who need to see.

I'm here for the lost. And Jesus broke all the conventions by being concerned for the lost, and for the poor, and for the destitute. He's not proclaiming good news to the religious leader, but to the poor, the vulnerable, the outcast.

And the huge change that is brought about by repentance is a reason for celebration. That huge change that's brought about when somebody repents is a cause for celebration.

You know, sometimes we can, sadly, we can all be cynical about things. You know, we don't have to watch much on the news, or hear politicians talking sometimes, or read what they say to become very cynical.

[8 : 03] But please, let's not be cynical when it comes to celebrating when a sinner is saved. It's such a joy and such a delight. And then, you know, we've seen it here recently followed by baptism.

What a joy and a delight. Even on the coldest day in summer in Christendom, I think, that we were all stood there somewhere in the sea baptizing. You know, it was still a joy.

It was still a joy despite it all, despite everything. And if people are here who haven't heard that story, please ask somebody in the church because it was a very, very cold night in June.

Sounds like a film title, doesn't it? A very, very cold night in June. Next slide, please, Josh. So, how do we develop a heart for the lost?

Well, I was looking, when I was looking at what to speak about this morning, I came across something that was written by John Piper, the theologian and pastor and scholar.

[9 : 06] And I thought, I was reading through it and I thought, well, yes, I certainly can't do any better than that. So, really, this is based on the five things that he said about developing a heart for the lost.

And I put it like this, never forget where the lost are going. Matthew 25, 46 says, then they, this is the unrighteous, this is the goats, and if you remember, I preached on the sheep and the goats a few weeks ago, then they will go away to eternal punishment.

So, never forget where the lost are going. They're going to eternal punishment. As we said, when I was, as I said, when I was speaking a few weeks ago, there's no annihilationism.

You don't just disappear. It doesn't just end. If you are unrighteous or a goat or you're not saved, you don't know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then you are going to eternal punishment.

And that's where the lost are going. And we need to have a heart for that. To be concerned and to have a heart for the lost. In what we say and what we do, how we live our lives, we have to show that compassion for the lost.

[10 : 23] Never forget what God did for us for the lost through the death of Jesus. In Acts 4 and 12 it says, Salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

There is no other name under heaven than Jesus. Jesus came. Jesus lived amongst us. Jesus died for us. Jesus was raised from the dead.

And Jesus will save us. If you're lost, Jesus will save you. For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, shall not go into eternal punishment, but shall have everlasting life.

You become a sheep. And you're rejoicing about that. never forget the power of the Holy Spirit to draw the lost to God.

In John chapter 16 it says, Unless I go away, the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, will not come to you. But if I go, I will send Him to you.

[11 : 32] When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. the power of the Holy Spirit. It's a remarkable thing, I think, for many of us could give the testimony here of when we became a Christian, how we found out then how many people were praying for us, how the Holy Spirit had been moving in our lives before we made that commitment.

You know, I know, I remember, I've said this before, how I was sitting, it was just before Mission England began back in 1984. and so the services and the sermons were very evangelical, were very, there was a call at the end of each service to come forward, anybody who wanted to come forward.

And I was literally gripping my seat, literally physically gripping my seat to stop myself getting up and going forward. And that was the Holy Spirit moving in me.

It was the prayers of people to ask for the Holy Spirit to move in me and convict me of my sin and to go forward and repent and to ask Jesus into my life.

And that happened a few days later, I'm very glad to say. Never forget the joy we feel when a lost person is converted.

[12 : 52] In the third letter of John it says, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. Just touched on that a little while ago. The joy of seeing somebody converted, that you've been praying for or that you know about or that you hear about.

It's amazing. The joy that you just feel leap in your heart, isn't it? It's absolutely great to hear that somebody we know of has made that commitment, has said to Jesus, Jesus, I want you in my life.

I can't go on without you in my life. I am lost. I need you. Please find me. And it is. It's a great joy. So never forget that joy that we feel in our hearts.

Never forget God's grace to us when we were lost. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, it says in Romans, and are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ.

We live in the time of grace. By the time we get, as I said a few weeks ago, to the time of the sheep and the goats, the time of grace has gone. It's the time of judgment. Act now in the time of grace.

[14 : 04] Now is the time to act if you feel lost. Act now in the time of grace. And God's grace is there in your life. And it's not something that you can earn or do yourself.

It's freely given when you don't deserve it. Never forget to act on what we desire for the lost. 1 John says, Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions in truth.

Actions will not lead you to Jesus. But they should be the result of committing yourself to Jesus.

Your actions, your life should reflect a change in you once you are converted and become a disciple of Jesus. Jesus. So let's not forget to act on the desires for the lost and to listen.

And if Jesus is telling us to say something or do something and that's not easy. I don't find that easy one-to-one. I find it much easier to stand here than to do one-to-one.

[15 : 17] And others might be the same. Others might be much more comfortable one-to-one. But it's great we're all different, isn't it, Ray? We all have different gifts as somebody said this morning.

All have those different gifts. But let's not neglect them. Let's use them. And let's not forget to pray that our love for the lost would increase.

It says in 1 Thessalonians, May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and everyone else just as ours does for you.

It's again about not being, not allowing ourselves to be cynical, but allowing ourselves to love others. To let that love just grow and increase and flow out and be a witness of Jesus in our lives.

Next slide please, Josh. So what can we learn of the story of the lost man Zacchaeus? Well, no one is beyond saving.

[16 : 24] Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector so he'd be particularly despised by the Jews because in effect he robbed them. He was part of the Roman Empire, worked for the Roman Empire.

He took his cut from other taxpayers so perhaps Matthew himself, one of the disciples might have had a cut taken by Zacchaeus. Who knows? But Zacchaeus would take a cut from all the other tax collectors.

So he wasn't a very nice person. Let's put it like that. And he was despised. But no one is beyond saving. No one is beyond saving.

You know, we look at our lives and the bad things that we've done in our lives, the bad things that we continue to do in our lives, but know that when we're saved we can go to Jesus and repent and be taken back under His wing.

But we know the bad things we have done and we see some of the bad things that go on in the world. But no one is beyond saving. No one. Murderer, thief, liar, adulterer.

[17 : 30] No one is beyond saving. We have to listen to Jesus' voice and respond. Zacchaeus heard Jesus' voice.

Come down, Zacchaeus, he said. You know, come out of that tree. Don't be silly. And he responded. He responded, didn't he? He came down. And that's what we need to do. We need to remember to respond to Jesus' voice.

To hear it and to respond. We need to acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and our Saviour. And when we come to know Jesus as our Saviour, we need to acknowledge Him as Lord in our lives.

Lordship of our lives. That He's the one who's leading our life. And it is, you know, we read that He's our brother, our friend, our Saviour, our Lord.

And it's that balance, isn't it? You know, between having a brother, but a brother who is the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, that is that close and yet He is our Lord.

[18 : 39] And we have to treat Him as such, as our Lord and our Saviour. do whatever we need to do to change our lives for the better.

Zacchaeus decided he would give his money away and cover things fourfold for things he'd done wrong and that would be a lot of money. Maybe he gave all his money away in the end. We don't know.

We have no idea. But do whatever it is to change our lives for the better. For me, personally, that happened when, after I'd been a Christian, I was in a tell management and then I saw a job in Scotland at a Christian conference centre and I went and applied for that job and got that job.

And for me, that was the best thing that could ever happen to me because I had two years under the tutelage of the director of the centre where I was manager who was a Baptist minister, a very experienced Baptist minister and I just grew so much spiritually in that two years.

And so I needed to do that to change my life for the better, to make sure I was on the right track and it was just a wonderful grounding that I was able to have under that man and in that place.

[20 : 00] Act on what God puts in our hearts. Sometimes you'll feel things on your heart. You know, we know that those of us who've been Christians for any length of time, God sometimes puts something on your heart to do or to say and you think, hmm, how am I going to do that?

How am I going to say that? And sometimes, you know, you think, is it just for me? Well, go and talk to somebody else. You know, talk to somebody in the church. Talk to one of the leaders and say, you know, I feel that God is saying this.

Do you think I should? Do you think it's right? Get a bit of counsel from somebody. But if you really believe that God has put something on your heart to say or do, then do say it or do do it.

It could change some situation. It could change some life. And we must remember that faith and action work together.

Zacchaeus had faith and then action. Called Jesus Lord and then gave His money away. So again, I'm not going to labour that point. I touched on it earlier.

[21 : 10] Faith and action. And remember why Jesus came. And this nicely brings us back right to the beginning again. Because in our reading, it said, Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

And we're all lost sometimes, aren't we? You know, we have degrees of lostness in our lives. You know, we might say, you know, we might be doing an exam at school and, you know, remember that?

And you say, I'm lost here. I'm absolutely lost here. Or you might be out in the car, you know, driving around. Completely lost.

What's the sat-nav doing? Well, it's getting you more lost, isn't it? Let's be honest. John Allen's had that experience, I can tell. Yeah.

Or you might just feel, oh, I'm just lost at the moment. Just don't know what to do at the moment. Just lost. All those degrees of losses. But here we're talking about being lost to God.

[22 : 12] Being lost to eternity. And if you are lost on the road, you find a map. Or you find a signpost.

And you find your way. And that's what you need to do. Don't rely on sat-nav. Find a map. Find a signpost.

Follow the map. Follow the signpost. And then you get on the right track. So if you're lost, if you feel you're lost, if you feel you're, you know, maybe you've been a Christian for a long time, but you feel a bit lost at the moment, find somebody here today, now, and talk to them.

And get them to put you back on the right road. Don't let yourself remain lost. Because as Benjamin Franklin said, only two things are certain in life.

Death and taxes. If you want to know about taxes, speak to Luke. He's your man. Treasurer of the church. But many of us know about death and about life.

[23 : 18] And death is going to happen to us. We can't do anything about that. But we can be prepared. If you're going on a journey abroad, you have your passport.

All ready. Visas in place and so on. Well, if you're going on a journey with God and you're going to reach heaven, be prepared. Don't be lost.

Get on track. Speak to somebody today if you need to. Don't let your life go on any longer being lost. God wants to find you. He came to seek and to save the lost.

Didn't come for anything else. He came to seek and to save the lost. So please, don't be lost anymore if you are. And let's give thanks that we've been found.

Amen. Thank you. Thank you.