

Jesus Seeks Lost sinners

Luke 19:1-6

March 5, 2023

Well, I'd like to invite you to turn in your Bibles to Luke 19, Luke 19. Little hooray for getting into a yet another chapter of Luke's Gospel. They seem to come slowly to us, don't they? But Luke 19 in verse 1, and this is the account of a lost sinner who sought the Savior. It's also the account of the Savior who came to seek a lost sinner.

Zacchaeus, the lost sinner, he wanted to see Jesus, and so he sought him. And Jesus the Savior, we find out, came seeking Zacchaeus. So the question is, who was seeking whom? It's a very simple story. Simple account. It is typical to Luke as he records this narrative. He does not at all guild the lily. He does not try to overdo or over tell the story, but what he puts into the text is beautiful in its simplicity but it's also deeply, deeply meaningful. Very, very profound theology and explanation of salvation comes in this very simple narrative.

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And there is as we're presented with the seeking savior and the seeking sinner, we ask that question who is seeking whom? In his book, *The Message of Salvation*, Pastor Philip Graham Ryken, he pastored for a long time the Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a renowned church. But he relayed in this book, *The Message of Salvation*," this illustration that was made famous by the well known Bible teacher Donald Gray Barnhouse.

And Donald Gray Barnhouse tried to use this illustration to help people understand the doctrine of election. "He asked them to imagine a cross like the one on which Jesus died, only so large that it had a door in it. And over the door were these words from Revelation, 'whosoever will may come.' These words represent the free and universal offer of the Gospel. By God's grace, the message of salvation is for everyone. Every man, woman, and child who will come to the cross is invited to believe in Jesus Christ and enter eternal life. On the other side of the door, a happy surprise awaits the one who believes and enters. From the inside, anyone glancing back can see these words from Ephesians written above the door, 'chosen in Christ

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before the foundation of the world.' Election is best understood in hindsight, for it is only after coming to Christ that one can know whether one has been chosen in Christ. Those who make a decision for Christ find that God made a decision for them in eternity past." End Quote.

What a wonderful mystery as the free decisions, and the free conscious choices of moral agents, intersect. On the one hand the sinner, but on the other hand, the God of Heaven. We see those intersect here in the text before us as Zacchaeus of his own free will seeks the Savior and Jesus too of his free will and, we would say, his sovereign free will. He seeks Zacchaeus. His will and the will of Zacchaeus align in perfect, harmonious, beautiful simplicity here in this profound story of salvation.

And which will be primary, which will is primary, which initiative to seek takes precedence over the other. Well, let's just read these few verses and see what light the text here sheds on our question. Luke 19:1, "He" that is Jesus, "he entered Jericho and was passing through and there was a man

named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and 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.

“And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and he said to him, Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today. So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled. ‘He’s gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.’ 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 four fold.’ 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.’”

This account of the salvation of Zacchaeus represents a really, what’s a climax in Jesus Ministry? It’s obviously not the climax which comes at the Cross, the Resurrection, and all that happens in about a week’s time in Jerusalem. But this does

represent something of a climax in Jesus' ministry. And considering where we've just come from in Luke's Gospel, it sort of sums up everything that we've seen starting back in Luke 18 verse 9.

If you want to look back there, everything from Luke 18:9 on into what we see today and concluding with what, where we are today, this sort of sums up everything. This account kind of puts on display everything that we have been seeing in the previous chapter, as well as the theme that Luke has been tracing from the very beginning, that Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

And Luke seems to rejoice in the fact that Jesus, he seeks and saves even the most distant of sinners, even the most reprehensible of sinners. We, some people will call the Gospel of Luke the Gospel for the outcasts. That's why I probably find so much comfort in it, you know? But it all comes together in the salvation of Zacchaeus.

So just to show you this, going back to Luke 18:9. The, the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, who went up to the temple to pray. It's the tax collector, surprisingly to everybody who's listening, who finds salvation. And he found salvation, why, because he humbled himself before God, and therefore he went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee.

The Pharisee who everybody lauded and praised as righteous and the, the very paragon of virtue. He seemed to be the one who would gain salvation, but he did not. Is it any accident that Zacchaeus just happens to be a tax collector too? In the next account we see parents bringing their children to Jesus to seek his blessing upon the little ones, even their infants. And Jesus commends the parents for that saying in verse 16, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the Kingdom of God."

Is it just a coincidence that we see Zacchaeus behaving in such a childlike manner? He's like a little kid who faces an obstacle that gets in the way of getting what he wants and he

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finds a way around it. In this case, he doesn't care what the adults in his world think. He's scrambles right up this Sycamore tree to hang out on the branches and look through the leaves and get a look at Jesus.

He's not going to let anything impede his desires. Zacchaeus's reception of Jesus, it's like a little child. His reception of Jesus is like a child, and it's mirrored only by Jesus' warm reception of him. Again, coincidence?

In the account of the rich young ruler, the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus, they share in common that they're both wealthy. Almost beyond our comprehension, they're wealthy. But there are several important contrasts that distinguish and contrast these two characters and separate them from one another. The ruler is a ruler because he rules over a synagogue. He's the most important man, guiding and overseeing all the religious functions of a religious community.

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The whole design of the synagogue is to perpetuate the principles of righteousness and justice through the law of Moses. It's to enculturate the next generation, which is what an institution is to do. It's to form and shape and enculturate. And that's what he's doing. He's doing what's virtuous.

Zacchaeus, by contrast, he's a part of an institution that perpetuates unrighteousness and injustice. He's a servant of the abusive taxation system that is imposed by their Roman oppressors. Very much a contrast. By all appearances, the rich young ruler comes to Jesus, an apparently and outwardly moral man.

Zacchaeus, by contrast, it's widely assumed and very apparent to everybody that he's an immoral man. The ruler, rich young ruler, came into his wealth honestly, probably virtuously. Safe to assume that Zacchaeus, by contrast, his wealth came by way of dishonest gain. It was the fruit of injustice, extortion, intimidation, bullying. There's nothing virtuous in the way he got his money.

So the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus, the tax collector, though both have riches in common, they are vastly different men in terms of character, reputation, virtue. So at this point, as we if we were to stop here, we'd see that the rich young ruler compares far more favorably than Zacchaeus, who is a despised, hated tax collector.

That said, as we go to the back half of each of those stories, two contrasts puts Zacchaeus in a far more favorable light. So first Jesus told the rich young ruler, looking at Luke 18 verse 22, "sell all that you have, distribute to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven." And then verse 23, "but he became very sad, for he was extremely rich." We knew he walked away.

Zacchaeus, also very wealthy. He receives no command from the Lord, and yet he resolves to give half of his possessions to the poor, and to use the other half to rectify all his wrongs. Pretty remarkable, right? Second, we see is the rich young ruler walked away sad. Jesus said in verse 24, "How difficult for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God. It's easier

for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

And yet here we see Zacchaeus, it's what Jesus said in verse 27, he, he actually meant it when he said “What's impossible with man is possible with God.” Again, it's very remarkable. But it's more than remarkable, isn't it? I mean, what we're seeing here is God doing in Zacchaeus what is impossible. Jesus said it's impossible with men. Only possible with God.

The story of Zacchaeus shows God accomplishing the impossible. He does it in and through the ministry of Jesus. And Zacchaeus is a reprehensible tax collector. He's a traitor to his nation. He's, as he's represented here, a little more than a child, with nothing to commend him, nothing to regard him, no merit at all in his favor. And even worse, according to Jesus, he's, he's a wealthy man.

He's a wealthy man, which would create a stumbling block for him. And yet his riches, possessions galore, all to choke out his heart, stifle his affection, and blind his eyes, somehow, like a camel fitting through the eye of a needle, he comes through. We mentioned blindness. In the story of Zacchaeus, we see a favorable comparison to Jesus' encounter, don't we, with a blind man, who we just read about in the previous chapter, end of the chapter, blind Bartimaeus and his friend.

The blind man, in contrast to the massive throng of people surrounding him, all who had the benefit of their sight, they were able to, able to see and walk and take their steps and follow after Jesus, and run down the street, and do jobs, and have families. The blind man, in contrast to all of them who could see, he was able to see what they could not see. He had a deeper sight than any of them. He had the gift of spiritual sight when others around him did not.

Turns out this man Zacchaeus he has the same ability. How does he have this same ability? Because he has received, he's

been a recipient of the operation of sovereign grace. It's clear evidence. So let's consider this Zacchaeus as he's first drawn to Jesus and then as he's awakened to new life. So here's a first point. Only two points for this morning. So here's a first, number one. Zacchaeus the seeking sinner. Zacchaeus the seeking sinner.

We see Luke is connecting us to the previous account there in verse 1, just a very short statement. He entered Jericho and was passing through. That's just a point of reference. It connects us to the same city. So same city, same setting, same time frame, as last week. Remember, Jesus was outside the city when he met blind Bartimaeus and his friend on the road to Jericho.

That healing encounter took place outside the city gates, along the roadside and open space. But after that, he goes back inside the city of Jericho, verse 1, and he's passing through. The verb tense there indicates that he's, he's walking along, and it pictures him moving through the city, not aimlessly, but really with intent. Just a brief word about the setting that

Luke gives us here, and Luke quickly moves us on to think about the man, this man Zacchaeus.

Luke describes him in verse 2 and then he shows us what this man wanted in verse 3, and then he describes how he put himself in a position to get what he wanted in verse 4. So the man, what he wanted, and putting himself in a position to get it. That's kind of the order of two versus 2, 3 and 4. It starts out in verse 2, "And behold," and behold, "there was a man named Zacchaeus.

Luke is calling our attention to a man. He's really grabbing our attention. It's like he's grabbing our face and turning us to look at this guy. Behold, this man seeking Jesus; Luke sees him as something very out of the ordinary. This is not, this is not the common experience Jesus has had, and he gives us three particulars to help him see why.

First, the man's name is Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name Zaccai. It's a name that you

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can find actually written in Ezra 2:9 and Nehemiah 7:14. Some of the, some of the exiles who came back into the land with Ezra and Nehemiah and the name Zaccai. The, it's from the verb *zakak* and it's related to the adjective *zak*. And it means pure, it means clear.

So the adjective *zak*, it means pure, it means clear to describe the quality of the olive oil that had to be used in the temple to keep the menorah lit. So clear, pure olive oil, pure oil, clear. And that literal use of the term, that literal meaning, resulted in a figurative usage, the quality of purity and clarity that ought to characterize someone's life.

This is what the life of virtue or integrity looks like. Purity, clarity. Proverbs 20 verse 11, "Even a child makes himself known by his acts whether his conduct is pure and upright." Same word there. So from his Hebrew name we know that Zacchaeus was a Jew, and from his name we can assume his parents had godly aspirations for Zacchaeus. They hoped that he would, like all parents do for their kids, he, they hoped that he would live up to his name. That his conduct would be pure, that it

would be upright. That his path would be clear before him. Clarity in the path of righteousness. Sadly, it was not to be, he's blown that. Luke describes him further, that he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. Chief tax collector, and he was rich. It means he was good at his job as a tax collector.

Zacchaeus, at some point, must have chosen to dive to the bottom of a filthy cesspool of social outcasts. Because that's what tax collection business was all about. He chose the most disreputable profession, especially considering Israel and its situation underneath the Roman oppressors. Worse, he was being paid very well for it, for he was the kind of man who was able to trade his reputation for money. Much like the stereotype of modern day politicians. They don't care anymore about truth or honesty. They just care about money and, and kickbacks and favors, and all that brings us to the second point of interest in this man's bio, that Zacchaeus was a tax collector.

Actually, Luke says he's a chief tax collector, which means he sat at the very top of the tax system in Jericho. And to pull that off, he had to be, I mean, he was no dummy. He was an

intelligent man. He had to be a very skilled, shrewd, conniving, we should say, politician. He was good at getting what he wanted. He was good at backroom deals. He was good at the art of compromise, at the art of making a deal.

Last week we spent some time getting acquainted with the city of Jericho itself. We learned that Jericho really sits at a strategic economic crossroads in the world, in that region. So all kinds of goods and trade and money flowing in and out of Jericho, all kinds of people in and out of Jericho, those serving the Herodian dynasty. The Herodian dynasty had made Jericho its winter quarters, its winter getaway place, because it was warmer and, and pleasant.

So all those serving that dynasty, all the priests and the Levites who served in the Jerusalem temple, many of them lived in Jericho. Caravans of traders that passed through and all of their entourage, all the people who served. We talked about this last time, the balsam industry, production to sales, to distribution in that entire industry. Everything from perfumes

to medicines to oils. All that supported that industry and trade was there in Jericho.

Don't forget the soldiers who were there, who are keeping the city safe from marauders and invaders. Everybody who attends and tries to get the soldiers money who are far away from home and willing to spend trying to get their money and make it change hands. So all kinds of people living and working in Jericho, serving the populace of Jericho. It's a cosmopolitan city. A lot of languages kind of flowing in and out of there. Very wealthy city. Probably lots of very good food in that city. Lots of joy and pleasures of this world and temporal pleasures and joys and all the rest.

So this meant, because Jericho was so prosperous and so industrious, Rome kept a very close eye on Jericho. Made sure that the customs, the tariffs, the toll taxes are all tracked well, carefully collected, properly accounted for and the full revenue sent back to Rome. Just a little insight into how that works. The Roman Senate back in Rome created tax franchise that, franchises that they would sell to rich businessmen in Rome, in

and around Rome, from the Equatorial class of Romans. So these are Romans who buy these franchises, tax franchises. They are from the wealthiest class of Roman society.

These uber wealthy businessmen, they would bid for this franchise contract. And after they won, won the contract they would pay the bid price itself into the public treasury of Rome. So the reference to that is *in publicum*, *in publicum* and hence the name *publicani*, or *publicany* or *publican*. We understand it as publican. These are Romans, publicans from the Equatorial class of the Romans, most of them are Romans.

They are the ones who held the tax contracts, and they hired these tax collectors, unscrupulous men from the native population, in this case, from among the Jews. These are Jewish men, so Jewish tax collectors. *Telones* is the word. They are the ones who run the day to day operations of tax collection.

You have to understand, by operating one of these tax franchises, one of these sites of tax collection, these

unprincipled men already making a deal with the devil, so to speak, to get money from their own people. Already they're unscrupulous, they're unprincipled men. And so they apply that not only upward to get what they want, but then downward to fleece the flock. To take every advantage of their own people. And they did that.

Whatever came through their tax houses, whatever goods passed through the customs office, that *telones* is there. The tax collector is there to examine bales of goods, examine what's on the caravan coming through, what's on the wagon coming through, whether it's imported or exported, whatever is coming in or going out of the city. They assessed values more or less arbitrarily. Whatever they thought they could get away with, then they wrote up the tax bill, demanded payment.

For business owners who were in town operating a business locally, maybe those who bought wholesale goods, or who traded with the caravans of traders, or just had things that they wanted to sell, even food or whatever it was. For the business owners in town for the common people, tax collectors hired

others under them to do the work of actually collecting those taxes. So whoever refused to pay them voluntarily, or whoever did not pay on time, they hired street thugs to go and coerce payment. And that created just another layer of an opportunity for extortion, since this hired muscle added an additional percentage on top of the required amount.

According to William Smith, "Tax collectors overcharged whenever they had the opportunity. They brought false charges of smuggling in the hopes of extorting hush money, and they detained and opened letters on mere suspicion. It was the basest of all livelihoods. They were regarded as traitors and apostates, defiled by their frequent intercourse with the heathen willing tools of the Roman oppressor." End Quote.

It's one of these men, these *telones*, a tax collector. Keep in mind one of these kinds of people is who Jesus called to be one of his disciples. It's one of these whom Jesus chose to be one of his twelve apostles. Luke 5:27 says, "After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax

booth and he said to him, 'Follow me' and, leaving everything, he rose followed him."

And Levi, we know him as Matthew. He's the writer of the Gospel of Matthew. We know that he was not some two-bit street thug. He hired people like that, but he was the one who was in charge of them. He had employees working for him at all different levels in his own tax house. He was their boss, but he was certainly responsible for everything that goes on underneath him.

Coming back to Luke, 19:2, Zacchaeus, he's not just a *telones*. He's at a higher level than Matthew. He's higher than a *telones*, a tax collector. Zacchaeus is an *architelones*, a chief tax collector. So he employed a number of men like Matthew, with their own tax collectors, each over different tax houses, maybe doing different duties around the city and around that region. So he's got tentacles reaching out to all different levels of customs and commerce, and he's collecting all the different kinds of taxes that Rome could devise.

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So think of Zacchaeus, he's at the apex of this massive tax enterprise, he's a very powerful and a very wealthy man. Since this is the only place in New Testament where we find this title, *architelones*, we don't know for certain his exact rank or his exact position, but he is at a very high level. And it's more at a strategic level, an operational level, so to speak. He's at a political level, he's got close interaction with Roman officials. He's in constant communication with Rome since Jericho is of interest to Rome.

So think of Zacchaeus, and some commentators even call him this, that he is like a tax commissioner. He's the commissioner of taxes and customs for the city of Jericho. That's the level he's at. He's an important figure to Rome, okay? But he's a despised and much maligned, hated, figure among his own people.

Still, Rome paid him well. And with that paycheck, with that salary, with that, with the money con, constantly pouring in, so much money he doesn't know what to do with, he hoped that money would help him forget the social price that he had to pay

for all this. Which brings us to the third description of Zacchaeus, namely that he was rich. He was rich.

We get an idea of how rich down in verse 8, when he vows to give half of his possessions to the poor. We're not talking, when we say possessions, we don't mean just what's in the bank account. We mean possessions. All the real estate he's bought up. All the businesses that he's bought up and operates. All the households that he runs and is over.

His possessions, half of it to the poor. And he vowed to use the other half to pay back four-fold whatever he had extorted from anyone else. Man, that had to be a pretty hefty sum considering all the, the graft and the kickbacks and extortion and everything that was happening underneath him. He was far richer than any of us can imagine.

That's how Luke introduces Zacchaeus to us, by his name, by his job, and by his wealth. Now we could imagine, if we put on our thinking caps here, we can imagine how all three of these

descriptors, his name, his job, his wealth, all three of those things for Zacchaeus, become reasons for his growing sense of discontentment.

To loosen the moorings, that all that is held upon his heart, and cause him to want to see this Jesus. We can imagine how these are constant, all three of these things, his, his name, his job, his wealth, with all three of these are constant reminders to him of this deep and abiding and a growing feeling of disappointment and dissatisfaction, always nagging at him. His conscience bothering him.

As anyone with means will tell you, money does not buy happiness. They can say it over and over again, jump up and down, stomp their feet, scream it out, make big signs and banners and tell you money does not buy happiness and what does everybody who doesn't have money do? Continue pursuing money to buy happiness. But they will tell you, money doesn't buy happiness. In fact, money can often create far more severe headaches, create more bitter sorrows, create more superficial

friends, sycophants surrounding you, always wanting to get their hands in your pocket.

People who are always yes men, nodding, saying yes to whatever you say, and counting you as great in your brilliance and eloquence, because they really just want to flatter you, laying a trap for your feet to get stuff that you have and make it their own. Money does not buy happiness, and in fact it creates a lot of challenges.

For Zacchaeus, his wealth had become like golden handcuffs. Keeping him tied to his job as tax commissioner of Jericho. Big title, but man, big responsibilities. It sounds prestigious, with a great salary, kickbacks, perks, benefits. But the job, the possessions that he could afford, the home that he lived in was like a golden cage with Zacchaeus locked up inside.

The wealth? Yeah, it was the reward for his compromise. To be in league with Rome, to be judged a traitor to his nation, to his people, and long ago the shine of the money had since worn

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off. And underneath the glory, the glamour of a big paycheck and a big title is the ball and chain of the actual job. He's trapped between the high expectations and the relentless demands of Rome, above him on the one hand, and then below him on the other hand the seething hatred of his people.

People from whom he took taxes and customs and tariffs and dues. Those whom, his own people, from whom they had extorted money and bullied and intimidated. He had to walk down the street and see those people. Enslaved to the Roman machine, caught up in the gears of its oppression, Zacchaeus had become a tool of its oppression, thereby alienating all the people that he'd ever wanna spend the money with. Got all the money in the world and no one around to do anything with, with it.

So these disappointments in his wealth, in his job, had to bring him to the, I'm sure the, the deepest disappointment of all, the one that he had tried to block out of his conscience, the thing that he wanted to silence and ignore as much as possible, but for some reason now I think it's starting to bubble to the surface. He's not at all living up to his name,

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Zacchaeus, is he? The name Zacchaeus bestowed upon him by his Jewish parents, high hopes for his character, of integrity, of moral purity, of ethical clarity, let them down long, long ago.

That had to eat away at his soul. That had to crush his heart. And it's, over the years, when you start down that path you do a really good job, when you've got energy, of drowning that in drink and pleasurable company. You do a really good job of drowning that in busyness. In celebrating the money and the rewards and the opportunities and the businesses you purchased, in the real estate you purchased and all the great deals you've made. But as you get older and all that wears thin. It all comes creeping back, doesn't it?

That's why David, you see him praying to the Lord, saying, "Lord, do not remember the sins of my youth." They kept revisiting him and he had to go back to the Lord. The sins of his youth is coming back to eat him. Eat away at his soul. Torment his conscience.

So maybe all this is coming to a head for him on this particular day when Jesus came to Jericho. Maybe, maybe this is what is stirring in his heart on this particular day and why, as we read in verse 3, he was seeking to see who Jesus was. No doubt, Zacchaeus had heard of Jesus already since the reports about him had saturated the entire land.

Only several weeks earlier, as we've been talking about, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead just up the road in Bethany. That, quazed, caused quite a stir in Jerusalem. The news had reached down to Jericho. And now, lo and behold, here is this very Jesus. He's arrived. He's here. Everybody's talking about him. He's here in Jericho. In fact, he's done a miracle right outside the gates.

Accounts of Jesus' ministry had been known far and wide as he came preaching the kingdom of God and healing; stories of miraculous power, him casting out demons, his creating food for thousands of people. Accounts of Jesus' boldness, standing up to these pretentious, sanctimonious Jewish leaders, putting them in their place.

Or the authority of his manner. Just his very personal being as his presence, his bearing, the way he taught, the way he spoke. He was not at all like the scribes who cited rabbis and sources *ad infinitum, ad nauseam*. Jesus didn't do that. He spoke with an inherent authority, with a clear understanding of scripture out of a relational familiarity with the God of Scripture. He knew his Bible and he knew the God of the Bible. And it was clear, and it was obvious.

Of particular interest to Zacchaeus, though, in all the stories that have been told about Jesus, of everything that he heard about his teaching and his power and his works, one particular thing caught his attention, that Jesus had called and chosen a tax collector to become one of his closest disciples. Now that's interesting.

Also he'd heard, that if this Jesus has any black mark on his reputation, it's that he kept company with tax collectors and sinners, huh? We read that in Luke 15:1, "Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And

the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying this man receives sinners," and, "eats with them."

Zacchaeus had to be encouraged by that, that he would have table fellowship with such reprobates, the refuse of society, the outcasts of all outcasts; that he would not only talk to them, be in their presence, but he would enter into table fellowship, sit down and have a meal. Which for any Jew, they did not do that with those kinds of people.

That was to enter into a state of uncleanness. Ceremonially, ritually defiled, can't come to the temple. This is very well known about him, about Jesus, ever since the very earliest days of his ministry in Galilee. We read about that in Matthew 11:19, Luke 7:34, that Jesus was even accused of being a glutton and a drunkard. Why would that be? Because he was a friend of tax collectors and sinners.

No way he could be a friend of tax collectors and sinners if he's done chowing down like they are and drinking as much as

they are. So he's a glutton and a drunkard. Slander, obviously. But that was his reputation. So Zacchaeus is thinking to himself, Could this be? Could it be that this friend of tax collectors and sinners, he's here in my city at this time? It's been a long time since Zacchaeus could call anyone friend. Since he'd known anything like a friend.

He had associates. He had business partners, employees. He had a list of sinners and derelicts that he could call up, hire by the hour. Sure, but a friend? Might Jesus condescend to offer Zacchaeus such a thing as friendship? He had to see for himself.

I mean, wouldn't you? Wouldn't you? I mean, if you've ever come to see the depth of your own sin. If you've ever discovered the offense that you have been to other people. The hurt that you have brought. Pain that you've caused. If you've ever known what it's like to be the talk of the town, and not in a good way. To be ostracized, to be put down, and to know for certain when you're honest with yourself that it really is your own fault.

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If ever your conscience, as you think about the law of God, has joined in the chorus with everyone else, condemning you as guilty and vile and worthless as a sinner, and therefore you are justly rejected and condemned. We read about this earlier as David, he had this sense of guilt and shame, didn't he? It welled up within him. Psalm 38:3 and following. And I'd venture to say that every true Christian has experienced this sense of shame at one time or another, to one degree or another, every Christian has had it.

David writes this, "There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation. There's no health in my bones because of my sin." He takes personal ownership, doesn't he? My iniquities have gone over my head. I'm drowning. They're like a heavy burden, too heavy for me. I'm crushed underneath the guilt of my own sin. I'm ashamed. My wounds stink and fester. I can't go out in public. It's because of my foolishness, he says.

Down in verse 10, Psalm 38, David continues, "My heart throbs, my strength is failing me. The light of my eyes, it's also gone from me," and then this, "my friends and my companions

stand aloof from my plague." Why? They don't want to get any on them.

They don't want their own conscience to start coming to visit them, be awakened. They stay away. My nearest kin, David says. Stand far off, even my family members. Again, for Zacchaeus, the wealth has lost its shine. His job is his prison. And the only thing that matters, the reputation of his character, that's long gone.

Who keeps him company? No friends. None that he doesn't have to pay for anyway. Purchase the pleasure of their company. His only companions are Roman overlords with constant demands and his tax collector associates. Those whose loyalty he buys with a paycheck. The thugs, the prostitutes, the drunkards they join in his misery. They enjoy the free food and the free drink that he provides, and all of them together collectively drown out their sorrows.

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Even, like David, his nearest kin, his family, they have probably disowned him. Many tax collectors were excommunicated from the synagogue, outcasts, unable to come in public and worship in public gatherings. We don't know for sure how much or how little these thoughts are occupying his mind.

But something is explaining this relentless, shameless, shameless effort, really to see Jesus. It says in verse 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. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way." The verbs there in verse 3, he was seeking and then he could not, or, more literally, he was unable.

Those verbs are in the imperfect tense. It, it portrays in the past repeated attempts to see Jesus, he was repeatedly seeking and repeatedly unable to do so. So, he's repeatedly trying to see Jesus, and repeatedly frustrated in trying to see Jesus because of the size of the crowd, which was large, and the contrast of his own size, which was not. So he kept on trying, kept on seeking, but he kept on being thwarted in his efforts.

As a shorter man, smaller of stature, he couldn't see over the crowd to get a glimpse of Jesus. And being a rather unpopular man, no doubt despised by many of these same people, he couldn't press into the crowd or very easily pass through the crowd. In fact, maybe he was even loath to do that, a little bit intimidated to try that.

But being an intelligent and resourceful man. He finds another solution to the problem. He didn't rise to the place of tax commissioner for no reason. We're going to see more about his thoughtfulness and his intellect next time. But as a resourceful man, intelligent man Zacchaeus notes where the procession is going.

He runs ahead, climbs up one of the sycamore trees that lined the streets of Jericho. They had a kind of a, a thick trunk and low hanging branches so it's easy for any kid. Kids love climbing trees, don't they? I've got five of them. Loved it. They were always at the top of trees.

But anyway, so these, he climbs up this tree just like a little kid would do. He just jumps into the branches and kind of perches up there and finds a nice, nice place to rest and wait. Elevated vantage point for a shorter man. Again, there's this childlike way about him, isn't there?

And at this point, and I say it's shameless because he has no sense of shame here. He's got no sense of self consciousness, no sense of public propriety or concern about that. There's no thought here about how a man of his position and stature, with his level of wealth, there's not a thought in his head of being noticed and laughed at and mocked and mercilessly scorned.

Which, if anybody noticed him, that's what would happen. Amazing, considering this Middle Eastern culture, this Middle Eastern context. Men just didn't do things like this. They never ran in public. Most certainly they did not climb trees, just crazy. What explains this?

Again, Luke 18:17, "Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child shall not enter into it." Which stated positively, whoever does receive the kingdom of God like a child, he shall enter into it. Clearly his heart and his mind have been, are being, prepared to receive Jesus. Now that we've seen Zacchaeus, the seeking sinner, let's consider a second point.

Number two, Jesus the seeking Savior. Jesus the seeking Savior. Zacchaeus may have been seeking Jesus. But we come to find out it was Jesus, who had been seeking him all along, verse 5 says, "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.'"

Whatever is going on in Zacchaeus' heart, whatever caused him to run on ahead, whatever compelled him to climb up into that sycamore tree, listen, the real force driving Zacchaeus to seek Jesus, sovereign grace is at work, invisibly, mysteriously, to chase down and compel this lost sinner, to drive him, to his

Savior to find salvation. Several evidences here of sovereign grace in these two verses.

Again sovereign grace working invisibly, working mysteriously, working providentially to bring this desperately lost sinner into a close personal contact with his seeking Savior. First the text says "when Jesus came" or as Jesus came. What's that doing? That's marking the time, isn't it? Then when Jesus came to the place, what's that doing? That marks the location. And then finally "when Jesus came to the place, he looked up."

What made Jesus look up? At that particular time in that particular place, what made him look up? Does the text say Jesus spotted a funny sight, little man climbing around the tree, scurrying around? No, it doesn't say that. Does it say someone in the crowd noticed Zacchaeus in the tree and said something to him? No.

What made Jesus look up? It was the right time and the right place. And the text is actually explicit in stating it that way and drawing attention to time and place. He'd come to the place, the specific place; we could even say the appointed place. And he looked up at precisely the right time, lots of trees up and down those streets in Jericho. He looked up at precisely the right time as he was passing the exact place where Zacchaeus was.

Folks, this is nothing less than sovereign appointment. The providential working of God to put Zacchaeus on the path of intercept. So that Jesus seeking Zacchaeus would surely find him. The time is now. The place is here in Jericho at this particular sycamore tree. Time for what? Place for what? For salvation to come to Zacchaeus.

We see the second piece of evidence here of sovereign grace in how Jesus addressed him. He addressed him by name. He looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus. We can only imagine how Jesus said that to him, Zacchaeus. And we can only imagine the contrast of, how often Zacchaeus had heard his name spoken in a,

a much less flattering manner, with revulsion, for years, people spitting the name out. Almost reminding him of how his name itself was a contradiction to everything that he is.

Setting that aside, the fact that Jesus knew his name at all. I mean this one man and these swollen streets of Jericho surrounded by this crush of this crowd. Some commentators suppose Jesus heard Zacchaeus' name from some bystander. Someone in the crowd identified the despised tax commissioner and called him out, exposed him, telled, told everyone he's up there sitting in a tree.

Listen, I don't deny that possibility, but I think that doesn't fit the context. I don't think it fits the narrative, which is very precise in noting the time and the place. Luke does not portray Jesus as just happening to look up. As in, oh look, I found one of my lost sheep. How lucky. Jesus doesn't accidentally stumble over Zacchaeus.

In fact, Luke doesn't show Jesus doing anything, accidentally haphazardly. Everything Jesus does in this Gospel is intentional, purposeful, even to the time of his death. The moment that he chooses to give us his spirit. He's in sovereign control.

By the same logic and with the evidence in the, in the text, the narrative does not portray Jesus getting Zacchaeus' name from some bystander. This is sovereignly determined. This is divinely imparted knowledge. And this is not the first time something like this has occurred either.

Earlier in Jesus' ministry, right at the beginning, John 1:47, "Jesus saw Nathaniel coming toward him and said of him, 'Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit.' And Nathaniel said to him, 'how do you know me?' And Jesus answered." Listen, the guys told me all about you, Nathaniel. I've been learning all about your back story. It doesn't say that. He says no. "'Before," Phillip, "Phillip called you when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.'" I knew your thoughts. I knew what you were praying about. I knew that you were praying

about Jacob's dream and the ladder reaching from heaven, heaven to earth, with the angels of God ascending and descending. I knew that.

In a similar way, I believe here this is sovereignly imparted, divinely imparted knowledge that the father is making known to the son that this Zacchaeus is one of his lost sheep. One for whom he will soon die, in a week's time, ascending the cross to be punished for Zacchaeus' sins. So at the Spirit's prompting, and by the father's sovereign will, Jesus looks up. He sees one of his own, and he addresses him by name, Zacchaeus.

The reason I imagine Jesus speaking that name in a friendly tone, with a tender and familiar voice, with warmth, with eagerness, is because the Savior, who is gentle and lowly in heart, he would speak that way to one who is so used to being despised by so many. Not only that, but the rest of the account here of what Jesus says makes me hear it that way too.

"Zacchaeus, hurry, come down. I must stay at your house today." One commentator says that Jesus uttered the, uttered these words in a cordial tone. A friendly tone, as if he were speaking to a familiar friend whom he's glad to see and with whom he means to stay that day. What a delightful surprise. That salutation, and how irresistible, it's friendly frankness, verse 6 shows.

Jesus has just met this Zacchaeus at this particular time in this place. In his divine nature, though, he has known Zacchaeus since before the foundation of the world. And so now in his human nature, informed by his divine nature, in his human nature Jesus delights to see this man, one of his own, and to enter into warm fellowship with him.

Third evidence here of sovereign grace in the verse. Jesus said "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." That expression, I must, shows up a lot in Luke's Gospel and Luke's writing in general. The impersonal verb *dei*, D E I, if you want to write that down, it means it is necessary. It is necessary, it must be, and it points to divine necessity,

with one exception, I think, about a dozen uses in Luke, but one exception, but all of them referring to divine compulsion and divine necessity.

As a boy learning at the temple, Jesus said "I must be in my Father's house" when his parents complained that he had, he'd stayed in Jerusalem when the caravan took off. Luke 2:49, "I must be at my Fathers' house." Didn't you know? I mean, you're the adults in my life. Luke 4:43, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well, for I was sent for this purpose." Again, purpose and necessity. Luke 9:22, "The Son of Man must suffer many things. Be rejected, killed and on third day, raised." "The Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say, what you must say." Luke 12:12. And then he says Luke 13:33, "I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following. For it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem."

I'm not going to march through the other half dozen references, but you get the idea. Zacchaeus, I must stay at your house today, it's another evidence of divine compulsion. Here it

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results in the Savior's necessity, what he must do. The emphasis here though, in this verse, the focus isn't actually on the divine necessity, that comes at the end of the verse.

The focus and what's put up to the front is on the word, today. Literally, it's, for today, and then, in your house. Yeah, divine will is driving Jesus, determining his timetable, setting his calendar and his daily itinerary. Everything, but at this moment, that is not the first thing on his mind. Divine will, that's always a given for him. But what is foremost on his mind? It's the joy of table fellowship.

It's the prospect of spending time with his long lost and newly acquired friend, Zacchaeus, my Christian friend. If you have ever in your life entertained any doubt whatsoever about whether your Savior loves you. If you have ever listened to the deceptive whisperings of the enemy, that your dear Savior has somehow grown tired of you, and now, after your salvation, that he's merely tolerating you, that he's simply putting up with you. Let this picture of your Savior, which is written down for your encouragement here in Holy Scripture, let it drive away

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your every doubt, and banish your every vile temptation that deceives you into thinking anything less of his love and his interest for you.

Know this for sure that Jesus loves you; longs for fellowship with you. He truly desires your company, and he offers you the gift and the joy of friendship and the fellowship of communion with himself and with his father in Heaven. What he says to Zacchaeus, he says to each and every one of us.

My beloved Christian friend, hurry, come down for today at your house, and with you, I must stay. Stay here is the verb that's used so thoroughly and richly in John 15. It's the verb *meno*, meaning, abide, remain, stay. He'll have it no other way. And by the sovereign grace of God, neither will the father above.

If you're not yet a Christian, if you have any doubts at all as to whether you are a Christian, you need to listen to the call of Jesus the Savior. Who came, verse 10, "to seek and to

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save the lost." Hurry and come down, enter into the fellowship of salvation in Jesus Christ.

But notice it's not just sovereign grace on display here, it's also irresistible grace as well. In verse 6, Zacchaeus, hurried and came down. He received him joyfully. He, hurried and came down. Same verbs, exactly the same that Jesus used to command Zacchaeus, Luke uses to describe Zacchaeus' behavior. He did exactly as the Lord commanded, so his discipleship is off to a really good start, isn't it? Jesus commands; he hears and obeys. That's discipleship.

He hurried, came down, not only that, but the friendship that Jesus offers Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus received. Again, the word received here, important word, portrays the instinct of salvation, that those who are saved, they receive Jesus, they welcome him, they enter into fellowship with him. And that's exactly what Zacchaeus does here.

He receives the king and thus he receives the kingdom, as Jesus said in Luke 18:17, "like a child." There in Luke 18:17, there, it's the verb *dechomai*, to receive, here in Luke 19:6, the form is intensified with the preposition it's the, it's the verb *hypodechomai*. So *hypo* and then *dechomai*, receive welcome or entertain as a guest. That's how he received him.

In verse 7, we know that Jesus lodges there with Zacchaeus. That he stays the night at his home. One commentator says "Zacchaeus, who only wishes a glimpse of the famous teacher, gets much more. He will host the teacher in his home. He provides hospitality. And he does so readily, eagerly, joyfully."

When we come back next week, we're going to see that salvation comes to Zacchaeus at some point while he walks with Jesus down the road to his house. Whatever Zacchaeus lacked in his knowledge, remember he's grown up as a Jew, in a Jewish Home. He has a Jewish name. He understands the Law. He understands God's holiness, his perfect standard of righteousness.

He understands pretty thoroughly, by intimate acquaintance, his own sin, his own failure to keep the law. So he understands who God is, who he is as a sinner, but what he is not well acquainted with, but just now meeting, he's starting to understand his Savior. Who he is, what he's like, what he's come to do, what he's come to offer. That conversation is one I would love to be a part of, just to follow along behind and just listen in as they walk down the road toward Zacchaeus' house.

And we'll come back to that next time. We don't know the exact timing, of course, of his salvation. Pretty typical for us as Christians, isn't it, that we often fail to discern the precise time of our regeneration? I mean, who can know the mysterious invisible working of the Holy Spirit to cause us to be born again. The exact moment that God caused us by the working of the Spirit to cause us to be born again. Pretty common for us as Christians not to know that precise moment.

One thing that Zacchaeus knows for sure. By this point, is he may have set his will to seek Jesus. And his will then drove

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him up into that tree. And now we know, after meeting Jesus in person, it's abundantly clear that it's been the other way around entirely. He knows, as all of us now know, our salvation was not so much a matter of us seeking him as it was him seeking us.

There's an old poem written by Jean Ingelow in England in 1878. And it starts with this verse, "I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew he moved my soul to seek him, seeking me. It was not I that found, O Saviour true, no, I was found of thee." Those words have been put to song and, as they should, really, and Ren Merry and Jesse Allen are going to come and lead us in singing that song together. And they'll come up now, even as we together bow for a word of prayer.

If you're here and you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ, may today be your time. May this be your place for your salvation if you do not know Christ. Our Father, we thank you for this account. It really kind of caps off the itinerant ministry of Jesus as we see him passing through Jericho to find Zacchaeus, a lost sinner. And many of us have done wrong before

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you and committed sins and Zacchaeus, he'd run the gamut. He'd committed all of them. He'd broken your law like we all have in thought, word, and deed, and committed sins of omission and commission. And he stood before you guilty, in need of your grace. And you, Father, were pleased to deploy the Holy Spirit to drive him to seek the Lord.

You were pleased to send your son on his route to Jerusalem, just before getting there, to have him pass through Jericho. To go that way, that he might find this one lost sinner, this wandering sheep away from your fold. We thank you that we've seen how Jesus found him. Let that be an encouragement to any who are yet to be found by the Lord Jesus Christ. May you be pleased, even this day, to deploy your sovereign grace, to deploy your Spirit and to send them into the path to intersect with Jesus today.

For all those who do know you, may we be reminded of the fellowship that Jesus himself desires with each one of us and let none of us resist. Drop every barrier every, take away every temptation, take every resistance away that we would run, as

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Zacchaeus did, hurry come down into his waiting arms. It's in his name that we pray. Amen.