

# Miscellaneous

*Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.  
(1 Peter 3:14–16 ESV)*

*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. (Luke 19:10 ESV)*

## **To Seek and Save the Lost**

**August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020**

**Luke 19:1-10**

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### **Introduction:**

Good morning! Please turn with me in your Bibles to Luke 19:1-10.

We've spent the last ten weeks preparing to do the work of evangelism, but preparation is no good if it doesn't lead to action. Amen? You can buy the gym shoes and purchase the gym pass, but eventually you know you actually need to get there and do something, right? In the same way, you can read about, talk about and write about evangelism but if you never actually do the work of an evangelist you're just going to turn into a bloated, grumpy Christian.

Has anyone ever met that Christian? I've *been* that Christian more often than I'd like to admit. As Charles Spurgeon puts it:

I think that there are no people that have so much to say as those that have a little to do. Where nothing is done, much is talked about.<sup>1</sup>

That's true, isn't it. I don't know about you, but I don't want to stand before the Lord with a resume that reads: "Talked lots. Accomplished little."

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Spurgeon. *Sermons on Proverbs*. 207.

Let me encourage you this morning: After ten weeks of apologetics training, you are without a doubt the best equipped person on your street to engage your neighborhood with the gospel. In fact, you might be the only person on your street who will EVER engage your neighborhood with the gospel. Let that sink in. There are probably some people on your street who will never in their lifetime hear the gospel unless they hear it from you. The great missionary Jim Elliot once said:

"May we who know Christ hear the cry of the damned as they hurtle headlong into the Christless night without ever a chance... May we shed tears of repentance for those who we have failed to bring out of darkness."<sup>2</sup>

Orillia would be a very different place if more Christians prayed prayers like that, wouldn't it?

It doesn't take long at all before our eyes begin to drift away from the mission, does it? That evangelistic zeal we felt when this pandemic first hit was quickly replaced by distractions and complacency. Those relationships with our neighbors that were finally gaining traction slowly regressed back to distant, shallow small talk.

It's easy to get distracted. But when our focus drifts, and we begin to sink back into complacency, we need to turn our eyes back to Jesus. To that end, I want to invite you to look with me to Luke 19:1-10. Hear now God's holy, inspired, inerrant, living and active word to us today.

He entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. <sup>3</sup> And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. <sup>4</sup> So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. <sup>5</sup> 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." <sup>6</sup> So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. <sup>7</sup> And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." <sup>8</sup> 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." <sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:1-10 ESV)

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God

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<sup>2</sup> Jim Elliot as quoted by Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983), 290.

I. Howard Marshall, says of this text:

The final story in the long account of Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem is meant to be a climax in the ministry of Jesus<sup>3</sup>

I think that's exactly right. This story serves as a climactic illustration of Jesus' mission in the world. And Jesus summarizes that mission in verse 10:

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. (Luke 19:10 ESV)

So, let me ask you something: Are you a Jesus follower? Are you being transformed into his likeness from one degree of glory to the next? Well then this is an incredibly helpful verse, isn't it? Here we are told unambiguously that the lost matter to Jesus. They matter so much, in fact, that he left his heavenly throne to restore them to himself. They matter so much, in fact, that he hung naked on a cross and bore the wrath of our Heavenly Father so that they could be redeemed. The lost MATTER to Jesus! Therefore, they ought to matter to us. In fact, that's our second core value here at this church:

**2. We deeply believe that lost people matter to God, and therefore, ought to matter to our church<sup>4</sup>**

Do we still believe that, church? Well then let's seek to learn from the example that Jesus set for us. This morning, we're going to study this text as we ask the question:

### **What Does This Story Teach Us About Evangelism?**

The first lesson we learn is that God is the Seeker.

#### **Lesson 1: God is the Seeker**

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<sup>3</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGTC)*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 694.

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.cornerstoneorillia.org/about/what\\_we\\_believe/our\\_core\\_values/index.php](https://www.cornerstoneorillia.org/about/what_we_believe/our_core_values/index.php). Accessed on July 28, 2020.

Now, I bet that sounds a bit counterintuitive to some of you. You're thinking, "What do you mean GOD is the Seeker? Zacchaeus was the one who worked his way through the crowd. Zacchaeus was the one who climbed up that tree. Isn't the moral of this story that ZACCHAEUS was the seeker and that he was rewarded for his seeking?"

I can see why that might be your takeaway, except that Jesus had a very different takeaway. In his summarizing statement, Jesus clarifies who the seeker is in this story.

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. (Luke 19:10 ESV)

This story isn't primarily about Zacchaeus looking for Jesus. This story is about Jesus FINDING the lost. Look again at verse 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." (Luke 19:5 ESV)

Do you see that? Jesus looks up. Jesus finds. Jesus calls out to Zacchaeus by name. Jesus is the seeker, and listen closely to what he says to Zacchaeus:

"hurry and come down, **for I must stay at your house today.**" (Luke 19:5b ESV)

That word "must" is absolutely profound. It comes from the Greek word "dei" which means "it is necessary." Jesus could have said, "Zacchaeus, I would *like* to stay at your house today," or, "Zacchaeus, *would it be okay with you* if I stayed at your house today?" But he doesn't say any of that. He **MUST** stay at Zacchaeus' house.

This lunch meeting was part of the Father's plan from before the foundation of the world. It was God's plan for Jesus to walk through Jericho that day. It was God's plan for Zacchaeus to climb up into that tree. It was God's plan for Jesus to lift his eyes and to see Zacchaeus through the crowd and, according to Jesus, it was *necessary* for Zacchaeus and Jesus to have a life-changing encounter.

Listen: The clear and consistent message of the Bible is that salvation is always and only GOD's initiative. HE is the seeker. Consider, for example, Ephesians 1 where the Apostle Paul writes:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup>**even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup>**he predestined us for** adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will (Ephesians 1:3-5 ESV)

God chose! God predestined! God seeks!

I wonder if there isn't a Zacchaeus or two with us today. God is seeking you, and you feel it. You're sitting in a church service, and you have no idea why! You're watching along on Facebook and you're not sure why you haven't scrolled down. Perhaps Jesus is calling your name this morning. Perhaps you can hear him saying: "I must meet with you today." If that's you, then you need to lean in and listen closely to what Jesus is saying to you this morning.

And Christians. Fellow evangelists. If you feel stunted in your evangelism, then can I offer you a suggestion? Always keep your eyes open for the people who the Lord is drawing to Himself.

Let's get really practical. Because God is actively seeking the lost, you can know that there are people within your sphere of influence who are being drawn to the Lord, even now. In today's text, God did something in Zacchaeus' life that compelled him to climb up into that sycamore tree. God was obviously at work in Zacchaeus' heart even before he sat down for lunch with Jesus. Jesus teaches his disciples a similar principle in Matthew 10. Before sending them out, he tells them:

And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. <sup>12</sup>As you enter the house, greet it. <sup>13</sup>And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. <sup>14</sup>And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. (Matthew 10:11-14 ESV)

What's he saying here? If you find a receptive audience – if you find someone who is leaning in and growing – if you find a ZACCHAEUS – stay with them and invest in them for as long as you can. But, if you find someone who doesn't give you the time of day, go ahead and move along.

Some of us are growing discouraged in our evangelism because we're spending all of our evangelistic efforts on a person who is not interested. They're not interested right now because they're not being drawn. Now that doesn't mean you've wasted your time. You should certainly continue to pray for them, and check back in from time to time, but here's the takeaway:

Give your best evangelistic efforts to those who lean in.

There is someone in your sphere of influence who God is already drawing to Himself. Pray for them. Find them! Throw that gospel seed everywhere and, when you find that soft soil – when you find that person who's eyes light up at the mention of the name of Jesus – give them the best of your time and efforts.

But there's a second lesson for us here:

## **Lesson 2: No-one is too far gone**

Now, it's hard to spot that immediately in today's text because, let's be honest, our mental picture of Zacchaeus is shaped primarily by a children's song. \*Sing?\* As a result, we LOVE wee little Zacchaeus!

But the community didn't love Zacchaeus. Listen to the way that Luke tells this story.

And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." (Luke 19:7 ESV)

They ALL grumbled. There wasn't a single person in Jericho who was sympathetic to wee little Zacchaeus.

The text tells us that he was a rich, chief tax collector. When you understand the responsibility of the tax collector, you understand why they were so hated. If Rome wanted to tax Jericho ten percent, then it was Zacchaeus' job to get that ten percent. But the tax collectors needed to make a living too, so they charged OVER and ABOVE the Roman tax and pocketed the difference. If you

were a Jew living in Jericho then you would go to see Zacchaeus to pay your taxes. You'd give 10% to Rome and then perhaps another 3% to line Zacchaeus' pockets.

The adorable character who we envision sitting in the tree was not so adorable to his neighbors. Zacchaeus was a greedy crook. He was the reason why some families in Jericho were homeless. He was the reason why little Timmy only ate one meal a day. Zacchaeus was a terrible sinner who profited off of the poverty of his own people.

If you don't see THAT, then you won't understand the scandal of THIS. Jesus said:

“Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” (Luke 19:5b ESV)

And EVERYONE in the crowd was angry. Everyone was disillusioned. They thought that Jesus was an ally to the poor. They thought that he was going to overthrow the corrupt politics that kept them locked in oppression. And yet, in the middle of a crowd, Jesus showed compassion to a man who symbolized everything that these Jews hated. I. Howard Marshall notes:

To stay in such a person's home was tantamount to sharing in his sin.<sup>5</sup>

The salvation that Jesus offered to Zacchaeus was an absolute scandal. It was so scandalous, in fact, that it made the outside world ANGRY.

Dare I say, I hope we celebrate some salvation stories in this place that are so scandalous that they make the outside world angry.

The world thinks that some people are too far gone. The world is becoming increasingly vindictive and there is less and less room for grace. What a TREMENDOUS opportunity that presents for us! In a world that is increasingly void of grace, we have a message of a forgiveness that covers over every sin!

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<sup>5</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text (NIGTC)*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 697.

Salvation is available to ex-convicts and murderers and pedophiles and every other wicked sin that you can think of. Do you believe that this morning? One commentator warns:

Let us be careful of ever daring to assess whether someone is worthy of meeting God.<sup>6</sup>

So again, let's get really practical. Do you want to be effective in your evangelism? Find the person who is unforgivable in the world's eyes and tell them the good news about Jesus Christ. Look for the rundowns and the rebels; the ragamuffins and the write-offs. Call that uncle that doesn't get invited to family Christmas anymore. Reach out to that neighbor that everyone avoids like the black plague.

Because the gospel shines brightest in the darkest places. To be frank, if we are preaching the gospel as we should, then there ought to come a day when the outside world looks at our church and says, "You let *him* worship with you?!?" That's what they were saying to Jesus, isn't it? Friends, no-one is too far gone.

Let's turn now to our third lesson. This text reminds us that:

### **Lesson 3: Salvation is always a miracle**

Now, I want to be careful to show you where I'm finding this in the text, because I know it's not immediately obvious. In order to see this, you need to understand the way that this story connects with the story we looked at two weeks ago. Look back a few verses at Luke 18:24. A rich young ruler approached Jesus and asked, "What must I do to be saved?" Jesus saw that this young man loved his money more than he loved God, so he told him to sell all that he had and to give to the poor. This man walked away sad because, while he wanted to be saved, ultimately, he wanted his money more. We jump into that story at verse 24:

Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> 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." <sup>26</sup> Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?" (Luke 18:24-26 ESV)

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<sup>6</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Luke*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2018), 278.



The implied answer here is: “Certainly, not rich people!” But now, a few paragraphs later in Luke’s Gospel, we are introduced to Zacchaeus. And what does Luke tell us about Zacchaeus? Look at verse 2:

And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector **and was rich**. (Luke 19:2 ESV)

Do you see what Luke is doing? He’s tying these stories together. Here is the conclusion to the story of the rich young ruler! When the first rich man spoke to Jesus, we learned that it is HUMANLY IMPOSSIBLE for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. We came out of that story wondering with the disciples, “Who then can be saved?”

But do you remember what Jesus said in response? Look back at verse 27:

But he said, “What is **impossible** with man is **possible** with God.” (Luke 18:27 ESV)

And now, as Jesus speaks to Zacchaeus – a rich man who had as much chance of entering the kingdom of heaven as a camel did of entering the eye of a needle – we see an absolute MIRACLE! THIS rich man was enabled by God to lay down the idol of his wealth and to receive salvation! And here we see a visible illustration of what Jesus just finished telling his disciples: What is impossible with man is possible with God.

This lesson is SO INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT if we are going to engage in evangelism. I can’t tell you how many times I’ve heard Christians say, “My loved one is just TOO lost. It would take a MIRACLE to open his eyes to the gospel!”

OF COURSE it would! It takes a miracle to open ANYONE’S eyes to the gospel! Because outside of Christ we were all blinded by our rebellion. Outside of Christ we were all dead in our sin. The Apostle Paul said that in his letter to the Ephesians. He said, don’t forget Christians:

you were dead in the trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1 ESV)

Salvation is always a miracle. Salvation is the act of God bringing dead people to life. You may think your loved one is EXTRA dead. You may think she's in need of a SUPER miracle. But every salvation is a miracle. Every Christian you see sitting in this room is a living, breathing miracle. We were all dead in our sins, enslaved to our desires, unwilling and unable to seek after God. But God, being rich in mercy, MIRACULOUSLY SAVED us! Because that's what He does. And, listen closely evangelist, that is what He will CONTINUE to do.

If you don't understand that, then you'll never be useful in evangelism.

The effectiveness of your evangelism is not dependant on your natural eloquence or charisma. Your giftedness, or lack-there-of, cannot bring dead people to life. Only God can.

So, stop being crippled by your feelings of inadequacy. It keeps you out of the mission field and it angers God. Did you know that? It ANGERS God! Do you remember the story of how God revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush? God sent Moses on an impossible task! He told Moses that He would provide the miracle. Moses just needed to go. But do you remember that Moses said?

“Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.” <sup>11</sup> Then the Lord said to him, “Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? <sup>12</sup> Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.” <sup>13</sup> But he said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.” <sup>14</sup> **Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses** (Exodus 4:10-14a ESV)

Are you feeling that rebuke this morning? Our fear is not cute to God. Our unwillingness to engage with our friends and our neighbors because of our insecurities is not a small matter in God's eyes. In fact, it makes Him angry! It betrays a lack of trust that God will go before us. It shows that we don't really believe that God will do what He said he would do.

You don't feel equipped to reach your neighbors? You don't think you'll be able to persuade them? You are slow of speech and of tongue? You're worried you want have an eloquent answer for all of their questions? PERFECT! You're right where God wants you! What God requires is not eloquence or charisma. What he requires is faith and obedience. Surrender that to Him, and watch Him bring about miracles of salvation all around you.

“How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (Romans 10:15b ESV)

Amen? Amen. Finally, we learn in this story that:

#### **Lesson 4: Repentance is not optional**

This, of course, is where we see the enormous difference between the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus. The rich young ruler went away sad because he loved his possessions more than he loved Jesus. Zacchaeus, however, wasted no time in following through. He said:

“Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” (Luke 19:8b ESV)

This response went far and above anything that was prescribed in the Mosaic law. Leviticus 6, for example, describes the steps that should be taken if one Israelite defrauds another. We read in verses 4-5:

if he has sinned and has realized his guilt and will restore what he took by robbery or what he got by oppression or the deposit that was committed to him or the lost thing that he found <sup>5</sup> or anything about which he has sworn falsely, he shall restore it in full and shall **add a fifth to it**, and give it to him to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt. (Leviticus 6:4-5 ESV)

So, according to the Mosaic Law, if you cheated your neighbor out of 10 dollars, you were to give him back his ten dollars plus another two on top as a sign of your repentance and a show of good faith. But Zacchaeus blows this out of the water! He says, “Forget adding a fifth! If I’ve tricked anyone out of ten dollars, I’m going to pay him back FORTY! And then I’m going to give HALF of all of my money to the poor!”

I want to make sure you see an important detail this morning, so I want to ask you a question: When did Jesus proclaim that salvation had come to Zacchaeus’ household? Was it when Zacchaeus scurried through the crowd? Was it when Zacchaeus climbed up into that tree and waved his hand at Jesus? No. Look again at verse 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.”<sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, “**Today** salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. (Luke 19:8-9 ESV)

Jesus didn’t operate with one set of rules for the rich young ruler and another set of rules for Zacchaeus. The bar never moved! Jesus gave the same radical call to repentance to both the rich man and Zacchaeus. One man held onto his sin and let go of Jesus. The other man let go of his sin and received salvation.

Zacchaeus proved to be a true son of Abraham. Abraham laid his son on the altar. Zacchaeus laid his wealth on the altar. Both men demonstrated with their actions that they believe that God is worth more than anything that this world has to offer.

When salvation comes – when a person’s eyes are opened to the Gospel of Jesus Christ – they’re not interested anymore in asking, “How much can I get away with?” They’re asking, “How close can I get to JESUS and what can I do to begin to set things right?” Thabiti Anyabwile says it so well:

Repentance isn’t complete until there is justice given to those we’ve sinned against. We cannot say we are repentant and following Christ if we intend to leave unaddressed and unchanged the wrongs we have committed against others.<sup>7</sup>

Now, that’s not to say that true, authentically saved Christians will never backslide into sin. Please don’t hear me saying that. This story isn’t teaching us that salvation is accompanied by *perfection*. It’s teaching us that salvation is always accompanied by legitimate, life-transforming repentance.

So, as we conclude, I want to put out an invitation to those of you who are being drawn this morning.

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10 ESV)

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<sup>7</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Luke*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2018), 281.

Is that you? Are you lost in your sin? Lost in your addiction? Lost in this broken world that has no answers for the questions you're asking? Are you feeling lost in your family? Or lost in the crowd? Jesus sees right through the crowd. He knows your name. He **MUST** meet with you today.

Today, salvation can come to your home.

But you need to understand that this will change **EVERYTHING**.

That sin you're holding onto can't come with you. That sinful relationship needs to come to an end. That greed, that anger, that lust, that pride – it has to go. If you're going to receive this gift then you need to say in faith with Abraham, and Zacchaeus, and all of the brothers and sisters in the room with us this morning that God's plan for you is **BETTER**. Jesus is better!

We began this morning with a quote from the great missionary Jim Elliot. He and his friends laid down their lives to bring the gospel to a people group who had never heard the name of Jesus. To the watching world, it looked like foolishness. Jim Elliot lost everything for the sake of Christ. But, as Jim Elliot wrote in his journal:

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain that which he cannot lose.<sup>8</sup>

Sinner, let go of your sin. Christian, let go of your fear. The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. Who are we to neglect the task that our Savior bled and died for? This is our call to action. And this is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.jesusisprecious.org/missions/he\\_is\\_no\\_fool.htm](http://www.jesusisprecious.org/missions/he_is_no_fool.htm). Accessed July 29, 2020.