

Title: Seeking and Saving  
Text: Luke 19.1-10  
Theme: For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost  
Series: Luke  
Aim: I aim to call my people to love the seeker and savior of their souls by embracing his heart (motivation), his plan (to rescue) and his power to do it all.

Read Text:

There are certain Bible stories that most people seem to be aware of and this is one of them. In fact, this guy, Zacchaeus has his own song. I asked Derek if we could sing it just before the sermon, but he didn't think that was a great idea. But like so many of the stories that Luke records, we think we know them and assume that we know where this is going, only to look at it a bit more carefully and discover that there is way more going on than we initially realize. This in turn amazes us, and widens our affections so that our love is warmer, our affections are deeper, our faith is stronger and our worship is hotter.

The Old Testament was the Bible that Jesus taught from and read in the synagogues on the Sabbath. In many ways the New Testament is the commentary of Jesus on the Old. You can read the last book or watch the last movie in a series and enjoy it to a point, but not like you would if you knew everything that came before. If you started your Bible reading in Matthew then you would know from Matthew 9, 10, 15 and 18 that Jesus is a shepherd who cares for his sheep. That would likely warm your heart and give you comfort. But there is more to the story. And if you knew that part of the story from the Old Testament, then when you read that Jesus said, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." You would have another a-ha, moment.

Ezekiel is one of the major prophets in the Old Testament. Psalms, Jeremiah and Genesis are the only other books that are longer. It is fascinating and to me, a bit intimidating. Ezekiel's ministry took place in exile. He was deported to Babylon in 597 B.C. probably around the age of 25 and lived out his days in a country that was not his home along with thousands of other Jews. Around 606 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, King of the Babylonian Empire came, with his army to Judah, Jerusalem actually, and took a number of its citizens captive including Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah (you know as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego). In 597 Nebuchadnezzar returned because Judah was still being squirrely and took the king into exile along with many other citizens including Ezekiel. Five years later (592?) the Lord began to give visions to Ezekiel and revealed his word to this man in order to give the Jews an understanding of what had happened, why it had happened and what God's plan was going forward. Things were going to get worse before they got better. In 586, Nebuchadnezzar returned a third time and this time he wiped out the city. Jerusalem fell, completely. The walls were torn down, the temple was destroyed, thousands of people were killed and now a massive deportation took place. The nation, for all intents and purposes ceased to exist. The stories of destruction and violence are cringeworthy. Ezekiel writes about this in chapter 33 of his book. Then comes chapter 34 that begins with these words, "*The word of the LORD came to me.*" And then we read what the LORD says. The LORD issues a massive indictment on the leadership of Judah. Instead of protecting

the sheep, God calls out the leaders (think kings, priests, false prophets) of using the sheep for themselves instead of protecting the sheep. Instead of feeding the sheep, the shepherds have fed themselves with the sheep. Then comes this warning and promise beginning in v.10. (Ezekiel 34.10-16; 22-24)

Who are the biggest enemies of Jesus? They are the false shepherds who devour the sheep instead of feeding them and protecting them. Ezekiel's prophecy was tied to the first destruction of Jerusalem and now, with Jesus referencing it, he knows that Jerusalem is about to be destroyed again. Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise in Ezekiel. Jesus is the shepherd who has come to seek out his sheep and to rescue them even as the false shepherds are threatened by Jesus and seek to kill him, which is another facet of this account.

Therefore, the story of Zacchaeus is not ultimately about a wee little man who just wanted to see Jesus, but of the great Shepherd who came after another unlikely convert. We are going to add Zacchaeus to a growing list of unlikely converts that Luke tells us about. That list includes the prodigal son, the beggar Lazarus, the one leper (out of 10), the tax collector at the temple, the children, and the blind beggar near Jericho. It's a list of those who have much to be ashamed of, are overlooked, marginalized or just really desperately needy. If you were setting up a political rally and you were putting people on the platform behind the speaker who would be seen by the cameras, these would not be the people you would want. They are not the image that is attractive to this world.

But Jesus is the King of the upside-down kingdom. His values and therefore his followers are not what we would expect. And Jesus makes it clear in v.9 that Zacchaeus is one of his. Salvation has come to his house, meaning, it has come to him. He is a son of Abraham. This story is another example of what saving faith looks like and Zacchaeus is another person whom we are going to meet one day in heaven. He was lost and now he is found. What do we learn about those who were lost but are now found? What are the evidences of genuine faith?

### 1. **The Lost who are Found** (1-8)

#### A. **They are needy and own it.** (Humble) (1-4)

When we think of Zacchaeus we tend to think of a little man, which is true, he was short. But Luke tells us that he was a tax collector and he was rich. This is an interesting combination. One chapter ago there was a tax collector who showed up at the Temple and was so humble and contrite that he would not even lift his eyes to heaven but instead beat his chest in grief and prayed, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." Jesus said that this man went to his home that day, justified. A few verses later a ruler who was "extremely rich" asks Jesus what he needs to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus puts his finger on the idol of this man's heart, his money. And this man was not willing to give that up. He wasn't that desperate. Here we have a tax collector (actually a chief tax collector) who is also rich and we are right to wonder, how this is going to turn out. Like the other rich guy he is respectful of Jesus and desires to see him. Why? What is at the

heart of this? Is he looking for affirmation or is he really desperate? Does he want to be assured that he is ok, or does he know that he is not? What does he do?

When he can't see Jesus because of the crowd, he gets desperate. People only get desperate when they have a problem that they cannot fix and this guy was desperate. We know that from the verbs in v.4. He ran on ahead and he climbed up into a sycamore tree. Men do not usually run in public. Rich men do not run in public. Rich men who are chief, esteemed tax collectors have an image to maintain and a reputation to protect. They certainly would never run unless there was something that was way more important than image and reputation. Zacchaeus had to, somehow, somehow, see Jesus. He was needy and he owned it.

This morning I am a needy person talking to a room full of needy people. The issue is not, whether or not you are needy, but whether or not you will own it. Are you willing to admit your fears? Are you willing to own your failures? Are you willing to face your sins? Are you willing to see truth about yourself so that you can admit that to God?

Illustration: lunch this week

#### **B. They are responsive and joyful. (grateful) (5-6)**

Jesus goes right to the tree where Zacchaeus is. Jesus gives him an order. It is beautiful and so personal! Did you notice that he calls him by name? He addresses him! *"Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today."* Don't miss this, because that statement by Christ is basically a summary of the entire Bible. Jesus came to seek Zacchaeus, that he might save Zacchaeus, so he could enjoy sweet fellowship with him. Jesus came to live a perfect life in our place that he might offer that perfect life as the perfect and final sacrifice for our sins, that we, by faith alone in Christ alone, might be forgiven and declared righteous. Being forgiven and declared righteous is not the end of the story. Being forgiven and declared righteous is for the purpose of God dwelling with us, enjoying us, delighting us, satisfying us and thrilling us. God saves us for a relationship. Here in Jericho, Jesus gives us a preview of this. Jesus orders Zacchaeus to come down from the tree quickly because Jesus is inviting himself to his house. Jesus doesn't give him much of a choice, does he? *"for I must stay at your house today."*

This is our story. This is the plan. We are going to eating, drinking, fellowship and celebration with Christ and what happened this day in Jericho was a preview of what is in store for all the people of God. At that moment, Zacchaeus did not know that. What he knew is that Jesus just addressed him by name, told him to get down out of the tree and that he was coming to his house, like now. And Zacchaeus came down and received him joyfully! That is what saving faith looks like. It responds to the command of Christ and does so with joy.

This is what distinguishes believers from demons. I know that sounds crazy, but even the demons obey Jesus. But they don't love him. They don't trust him. Their obedience to his commands does not come from a heart of love, affection and trust. They have to. Not for us. Our obedience is driven by faith and love. Our faith in Christ and love for Christ is displayed in

our joyfully obedience to him. Romans answers the question of how are we saved from our sin. The answer is by faith alone in Christ alone. The books of 1 John and James answers the question of what does that faith look like? How do you know if someone has genuine faith? The answer is, it is a faith that displays the gospel fruit of obedience because it loves Christ. Do you love Christ? Do you love him enough that you are willing to obey him?

### C. **They repent and are generous.** (fruitful) (8)

Zacchaeus was thrilled to welcome Christ to his home. This was what he longed for. He wanted his life to be taken over by Christ. He wanted the Lord to be Lord in his home, his heart, his everything, including all that he was and had. The crowd grumbled. Of course, they did. *"He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."* What is behind that? The crowd believed that Zacchaeus shouldn't be cared for by Jesus or couldn't be. But if Jesus could give physical sight to the blind man who already believed, couldn't Jesus give belief to the man who was just trying to see? Jesus can do way more than we realize or want him to at times. Zacchaeus was the outsider. He was the guy the crowd didn't want to hang with, but Jesus did. And the relationship that Zacchaeus experienced with Christ gave him a radically different view on people, things and money. At some point (at a meal?) Zacchaeus stands up and demonstrates his change of heart by announcing an estate sale. I am going to sell half of what I have in order to give it to the poor. What's more, if I have defrauded anyone of anything, (which is likely since he said it) he is going to give it back times 4!

If Mrs. Zacchaeus is already in shock over Jesus and 12 guys showing up announced to the house, her head is spinning now. But what Zacchaeus displays here is profoundly important and insightful. Beloved, this is what repentance looks like. Do you remember what Paul said in Ephesians about how to tell when a thief is no longer a thief? It's not when he stops stealing, but when he uses the same hands that used to take from people and now, he uses them to give to others. Salvation is not a behavior management technique to get you to stop abusing fentanyl, alcohol, or porn. Salvation causes a change of heart where instead of living for yourself, you live for the glory of another and for the good of others. Zacchaeus was not paying for his sin by doing this. These commitments were evidence of his faith in Christ. He had a complete change of heart. Instead of defrauding others, he was going to help them. Instead of looking out for his own interests, he was now concerned about the interests of others.

There you have it. This is what a believer looks like. He admits his need, no excuses. He believes Christ and fellowships with Christ, no hesitation. He turns from self and is now oriented toward others. The entire account is just further evidence of the fact that our God loves to save.

### 2. **Our God LOVES to save.** (9-10)

In v.9 Jesus announces that Zacchaeus is the real deal. He has truly come to faith. He is a son of Abraham. He is not one by blood, but by faith. And then (v.10) Jesus tells us why this event took place. Zacchaeus did not remain lost because Jesus came to get him.

Jesus was sent (and came) to seek. Jesus was sent (and came) to save. Jesus seeks us and saves us in order to enjoy us and Jesus accomplished what he came to do. Think

At this point in the ministry of Christ, the people (crowds, the public) were in one of 3 groups:

- The people who believed Jesus, no matter what. (Faith seeking understanding)
- The people who believed Jesus, or thought they believed Jesus. The real story was they believed him and were willing to follow him if he did what they expected. (Conditional faith)
- The people who did not believe Jesus, no matter what. (No faith despite the evidence)

Everything that Jesus is doing here (going through Jericho in order to go to Jerusalem in order to be rejected, suffer, and die) is so that he, the Shepherd might rescue his sheep! This is our King! This is our Shepherd!

People who trust the Shepherd are humble, obedient, believing and repentful.  
The Shepherd is intentional, personal, willing and trustworthy.