



The Gospel According to Luke Wk. 92 “The Ultimate Dinner Guest” By Pastor Jody May

Luke 19:1-10 ESV

Jesus and Zacchaeus

19 He entered Jericho and was passing through. **2** And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. **3** And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. **4** So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. **5** 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.” **6** So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. **7** And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” **8** And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” **9** And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. **10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

10 “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

This may just be the most important verse in the Bible for us. – It is the recognition of how we get to God, no one comes to the Father except through Jesus, the Son of Man... (John 14:6). It is how God has acted since the beginning, Gen 3:8-9 – “Where are you” Adam? We see all through the patriarchs, through Moses the deliverer, through the judges and through the Kings/prophets that God always seeks to save the lost.

The Lost, according to its’ definition, are those that are bound for destruction; committed to hell, destined for the wrath of God. The truth is that Jesus proclaims here in vs 10, as the Son of Man, a title that speaks to Jesus’ choice to live as a human, fully divine but fully man, is that He will earn for us the needed righteousness to spare us from the wrath of God AND He will also absorb the penalty of death in His own body, bringing justice for God, because of our wicked rebellion. The Son of man has come to save the damned because no one else



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could, but **more importantly because God so decreed it** before time as it would be the fulfillment of glory.

As the Son of Man, Jesus came to fulfill the Davidic covenant, as a King to protect His people, as the prophet Ezekiel records that since the kings of old could not do it, God Himself would!

Ezekiel 34:16 ESV

¹⁶ I will **seek the lost**, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them in justice.

The other reason that this verse is so important is because of this **HUGE BIBLICAL TRUTH**:

Romans 3:11 ESV

“no one understands; **no one seeks** for God.”

You and I, are in a state that whereby we cannot seek God, (see last week). People are born in a state of futility:

Ephesians 4:17-19 ESV

¹⁷ Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹ They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.

But thanks be to God this morning that God chooses not to leave His elect there, in the futility of their minds, ignorant, calloused, and looking to satiate a God derived loneliness with sin but instead He rejoices over finding His children.

Jeremiah 32:41 ESV

“I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.”



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I want you to see in the story of Zacchaeus today, your story, that God chooses to seek and save the lost, and that means you. For if you claim to be His today, that is solely based on God’s sovereign will, not yours, so that none of us can boast.

1. An Irresistible Draw comes from Divine Will.

19 He entered Jericho and was passing through. **2** And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich.

Zacchaeus, was a chief tax collector that was rich. According to what Jesus has already taught in chapter 18 of Luke this puts Zacchaeus in some hot water.

Luke 18:13 ESV

13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’

Being a tax collector, while being an occupation that was rewarding in a monetary type of way, it was not the best job to have for one’s social life. A tax collector in a Jewish town, that’s here in Jericho, was someone of Jewish heritage. They were offered a job by the Roman Government to collect taxes from the people for government projects, provisions, and protection. The pay of the tax collector was collected through taking extra from the people. There were no regulations on this by the Romans, it was up to the tax collector to set their collection prices or service fees. Zacch, in our story, was the **chief of collectors in this town**, meaning he is the head loan shark, other collectors would pay him a share.

The fact that it says he is rich shows that he has had no scruples in his collection practices. He has fallen to the **provocative sin of Greed**. The richer he became the more he was disliked for in the law it was looked down upon to steal from your own people, to use unjust scales, to charge interest, and because of this he most likely would have been refused fellowship through the synagogue with the other Jews in the town.

Luke 18:24-25 ESV



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²⁴ Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, “How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”

Not only is this man reprehensible for how he treats his own people but the condition of being rich greatly decreases his chance of finding the Kingdom of God. Jesus has painted the picture of an impossible feat by the image of the camel going through the eye of a needle.

BTW by the time we get to these stories we should be seeing in this pattern in Luke that Jesus is always setting up His miracles, mostly of Salvation, to show us how getting into the Kingdom really works and that is **no one but no one gets into the Kingdom except by Jesus’ will, the Son of Man, the Messiah, God in flesh.** But notice in the story now, even though the condition of his spirit did not look good, notice it was **He that went looking** for Jesus.

³ And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. ⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way.

Zacchaeus most likely hears about Jesus healing the blind beggar, Bartimaeus, he probably knows about the other tax collector Matthew that travels with them. Zacchaeus knows that Jesus travels and spends time with sinners. Zacchaeus has a need, it is seen by his actions in the text, **he is drawn to the man that accepts people like him!**

Zacchaeus’ heart has been prepped by the Law of God and he has a conscience conditioned by the ones he has oppressed. This is why **the law, the OT, must be preached in churches** along with the NT Gospel of the Incarnation FOR the **law IS the Gospel found in the OT for it teaches the NEED of the Incarnation.** There is **no heart work done UNLESS God’s law is proclaimed and cherished** as we saw in Psalm 119. This heart heavy with the burden of sin is what is driving Zacchaeus to search Jesus out.



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So, Zacchaeus climbs this tree. There are several reasons why this tree is being climbed. First, **trees are not easy to come by in the middle-east but this is Jericho**, and ever since its’ appearance in the OT it has been **known for its springs**. Because of those springs it has always been a place of trees providing shade, rest, and food. A Sycamore is a type of fig, that is fragile, and produces leaves and fruit seasonally.

Zacchaeus also climbs a tree **because it was going to be the only way he would ever glimpse a view of Jesus**. The text says he was small in stature and while most believe that refers to his size it may have a double meaning for Zach would also not rank really high with the town folks. Imagine a small man, disliked by the town, do you think there would be any chance for him to get to the front of the line? Zach had to climb a tree just like the children would have to, because remember in this day kids were viewed as more of a nuisance to keep in the back. **So just as a little child Zach comes to Jesus the only way he can** and he’s not too proud to climb a tree to get a look at Jesus.

Then in the text the story takes an interesting turn:

⁵And 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.”

You see all this effort, the drive of a heart in need of a change, Zacchaeus thought he had climbed that tree so he could see Jesus but in reality, **Zacchaeus climbed that tree so Jesus could see Him!** In that moment we see how Salvation works in the lives of the Children of God.

**Salvation doesn’t begin in the mind of man
but in the heart of God...**

Zacchaeus doesn’t know it but his whole life had lead him up to that moment, to be born in that country as a Jew, to be hired by the Roman authorities to collect taxes, to be allowed to rob his people, to climb a tree planted by who knows, and



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all of that was all planned out by God! Jesus, the Son of Man, having seen Zach makes a DIVINE PROCLAMATION:

*“hurry and come down for I **MUST** stay at your house today.”* – I must, it is an imperative in the Greek, it doesn’t mean like for us as saying *I strongly desire it*, the intention is that Jesus says, *“I have no choice **BUT to stay with you!**”* The manner in which this is happening shows that **God not only knows who He will save but when and where!** Jesus is thus stating, “I am under compulsion of God, you and I are here in this moment in history and Zach, you can’t escape it, GET DOWN HERE FAST!”

You see that is how it happens for all of us. Part of our conversion experience is when you and I recognize that **we did not get to Jesus but that He came for us!** That all of life was a pathway that God directed to Him, so that we would understand that our Irresistible Draw to Him, like Zach, happened because of His Divine will! What an emotional high it is to know that **Salvation does not begin in the mind of man but in the heart of God.** When you finally get that look at what can finally happen for us:

2. A Declaration of Lordship & Repentance comes from Divine Recognition.

⁶So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.”

Zacchaeus, climbs down hurriedly, that means he was risking his safety. Anytime I have come down in a tree quickly it usually didn’t go well. 😊 But Zach receives Him joyfully, gladly. Up to this point whenever Jesus has wanted to stay with you, it meant good things for those people. Staying at someone’s house in the text here doesn’t just mean passing through, it is the intent that ‘I will be staying with you, for dinner, most likely for the night’, we are talking hanging out, and we are going to set some things straight in your life. How many of you would love to have Jesus come and do that with you today? **This is your story but the tree you gotta climb into to see Him is - His Word**, and if you seek Him you will find Him (Mat. 7:7), it is one of His promises, do you believe Him today?



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Even the crowd saw the promise of this meeting. They grumbled about it, that is they complained about it. It meant the biggest sinner in the town was going to get the attention of Jesus, this man wasn't just a sinner he was like the Mafia boss. This guy was about to get a pardoned by the only man that could do it!

What excitement for Zacch! You can see how Zacch's heart was so willing to turn to be changed because the Divine will was working on Him, He couldn't resist! But as you see in the text Zacchaeus is not looking for a pardoned, just the fact that Jesus accepted him meant everything to Zacchaeus. He knew that in order to be around Jesus was special, He had been called to an audience like Bartimaeus.

⁸And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "**Behold, Lord**, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold."

Zacchaeus, standing before Jesus, shows there is something happening here in the text. Zacch is making a public declaration, it was meant for all to behold, everyone was to be quiet. He calls Jesus, "Lord", that was moment of public confession, I know longer live by my will, **but Zacch was recognizing Jesus as the commander of his life**. He therefore declares that he will make good on what is owed to the people.

He's giving half of everything he has to the poor, his theology has changed. The poor are not to be sneered at they are to be cared for. He recognizes he is no better.

Then he has what seems to be an extravagant offer, those that he has defrauded he is going to pay back 4 times. Just know in the OT there are several places where it is commanded to pay back more than what you took by sinful ways, but there is only one place where it talks about a four-fold payment. In exodus 22:1 it talks about if someone takes an Ox or a sheep, he should pay it back four times. It is a law meant for violent crimes and uncaring behavior. It is the exact law that David calls for when Nathan tells him the story of how a lamb had been taken from a poor man. That story was about David stealing Uriah's wife and God knew



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it. **That type of sinful behavior demanded a four-fold retribution and Zacch knew he was in the same boat as David, he recognized what he had done!**

Zacch sees the immensity of his sin, Jesus didn't tell a parable and then explain to him it was about him stealing from the people. Zacch's heart had been changed by grace, it was his desire to pay for all the harm that was done and he wanted to be judged by the harshest of laws. He wasn't working to get Jesus' approval he had it already because Jesus was there spending the night with him, **he was offering because his heart had been changed first by GRACE!** So again, Here's the truth he was living out:

Salvation doesn't begin in the mind of man but in the heart of God...

Proverbs 8:17 ESV

“I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.”

In this room today are we recognizing that the Lord of grace has come to dwell with us, are you overjoyed that you have sworn fealty to Him surrendering your life and your wants?

Is joy over His grace given to you reflected by how **you want to treat others with grace upon grace?**

Are you shy about declaring to people how much you love the Lord?

If so, let me ask you, have you truly sought Him out yet? If not, I implore you loved one do it, start today and experience the joy that Zacch was discovering.

3. The Salvation of Sinners happens because we have a God that Seeks to Save!

Today as we wrap this up, I really hope you are seeing this as your story or at least you are desiring to have a story like this. I just want you to see what it looks like to be declared saved.



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⁹And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.

Jesus says today, Salvation has come, He's not saying the Savior has arrived. He's pointing out to what He has seen. Jesus is glorifying His Father, He's declaring as Zacch just declared publically. This man, this ultimate sinner, chief of the money collectors, the man that everyone despised, the man that the enemy of the Jews employed, that man today has been SAVED! He has been saved not because he begged for mercy, nor did He pay for any sin, but because I/Jesus was sent to find him and I found him, and now he is no longer lost. THEREFORE, I see that his offer for payment is the showing of a changed heart! Salvation has indeed come to this house!

Then Jesus makes another small declaration but a huge slap to the Pharisees and the crowd that surround Him. "**he is a son of Abraham.**" We read this week in Genesis together, of when God extended to Abraham a covenant to give him descendants that would be as many as the stars in the sky or the sand on the seashore and that he counted Abraham's faith in that promise/covenant as righteousness. Again, I would like to point out in case you think that Faith was Abraham's work, God found Abraham first as a lost man and called him to follow him, faith was a gift from allowing Abraham to see how God moved. Abraham's true decedents are people that have experienced true faith in Jesus, and it is reflected by their change of heart!

Galatians 3:29 ESV

"And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

Jesus had already called the Pharisees children of Satan, because their hearts were like stones - dead. John the Baptist had claimed in Luke 3:8 that God could raise up stones to be children of Abraham. And we see the promise of **Ezekiel 36:26** as God seeks to save sinners the process by which Salvation is delivered is by giving people living hearts replacing hearts of stone. Jesus, by His work had taken out Zacch's dead heart and had given him a living one, and if He can do it for the chief of sinners then He can do it for you!



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That’s how we are all family, it’s not by our last names, our cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, or our political proclivities, we are related because we have the same heart. If a bunch of people have the same heart but different gifts, then watch out because a lot wonderful and beautiful things can happen through that group of people.

Do you feel like he has found you yet? Is your heart tender towards the sinner or do you only like to associate with people in the church? Are you ready to give up everything to follow Him this morning? If so, be honest with yourself, if so then you have already experienced possibly the most important verse in the Bible:

10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Let’s thank Him today for this wonderful Grace and let’s pray to Him in earnest if you still have not experienced His peace today, and let’s believe the promise the if we diligently seek Him, we will find Him, just like Zacchaeus. For,

Salvation doesn’t begin in the mind of man but in the heart of God...

PRAYER

COMMUNION

BENEDICTION

Go in the name of the Father, where the plan of our Salvation rest securely and nothing can change your destiny with Him.

Go in the name of the Son, that came to seek and save the Lost, and by His love changes our hearts.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that replaces our hearts of stone with hearts of flesh so we may see Him, love Him, and live for Him being a light in this world.