

The Evidence of True Conversion

Luke 19:7-10

March 12, 2023

Well, I want to ask you to turn to Luke's Gospel this morning as we take another look at Zacchaeus and Jesus. It's a story of salvation, and it's a story of the salvation of one of the most loathed kinds of sinners that there were in the first century world: the tax collectors.

In that song we just sang, talked about the grace of God, "Once your enemy, now seated at your table." And here we're going to see and think about just how much of an enemy, how far gone a person can be and still be rescued by the grace of God. I'd like to introduce our text this morning by starting out not in Luke 19, but just back a few chapters to Luke chapter 5. So find your way back to Luke chapter 5 and verse 27. And I want to introduce the topic this morning and the sermon this morning in

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the calling of Levi, Levi whom we know as Matthew, the writer of the Gospel of Matthew. He also was a tax collector.

And there are parallels between Jesus' seeking and calling of Levi and his seeking and saving of Zacchaeus. Both accounts, obviously, they're about Jesus showing love for tax collectors, bringing the mercy of God to tax collectors. He's even willing to eat and drink with them.

And in both accounts, Matt, Levi in the one hand, Zacchaeus on the other, people, people around him seem to be willing to reject Jesus based on who he embraces, based on who he accepts. They're willing to reject him outright. And no matter what public opinion may be, Jesus does not listen to public opinion. We're so thankful for that. But he stands with those that he came to save.

Look at Luke 5:27 through verse 32, "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 and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his house,

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and there was a large company of tax collectors and others, reclining at the table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?' And Jesus answered them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'"

Just as Zacchaeus rejoiced, remember in our story he rejoiced when Jesus called him down from the tree, "Hurry and come down for today, Zacchaeus, I must stay at your house." He rejoiced to come down from that tree. He came down in a spirit and attitude of joy. Levi, here, too, he rejoices to invite Jesus into his house, to put on this massive, expensive feast for Jesus. He treats the Lord to his generous hospitality.

And when Jesus partakes of this hospitality and eats and drinks and fellowships with him, what happens? He's immediately criticized. He defends his actions and explains his actions in this way: He points to his mission. His mission is, as it says

there, "to call sinners to repentance," to call sinners to repentance.

With that in mind turn over to, now, to Luke 19:1, and notice how the same themes that we see back there in the early days of Jesus' ministry in that account about his sa, salvation and calling of Levi, those same themes show up again in the story of Zacchaeus. There are people who are willing to reject Jesus, and on the basis of who it is that he accepts. And yet Jesus stands firm, standing with, standing alongside, defending those whom he came to seek and to save. That is his mission.

With that in mind, let's read the account again of Zacchaeus, starting in verse one, chapter 19. "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.

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"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.' And so he hurriedly came down and received him joyfully, and when they saw it, they all grumbled, 'He has 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.' And 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 is the only place in the Gospels that I could find where Jesus invited himself over to somebody's house. But Zacchaeus, hearing Jesus invite him over, he's not, he doesn't take any offense, obviously, not at all. He immediately receives Jesus with joy. He welcomes him with open arms, as he should. It says in verse 6, "He hurried and came down and received him joyfully," and so the two of them set off together, surrounded by this massive crowd.

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They're walking down this street in Jericho, the two of them, Shepherd and sheep, Savior and sinner, and they start walking together and talking together and heading to Zacchaeus' house. The Lord comes to Zacchaeus' house, he partakes of Zacchaeus' hospitality, and when we read ahead, we see in verse 11, the next parable that he gives happens in the context of Zacchaeus' house and indicates that Jesus probably stayed the night that night. After giving that parable, we see in verse 28, that's when Jesus departs for Jerusalem, and we head into Passion Week.

But back in verse 7, we see that the crowd doesn't like this at all. Not one bit. They don't like it that Jesus plans to stay at Zacchaeus' house. Why is that? Because as we've said, as we've seen, as, in, throughout our study, not just in this account but all through Luke's Gospel, there was a deep, deep antipathy among the Jews against tax collectors, in particular, all the sinners that are associated with tax collectors as well, but tax collectors in particular. They were the ringleaders at the top with the money to fund all the other thievery and thuggery that was happening underneath them.

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So it's this antipathy towards tax collectors in particular that prompted Jesus' parables about seeking and finding the lost that we went through back in Luke chapter 15. God is, Jesus is telling these parables, telling these stories with a point, God is like a shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep behind to go after that one that's lost until he finds it. God is like a woman who loses a coin in her home, and she diligently searches that entire house until she finds it. God is like a father who loses a son, who watches that horizon every single day, waiting for his son until he returns home and when he returns home, he lavishes his love upon him.

Some of the most beautiful stories ever told, but we need to remember that those stories are parables, and as parables, they are making a point. Why did Jesus tell those parables? He told them to rebuke the censorious attitude of the Jews. He told those parables, and they had a sharp edge, a point that penetrated into this criticizing attitude of the religious people in his day, this grumbling that they had against God and his grace, if you can believe it, this criticism against the Lord.

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It says 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, this man, almost with a, a spewing him out of his mouth, "'this man receives sinners and eats with them.' And so," verse 3, "he told them this parable." And it's not just one parable. It's, well, it's the same parable, but it, three different ways.

All through Luke's Gospel we see this. We see the Jews represented in Luke 15 by the Pharisees and the scribes. But they do not like Jesus offering salvation to tax collectors and sinners. They hate those people. They hate them deeply. They would rather see them burn in hell than be saved. Same attitude we find here in Luke 19.

So as we look at the text, as we think about the impact of this account in our own lives, we need to ask ourselves hard questions at the heart level. Because as we've said throughout our study of Luke's Gospel, the Jews of that day, especially represented by the Pharisees and the scribes, those people in our context would be called evangelicals. They would be the ones

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who run our seminaries and institutions, many of the people who pastor churches, exercise leadership. They're the evangelicals. They're the Bible people. They're the ones who can, are concerned about voting the right way, about putting the right people in public office. They're, they're conservatives. There is a lot in common between us and them. And so this warning is particularly important for us to hear and to heed.

So as we enter into the text this morning, let's ask ourselves this question, what, what kinds of sinners do I have the hardest time forgiving? What kinds of sinners does society have the hardest time forgiving? What kinds of sins seem to be beyond salvation? What kinds of sinners would many people today remand to the pit of an eternal hell? Those same people that deny hell, reject hell, when they, when they meet one of these kinds of sins and these kinds of sinners, they're very quick to allow, oh, I believe in hell for those kinds of people.

One of the most reprehensible sins of our day, for many it's considered unforgivable, is racism. Shelby Steele, in his excellent book *White Guilt*, he contrasted our time with the

1950s. Politicians who would never survive a sexual scandal in the 1950s, while in public office, he makes the point that they would get away with uttering the occasional racial slur. To illustrate how radically things have changed, Shelby Steele points to Bill Clinton's moral scandal and the moral relativism that allowed him to survive it and stay in office.

But, he points out, "Today," quoting him, "Today, America is puritanical rather than relativistic around racism." End Quote. Clinton survived the Lewinsky scandal, but if Clinton was caught using racial slurs, Steele says, "It's very likely nothing would have saved him." So Americans are mortal, moral relativists about sexual sin. That's what was revealed during the whole Bill Clinton era. It wasn't that we became moral relativists, it's that Bill Clinton reflected to America what America has become, a nation of moral relativists about sexual sin. But flipping it around, they have become absolute, hard-hearted fundamentalists about racism, unwilling to grant any forgiveness, any absolution. That's the spirit of our age.

Now, what does the Bible say? Can racists be forgiven for the sins of prejudice? Can they be forgiven for the sin of hating others, for treating people with such injustice? Does the Gospel apply to such people? Flipping it around, what about philandering politicians? What about those in politics and universities, and in all different places of influence? What about those who promote godless ideologies just to get votes, just to curry favor with the mob, just to, just to keep their power and their influence? Does God forgive sins like those, too?

Let's make this even more uncomfortable for ourselves as we ask some questions. Does the Gospel apply to pedophiles? Does it apply to despicable, deviant sins? What about those who abuse others? What about those who victimize others, especially victimizing women and children? Is there forgiveness for human traffickers? Is there forgiveness to be found for modern slave traders?

Because sin is so rampant today, and because the true Gospel is so hard to find, many people have become harsh,

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unwilling to see certain kinds of sinners forgiven. They have no Gospel that can relieve the need for justice, and so they pursue their own justice, but it's a warped justice because it's coming from the human heart that merely demands retribution and vengeance, harsh penalties.

What we're living through right now is probably a prelude to what Jesus describes in Matthew 24:12, He said, "Because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold." Oh, that's what we're seeing today, cold-hearted people. And I'm not talking about the world and the secularists. I'm talking about religious people. I'm talking about people in the evangelical camp, conservative evangelicals, who've become cold-hearted, hard-hearted people.

Intellectually, we have to acknowledge, if we're going to be faithful to Scripture, that if the Gospel does not have the power to save all kinds of sinners, to reconcile all kinds of enemies to God, then it doesn't have the power to save any sinners at all. Intellectually, we get that. But we have to also acknowledge, emotionally, when we are faced with certain kinds

of sinners, certain kinds of people who've come out of certain sins and want to join the fellowship of a church, join the fellowship of the redeemed, we have to admit we've got some questions, right? We have some hesitations. We feel a spirit of caution, probably should.

It could be very hard to understand how Christ can extend his forgiveness to certain kinds of sins, how he can offer a full pardon, a complete pardon to certain kinds of sinners, because when those kinds of people come into the church, knock at the door, and seek to enter, we might find ourselves sounding a lot like this crowd in Jericho.

So coming to the first point in our outline today, put yourselves in their shoes just for the sake of thinking this through. Not that you are the crowd in Jericho, but just go with it for a minute and consider their complaint. Number one, point number one for this morning: the revulsion of the crowd. The revulsion of the crowd. They are revolted at Jesus' action of staying with Zacchaeus. So the revulsion of the crowd.

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Tax collectors, as I said, were hated by the Jews, deeply despised. They were reviled, and it was for a very good reason. The tax collectors, they were backed by the Roman Empire, and so they were very well-connected and basically untouchable. They acted like a law unto themselves. They could assess goods passing through their customs houses. They could make their own assessment, assign their own values, and write their own bills. That's convenient. That's a great way to make money.

They were well-paid to betray their own people. And because they hiked up the percentages on tax collection, they were nothing more than politically savvy thieves. As William Smith said, and I quoted him last week, "They, they were regarded as traitors and apostates, defiled by their frequent intercourse with the heathen, willing tools of the Roman oppressor." When you add the element of extortion to all that, collecting taxes by means of, of bullying and intimidation and violence, tax collectors were just the same as robbers. Maybe they didn't put the hands on people, but they hired bullies to do that, to frighten people, to keep them subjected to fear, to pay up.

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So verse 7, "When they saw it," when the crowd saw it. Saw what? When they saw Jesus make this overture of friendship to Zacchaeus, when they, they heard that he sought Zacchaeus' hospitality. "When they saw it," it says, "they all grumbled. He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." They were right. It's exactly what Jesus intended to do, to be the guest of the man who was a sinner, and listen, that was scandalous in that day. It was worse than the Clinton-Lewinsky affair, worse than any widespread offense of racists today.

Imagine if the story were told in our own day, and the man that Jesus sought, met, joined in fellowship was David Duke, former Grand Master of the Ku Klux Klan, a notorious white supremacist. That is the depth of revulsion that this crowd felt about Jesus befriending Zacchaeus. How could he?

And so they grumbled and they complained. The word is an onomatopoeic word; it's the word *gongyzo*, which kind of reproduces the sound that ran through the crowd. *Gongyzo*, kind of comes from the back part of the throat and kind of comes out almost like the gurgling sound of someone who's getting ready to

vomit. That's really the sound. It's a revulsion. They are revolted by this.

The verb, here, is intensified. It's *diagongyzo* which shows this grumbling, complaining moving through the crowd. *Dia* is the word, through, so it's through the crowd. It's running like this electric current buzzing along at the same speed as of electricity. The crowd is erupting collectively, voicing their disdain and disapproval and muttering condemnation upon the whole situation.

Luke uses *gongyzo* three times in his Gospel. Three times: Luke 5:30, which we just read, the account of Levi, grumbling over Jesus eating and drinking with Levi, a tax collector, then again in Luke 15:2, grumbling over Jesus' eating with tax collectors and sinners and then here again in Luke 19:7, grumbling over Jesus staying in the house of another tax collector.

The Jews had serious problems every time Jesus ate and drank with tax collectors and sinners because fellowship meant

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approval. Table fellowship meant sharing in their sins. They loved his miracles. They loved the fact that he could create food just like that, hand it out, feed them best food they'd ever eaten. They loved the fact that he could heal the sick, cast out demons, give sight to the blind, the ability to walk to the lame, hearing to the deaf; they loved the fact that he could do all those wonderful things; from, they loved his teaching, they loved his power, and strength, and teaching, and representing the truth. They loved the fact that he could, he could upend and show up their, their pretentious scribes and Pharisees.

But when he does this, they're willing to cast all that away. In their judgment, Zacchaeus is the sinner, a *hamartolos*. He's a sinner, and it's not for them in the theological sense of sin that's shared among all fallen humanity because everybody in the crowd is going to admit to having some sin. They, they admit that. They understand the Law of Moses, that they're sinners, they have a, a pathway back to restoration and reconciliation to God and, and finding cleanness from their sins through sacrifice. They get that.

But when they say he is a *hamartolos*, they mean he is so characterized by sin, that sin is so defining of a quality in his life, that this Zacchaeus is irredeemable. He is beyond salvation. He has crossed a line from which he can never come back. Why? Because his sin is so serious, the effects of his sin so far-reaching, his sins pursued for such a long period of time, it is impossible for them to imagine at all this Zacchaeus walking in righteousness, earning enough public trust to regain any credibility, to win back any public trust.

So that's their judgment against Zacchaeus, and we can somewhat sympathize with this, can't we? We recognize, especially in a time, such a sin-stained time, sin-saturated time like ours, that there are so many false and sub-Christian gospels propagated throughout our country, so that when even some notorious sinner who betrays the public trust and does something despicable, and when he claims, hey, I found Jesus!, are we not just a little bit apprehensive about that, just a little bit cautious, like, hmm. I wonder what Jesus, what gospel he says he believes. Is it the Joel Osteen gospel, about having his best life now? We can understand their apprehension, their caution.

Having said that, though, notice here that their grumbling does not stop, does not stop on Zacchaeus. Their grumbling actually goes farther, further than rejecting Zac, Zacchaeus. Their complaint, it is based on rejecting Zacchaeus' salvation. But their grumbling is actually not against Zacchaeus; it's against Jesus. Do you see that?

Notice in verse 7, when the crowd says, "He has gone in to be the guest," who's the subject of that verb? It's Jesus. Their charge here is against the Savior. They've condemned his saving grace. They've condemned his judgment. They've condemned his wisdom. They've condemned his, his viewpoint. They've gone, they've crossed a line, now.

All these people, they're condemning Jesus for the choice that he has made, to take his rest, to stay the night. The ESV translates the verb, to be the guest of, that's fine. Better here may, may be, to find lodging. And they say, he ought to know better. Are there not other houses to stay in, fine hotels, inns? Can we set him up? We, we can pool, pool enough money

together to get him out of that situation. It's a bad optic for him. This is a bad optic for the Messiah and his campaign. Bad example he's setting for all the little ones.

What is he doing associating with Zacchaeus, a man who is a sinner? They know Jesus is knowingly entering into an environment of uncleanness and un, and ceremonial impurity. This man Zacchaeus has probably been, not been to the temple for many, many years. Why? Because he's been excommunicated, pushed out. Your business is so dirty that it defiles you through and through, there is no salvation for you while you have that job. Table fellowship, partaking of his hospitality, that is showing approval. For them, that's participating in his sins. It's guilt by association. They're charging Jesus with sin. That's really where that it, that goes to.

So taking offense at Jesus, condemning Jesus, they have crossed a line, and as soon as Jesus extends friendship, you know what they should have done? They should have shut their mouths. They should have held their tongues in humility. They

should, they should have corrected their judgment, rebuked any impulse of grumbling against the Lord.

Why? Because this man, Jesus Christ, Jesus the Nazarene, have they ever heard any charge of sin against him? Had they not seen the wisdom of God that overcomes all the best teachers they have in Israel? Had they not seen purity and holiness incarnate before them? They should realize that when Jesus touches a leper, it's not the leper's uncleanness that contaminates Jesus; it's Jesus' holiness that contaminates the leper.

When Jesus enters into the house of a tax collector, it's not the uncleanness of that environment that contaminates him. No. He is of such a holy character, holy nature, holy essence, that his holiness pervades the entire environment and certainly it's done so with Zacchaeus. They need to shut their mouths.

Notably, the history of Israel is a history of grumbling, isn't it? Should provide a caution for every subsequent generation of Israel, but as Jesus said, this generation is no different. It, too, is an evil generation, always prone to

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grumbling, always prone to accusing and condemning God. And so it turns out that this generation, they're just like their fathers. They have not paid heed to the lessons of Israel's history.

By grumbling against Jesus, the crowd reveals this spiritual blindness. They cannot see the Lord as he is, for who he is. They can't see what he's doing by drawing near to Zacchaeus, and therefore they can't see the evidence of true conversion in him. They cannot see the evidence of real spiritual transformation in Zacchaeus.

That's a caution for us, isn't it? Sometimes we get used to our salvation. That's a good thing. I'm thankful. I'm thankful that what God is doing in my life is enough to give me joy and gratitude, that it can eclipse all the evil that I've done in my life beforehand. I'm so grateful for his grace. But listen, we have got to remember that were it, were it not for the grace of God, there goes some of us, right?

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We can't be so unfamiliar with our past, unfamiliar with the sins of the world, that, that we think ourselves better. We can see the evidence of true conversion, and when we do see that evidence of true conversion, we need to regard that person the way God regards that person, even if he was characterized as the very worst of sinners. However you fill in that blank in your own mind, we need to regard that person as belonging to Christ, as being one of his lost sheep, whom he came to seek and to save.

So that becomes the material point, right? What do we look for, then, as evidence of true conversion? Are there signs that we can see, here, that someone really has become a Christian? And that's what we're going to examine in our second point, starting at verse 8, number two, the conversion of the sinner; point two, the conversion of the sinner.

Before we look carefully at verse 8 and the conversion of the sinner, let me just set this up. We don't, we don't know exactly when Zacchaeus came to saving faith, but we do know it happened. Jesus said so in verse 9, but the evidence is right

there in verse 8. At this point, though, Luke just wants to put the focus on the evidence of true conversion. We see the evidence of saving faith before we hear the Lord's declaration about saving faith. Luke intends that we should think this through, think through the evidence first before we hear the Lord's declaration.

So we don't know exactly when Zacchaeus came to saving faith, but he and Jesus walked down the street together from that tree. They made their way to his house. We don't know the exact conversation they had, but we can discern it by what Luke has written in Luke 19:8-9. Zacchaeus, he is under conviction. We talked about this last week. His conscience is bothering him about his ill-gotten gain, about collecting taxes, how he's failed to live up to his name, Zacchaeus, which means, purity, clarity. It points to a life of integrity, which he knows he doesn't have.

So he sought Jesus. He wanted to see who this Jesus is, and he went through great pains and efforts, exposing himself to public embarrassment, throwing away his own personal dignity and

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propriety, in order that he would be able to see Jesus. This goes way beyond mere curiosity. He is, he's got an interest, internally, driving him to Jesus, and now here he is, walking side-by-side with Jesus. This is the most righteous man on the planet. He's a man of impeccable integrity that he's walking next to.

So we can imagine Jesus, there, rejoicing to tell Zacchaeus about the salvation of God. Rejoicing to tell him, Hey, I came for you. Rejoicing to talk about the salvation of God that comes from the grace of God, sourced in the mercy of God. And Jesus is affirming him, and Zacchaeus is acknowledging and confessing his sin. We can imagine, here, Jesus speaking very tenderly to this lost sheep, who has become very dirty. He's fallen in the thorns, he's been entangled in the thorns and briars, he's been ruined. And Jesus rejoices to apply the balm of the Gospel of grace to his heart, clean him off, clean him up, set him on his feet again.

And as they talk about the nature of a new life, this eternal life that comes from God, that turns the unrighteous to

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the righteous, no doubt Zacchaeus is interested to know how he, a tax collector, can do this? Can he walk righteously as a tax collector? Is that even possible? If, if it's possible, is it even preferable? Does he just need to get a new job?

Remember John the Baptist back in Luke 3, verse 8? John was preaching, fiery preaching, "Bear fruits in keeping with repentance." He's bringing, he's bringing the heat, prophetic heat to the whole of Israel. And one group of people that came to him were the tax collectors. They're convicted by the prophet's powerful preaching, and they come and ask John in Luke 3:12, "Teacher, what shall we do?" Remember how John answered? It wasn't, Go get another job. Rather it was, "Collect no more than you're authorized to do." Jesus would have said much the same thing to Zacchaeus.

So as we come to verse 8, they're drawing near to Zacchaeus' house or, as a number of commentators believe, and I think rightly, the scene has shifted, here, between verses 6 and 7, and here they're eating a meal together along with other guests. So it's a scene similar to the one at Levi's house. It

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says in verse 8, "Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord,' I, "the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything I restore it four-fold.'"

Three evidences, here, in this verse of true conversion. Three evidences of saving faith that this tax collector, a former sinner, has been born again, that he has been truly saved. First, notice that he confesses the lordship of Christ. Notice that he confesses the lordship of Christ. Luke tells us that "Zacchaeus stood and said," to whom? "to the Lord." *Kyrios*. Luke wants us to take note of that crucial element of true salvation in what Zacchaeus says. "Zacchaeus stood and said to," to, "the Lord," and what did he say? "Behold, Lord."

So from the sycamore tree in verses 4-6 to this moment in verse 8, Zacchaeus and Jesus have been hearing all this noise around them, the incessant grumbling of the crowd, imperfect tense, there, so the grumbling has continued. It's been on, nonstop, unabated. Did Zacchaeus hear this grumbling? Probably. The crowd wasn't inclined to be quiet in its condemnation. Did Jesus hear it? Yeah, he knew. But it's important to see what

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Luke wants us to see, that what Zacchaeus says in verse 8, he is not caving, here, to the pressure of the mob. "Zacchaeus stood and said," not to the crowd. He said "to the Lord." And Luke puts the focus on the lordship of Jesus Christ. He identifies him by his authoritative title, here, *ton kyrion*, Master. Zacchaeus begins with, "Behold, Lord."

Luke is also careful to draw our attention to Zacchaeus' posture. It's interesting in this account, isn't it? Well, he's up in a tree, at the top, and then at the Lord's bidding, he hurried down, he hurried and came down from the tree. He's sitting, and now he's standing. Luke wants us to picture him. He wants this, in our mind's eye, to imagine Zacchaeus sitting at the table, guests being served drinks, appetizers by his many servants, and he stands up and he speaks to the Lord.

But by standing, notice that he is drawing all the attention to himself. Before, in the tree, he didn't want any attention to himself. Now he wants the attention on himself, on what he intends to say. That is why he begins with the word, "Behold." Behold, it can also be translated, Look, everyone! It

can be translated, Pay attention! It can be translated, Listen up! Listen up, everyone! He wants to make whatever he's about to say, this proclamation, he wants to make it public. He wants to make this known to everyone there. He's making himself, what's he doing? Why is he doing that? Is he showboating?

No. He has survived all his time in Jericho, extracting taxes from people who aren't really happy with him, not by calling public attention to himself, but by hiding in the shadows. Here, he's calling public attention to himself, to make himself accountable to everybody who hears him. And everybody who hears him will report this to everybody else. He's making himself accountable. So he says here, in front of everybody, Listen up, everyone. Pay attention! Behold, Lord! And then he says, "I give" and "I resolve." Those are the two verbs, there. And he uses present-tense verbs, indicating a resoluteness, indicating a very firm resolve.

There's another indication of resoluteness and firmness here in the, in the sense of that verb, he stood. That's the verb, *histemi*, and that, too, can indicate firmness of resolve,

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an unwavering conviction. So in the presence of this relatively hostile crowd, what he says, he says with resolve, in spite of the hostile crowd. What he says he says in sole consideration, not of the crowd, but of the Lord. And he says it directly to the Lord.

That's why this is such a clear evidence of conversion, his declaration of commitment and resolve, telegraphing his intentions to everyone, calling attention to himself in public, which he just didn't do. Man, this is a, a reversal of his character. And he begins where everybody ought to begin, with the fear of the Lord. You see the fear of the Lord, there? It says in Proverbs 14:26, "In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence."

He has strong confidence here. He had to have strong confidence. But for him it's not a matter of courage. It's not a matter of, like, pushing back against the hostile crowd. It's just a matter of what his heart is compelled to do, here in front of the Lord. Something has changed in this man.

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If you think about yourself, think about in all your time professing Christ, has there been any really significant, profound change in your life, of the continuity of what you were from birth, all the way through your trajectory of, really, your sin, self-centeredness, all of that? Has there been a break in that, in that trajectory to put you off in a totally different direction, so that who you are now and who you were then are two completely different people?

Sometimes I can't even recognize, I, I, not just sometimes, all the time, I can't re, recognize the person that I used to be before Christ. I'm so ashamed that the two of us share the same name, and yet, that, too, is by the grace of God, to bring all glory to him.

Zacchaeus had heard of Jesus. He knew something of who Jesus was and what Jesus had preached. All those reports had come from Galilee, through Judea, Perea, down to Jericho and the intercourse of communication between Jerusalem and Jericho, and obviously through Bethany and all the places around there. Jericho knew who Jesus was.

Zacchaeus knew who he was. Jesus' preaching gave him hope, hope of a salvation from his sin, hope of a rescue from his wretched condition, hope of freedom from all of the prisons of his heart and his station in life. And now, having met Jesus, having listened to him and learned, Zacchaeus knows for sure, without a doubt, this is the Lord. This is the Master. This is my Master. So he starts with lordship.

A second evidence of true conversion, second, Zacchaeus commits to showing mercy. Zacchaeus commits to showing mercy. He's now going to be generous to the poor, the poor, who he had barely given a thought to, previously ignored. Zacchaeus really had been like the rich man in Luke 16, clothed in purple and fine linen, feasting sumptuously every single day, all the while ignoring the poor sitting in his gate.

And now, having been converted, he's going to change that. He's going to turn from a heart of greed and practice a heart of generosity, practice a heart of mercy. He intends to do what the rich man of Luke 16 never did. He intends to do what the rich

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young ruler could not do though commanded clearly by Christ. He does not want wealth to have hooks in his heart. He doesn't want the weight of riches to drag his soul down to the pit of hell.

That's not all that's driving him, is his own personal concern for himself. More to the point, having talked with Jesus, having received for himself the free gift of God's mercy, having received the free gift of grace in his salvation, listen, his heart has changed. He wants to give. That, too, is an impulse of a truly regenerate heart: generosity, mercy, compassion, concern.

Jesus once said to his disciples, Matthew 10:8, "Freely you receive, freely give." That's the way we think, isn't it? The converted heart is a generous heart. The converted heart is not a covetous heart, not a stingy heart. The converted heart is generous, ready, eager to give, looking for ways to give, searching out ways to give, not waiting to be told, not passive, but active.

"The half of my goods I give to the poor," he says. "Half of my goods." That's not just money. That's not just what's in the bank account, the liquid cash. This includes all his possessions; yes, the cash, but also real estate, businesses, business assets, investment. This is lavish generosity on his part.

The second half of his commitment, "I restore it four-fold." Listen, considering how much money he needed to fulfill that commitment, it's a staggering amount, an even more astounding transformation of the heart, to go from the practice of greed and covetousness to a heart of generous mercy. This change from greed to generosity for the sake of mercy to the poor, the poor having absolutely nothing that they could hand back, no way that they can *quid pro quo*, hand back and do for him, because I've done for you, there is nothing, there's nothing that they can give in return.

This change, it's a remarkable change. Jesus said in the previous account, the rich young ruler, he said of the rich, it's an impossible change. A man cannot do it on his own. So

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this is only possible by the grace of God. Again, it's an indication of true repentance that there has been true, genuine conversion, here. There's a radical, deep, profound transformation in this man's life.

We ask this question in biblical counseling, commonly. It's a standard question just to help people understand the, and illustrate and understand the nature of genuine, biblical repentance. And we like to ask people, When is a thief no longer a thief? Is it when he stops stealing? Does that make him no longer a thief? We say, No. Is it when he gets a job? No, he can still have a thieving, covetous heart in having a job. Is it when he has a job, works really hard, and brings home enough income for himself and a little bit extra? No, because he could still have a covetous, thieving heart and have that job and extra income.

When is the thief no longer a thief? It says in Ephesians 4:28, "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands so that he may have something to share with anyone in need." When is a thief no

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longer a thief? Yeah, when he stops stealing, gets a job, works hard, has extra money. But it's when that thieving, covetous, greedy heart is removed and killed, and in its place there is a generous, freely-giving heart, one that not just is passive about, Hey, I'll give when I find out, but is active to be generous to give to those in need.

Zacchaeus had been working. We can assume by the level that he was at as his role in tax commissioner for the city of Jericho, one of Rome's tax centers in Judea, we can safely assume Zacchaeus had been working, and he'd been laboring, and he'd been working and laboring very, very hard. He'd climbed the ladder. He had achieved the pinnacle of where he could come to. Was all his labor doing hard work, was that evidence of genuine repentance and true conversion? No, of course not. He still had the heart of a thief. He wanted to get more and more and more and more for himself through fraud and extortion. Zacchaeus, he needed to engage in honest work. We'll come to that in a moment.

A thief is no longer a thief when his heart is changed, when his mind is made new, when he's no longer driven by a heart

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of greed, he works hard and he works honestly to make extra money, "so that," that's a purpose clause, there, "in order that he may have something to share with anyone in need," which implies he's looking around for people who have needs. He's eager to be generous.

So this is Zacchaeus. This is what happened, has happened to him. He's no longer driven by a heart of greed. He's not, he's not willing any longer to commit fraud, extort, and intimidate. He's now motivated by heart of generosity, and it's evidenced by his desire to give half his possessions to the poor. So in submission to the lordship of Christ, Zacchaeus wants to be generous. He wants to be generous for mercy's sake.

One more, third evidence of true conversion, Zacchaeus commits to practicing justice. Zacchaeus commits to practicing justice. He intends to, to rectify all wrongs. He intends to pay restitution. And here's where we see Zacchaeus' converted intellect at work. He is thoughtful in acknowledging his sin. He is biblical in making restitution for his sin. He's, he's genuine in his obedience, and he's committed to moving forward

in the fear of the Lord and going where the fear of the Lord takes him.

Imagine what's going to happen, here, to the city of Jericho when Zacchaeus takes the proceeds of half of his possessions and disperses it to the poor. Imagine what's going to happen. It's going to get people's attention, isn't it? Once he starts executing on his plan, people are going to take notice. They're going to trace all of his actions to this point, to this declaration of commitment before the Lord to show mercy and to make restitution for past wrongs.

And so when Zacchaeus says, "If I've defrauded anyone of anything," he uses the word there, *sykophanteo*. *Sykophanteo*. It's from *sykon*, which is the word for, figs. And then *phainrao*, to show. So literally it's, to show figs. What in the world does that mean? In our day not much unless you're a fig grower, you know, then you understand. Almond grower, you could say the same thing. A literal sense is to show figs by shaking the tree, so those ripened figs fall to the ground. It's a metaphor. It

pictures, when it's done to people, that's a, that's called a shakedown, roughing them up to extort money from them.

So he uses that word to refer to his actions. He puts this commitment to restitution in the form of a conditional sentence. Notice, it's an, if/then. "If I have defrauded anyone of anything, then I'll restore it four-fold." It's a first class conditional in the Greek which, and this is key, here the speaker assumes the truth of the, if, statement for the sake of argument. He assumes the truth of it.

The fact that he's guilty of extortion, here, that's not in doubt. But the extent of his extortion, that's going to take some investigating on his part. By saying, "If I have defrauded someone of anything," Zacchaeus is really, there's an admission there, yes, of the general charge, but he's opening himself up to closer scrutiny. He is willing to allow his life and his work to be examined. He's going to consider any complaint that's brought to him as credible, and from anyone whom he or maybe a subordinate of his may have defrauded of anything, he's going to consider that complaint credible.

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Remember, he's an *architelones*. He's a chief tax collector, and as such, he's overseeing a number of different tax houses in Jericho, each of them run by a separate *telones*, a separate tax collector. Each tax collector has his own method of collection, his own network of thugs, all with their own schemes. Probably lots of robbery going on that's miles wide and many layers deep.

So the complaint department at Zacchaeus' tax office, it's going to be opening early and staying open very late for a very, very long time. Expect a long line of victims extorted by close associates of the office of the tax commissioner. Everyone needs to just take a number, settle in for a DMV-sized wait time.

This commitment, here, that he's made to a four-fold repayment, some see this as magnanimous and over the top. It's really not. Zacchaeus is just following the law of Moses, but he's doing so to the fullest extent. Numbers 5:5-7, it says, "When someone sins, breaks faith of the Lord, results in injury to others, he shall confess the sin he's committed, to make full

restitution for his wrong, adding a fifth to it and giving it to him to whom he did the wrong.”

Similar direction in Leviticus 6:4-5. “If he sinned and realized his guilt and will restore what he took by robbery or what he got by oppression, he shall restore it in full and shall add a fifth to it,” so that's 20% increase, “and shall give it to whom it belongs on the day he realizes his guilt.”

So no doubt Zacchaeus is considering those texts about robbery, about oppression. But in his mind, his guilt has gone further than that, and so he sees Exodus 22:1 as most applicable to his situation and what he's done. “If a man steals an ox or a sheep and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an oxen, and four sheep for a sheep.” He puts himself in that category. Whether he committed that kind of theft intentionally, literally, or figuratively, both are possible in the way that people collected what was owed. They could have stolen animals, actually, and turned them into money.

But he considered himself guilty of a sin of the same kind. He had taken from others what they depended upon for their livelihood. So he's saying, I've done the same. You see how this statement, here, tacitly but clearly, this statement is Zacchaeus admitting his wrong. It's him confessing a sin. He is willing to take on the full penalty imposed by the law because he counts himself guilty. Rightly so.

Lots of people, though, are willing to confess sin when it costs them nothing. Zacchaeus' confession of sin and the outworking of his repentance, it's going to cost him, isn't it? The genuineness of his conversion, though, it's evident in the fact that he voluntarily confesses it, and he is eager to make restitution.

Notice how thoughtful he is here at this point. Even in rectifying his wrongs, he does not turn off his brain and roll over and accept whatever fate the mob deals out. He intends to be thoughtful, to be diligent, to test any of their claims of injustice against him based on the actual evidence. That's not him being stubborn. It's him being wise. First class conditional

again means Zacchaeus has accepted the general charge that he defrauded people. But instances of guilt, those must first be tested.

He is committed to doing justice. He is also committed, in doing justice, to due process. He knows he's guilty of the charge. He accepts responsibility. But for each specific case, he's going to need to presume innocence until he verifies the guilt in each instance. He needs to clarify the extent of the offense and thus how an equitable restitution is to be made.

I hope you see that, here. It's so important, considering the context we live in today, of a demand for reparations, to just open up the coffers of the federal government of taxes extracted from the populace and just start handing them out to victim groups.

That's what Zacchaeus' repentance, and the kind of repentance and thoughtful desire for restitution, it argues against that. Zacchaeus isn't simply going to liquidate half his possessions, walk out in the street, and throw a bunch of cash

in the air. Why not? That's not justice either. He has a concern for restitution, yes, but it's a restitution that's going to be based on truth and based on justice. He's not going to cater to the passion and demands of an angry mob because that is not justice. Those who are wronged, they will get their due recompense. If evidence of guilt is verified, then he'll pay. He's eager to pay. He's the one setting this up. As he said, "I restore it four-fold."

Listen, the day that Jesus leaves Jericho, heads up to Jerusalem, Zacchaeus has to go back to work that day. He's still the tax commissioner in Jericho. He's charged with the responsibility to collect taxes for his employer. Now, though, he returns to his job with a new commitment to justice, to do right by the people from whom he must collect taxes. He has a stewardship to perform here. He's got a completely different mentality about it. "Collect no more than you are authorized." Very simple instruction. And with that charge, Zacchaeus has got a lot of work to do.

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But now it's a good work. Now it's a God-glorifying work. Jericho is going to be one city among so many that is the exception to the rule. It's going to be a city that benefits from this odd and anomalous form of God's blessing: a saved and honest tax commissioner committed to the just and righteous assignment and collection of tax.

Will this be easy for Zacchaeus? No. Has coming to Christ been without consequence for him? No. But what does that matter? What does that matter? He's been forgiven. He's been set free. He has been reconciled to God. He has a new heart, one that delights in doing mercy and justice, mercy to the poor, justice to right past wrongs, rectifies extortion, pay back what's due.

Earlier, I asked you to think about the kinds of sinners you'd have a hard time forgiving. Think about it. Back up and think about it. If you have benefited from God's mercy, if you've received divine grace for salvation, does that help you at all to look past someone's sins, their past sins, their history, sins that once characterized the bad person and see the true evidence of genuine conversion? Can you do that? By God's

grace I know you can. Sincere, life-long commitments to the lordship of Christ, a heart that loves mercy and justice, a wide heart of generosity and compassion along with concern for truth and justice; no salvation apart from those internal changes, apart from that kind of a repentance.

The crowd's revulsion is answered by the evidence of Zacchaeus's conversion. Now it's time for the crowd to repent and to see this the Lord's way. So one quick final point, number three, and this is verse 9: the declaration of the Lord. The declaration of the Lord. I love how Jesus, here, Shepherd of the sheep, he steps in to claim and affirm his own, and he does so publicly. Verse 9, "Jesus said to him," remember, he's saying this in front of everybody, "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."

Jesus speaks first to Zacchaeus to assure him with his declaration of justification. And second, he speaks about Zacchaeus, referring to him in the third person, and he calls everyone else to restore this penitent sinner. And then finally,

in verse 10, Jesus speaks about the mission of the Son of Man to do exactly as he has done, that is to seek and save the lost.

So just three quick points. First, justification. Justification. Just write that down. Jesus speaks to Zacchaeus and declares him justified. We can see this in the first part of verse 9, first clause, "Today, salvation has come to this house." Emphasis there on the word, today, indicates a point in time, a before and after. Before today, no salvation. Starting with today, salvation has come, which means what? He has been declared righteous. He is justified. Declaration of salvation, *soteria*, delivered from the just penalty of his sin.

How can Jesus say this? It's because he is the sovereign Lord. Also, though, because he knows that in just one week's time, he's going to ascend the cross, pay the price, a due penalty for all Zacchaeus' sins, and the grace of God in Christ is going to save him eternally.

A number of commentators, here, wring their hands over the fact that the text does not explicitly portray Zacchaeus as

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exercising faith, but I think it does. I think, I think that's very clear. Luke has actually portrayed the faith in this account. Since Jesus has justified Zacchaeus and declares him saved, he's righteous in the sight of God. How'd that happen? It's indirect evidence, here, that he has been justified by faith, by the instrumental means of faith. We just confessed that in our London Baptist Confession this morning. The instrumental means of salvation is faith.

We see this in the second clause also, that Jesus declares him to be a son of Abraham. That's exactly what Paul summarized in Galatians 3:7, "Know then that this, it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham." How could Jesus make that statement? Because, second part of our Lord's declaration, we'll call it restoration. Just write down the word, restoration.

Jesus commands that Zacchaeus be restored. The Shepherd first spoke to his own sheep, assuring Zacchaeus, "Today salvation has come to his house." That's justification. And now Jesus speaks about Zacchaeus to the rest of the people who are there. "He also is a son of Abraham." He's calling the crowd to

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obedience, that they would restore this penitent sinner. This man is no longer to be characterized a sinner as they have done. The Lord has restored Zacchaeus. He's acknowledged him as a son of Abraham.

And by the way, he's not trying to tell everyone Zacchaeus is Jewish, Jewish. Duh. So he's not a son of Abraham according to the flesh, merely. Paul says, Romans 9:6, "Not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel. Not all are children of Abraham because they're his offspring, but 'through Isaac shall your offspring be named.'" This means it's not the children of flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring."

How are the children of promise as distinguished from the children of flesh, how are they counted that way? Those of faith. Again, Galatians 3:7, "Those who believe the promise, they are the sons of Abraham." So since Zacchaeus is a son of Abraham, by the declaration of Christ, by his justification, no one has the right to withhold fellowship for Zacchaeus. Everyone can feel free to have table fellowship with him. Following the

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Lord's example, they can sit down, eat and drink, lodge in his house, walk along the way, go up to the temple, offer sacrifices, enjoy the sacrificial meals together.

Being reconciled to God, being a co-heir with Abraham of the promise, no reason he should be excluded any longer from the temple, from sacrifice, from full inclusion in the spiritual life of Israel and his own community. "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It's God who justifies. Who's to condemn?" Zacchaeus is to be received, no longer defined by his former sins, but fully, completely restored in the community. And anyone who refuses to accept and restore Zacchaeus, well, they're going to have to answer to the Son of Man face to face on Judgment Day.

So the only question at this point is, will the crowd heed the Lord's call to restore Zacchaeus or are they going to continue despising him? It's perhaps for that reason to encourage the crowd toward obedience to this call to restore Zacchaeus to fellowship, the Lord adds this in verse 10. We've seen justification, restoration.

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Now a third, a third point. You can write down the word mission. Jesus claims Zacchaeus is his mission. "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." That's the purpose. This is the true reason the Son of Man came, according to the imagery of Luke 15, to seek his lost sheep, to find his lost valuables, to save his lost sons.

So beloved, stop being surprised that tax collectors keep coming to Jesus, or our modern day version of them. Stop being shocked. Stop expressing this, any kind of anger or moral outrage when notorious sinners repent and convert and make such astounding transformations, when they give evidence of true conversion. The salvation of sinners, that is the point.

Beloved, the single evidence of true conversion, I shouldn't say the single evidence, I should say these evidences that we've seen in this text of true conversion, it's the same for every single Christian. The same. No exceptions. We all, if we're Christians, we all confess the lordship of Jesus Christ, and we obey him. We're committed to showing mercy. We're

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committed to practicing justice. Why? Because we have to? No, because we have a new nature that longs to do that. We want to do that. We love to do that.

But the ground of our assurance, I want to make this very clear, the ground of our assurance is not in our actions. The ground of our assurance, the ground on which we stand, that we feel a conviction that we truly are saved, it is not our behavior. It's not our performance. The ground of our assurance is in the gracious declaration of Jesus Christ, who points to us and says, Mine. I died for that one. That one is declared righteous in God's sight. This one was lost, but he is now found. He is safe. This one was wandering, but she is now recovered and justified and restored.

Again, "Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It's God who justifies. Who dares condemn? There's therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," and as we read earlier, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is

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no deceit." May we all display the patterns of Zacchaeus in our lives and rest in the declaration of Christ and His justification. Amen? Let's pray.

Our Father, we thank you for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for the work of the Holy Spirit to inspire such a text, such a, an account for us that we could see with such clarity and such wisdom the unfolding of the true evidence of conversion. Those who submit to the lordship of Jesus Christ in their lives as a matter of characteristic habit and pattern, those who rejoice to show mercy, generosity to those in need, and those who are committed to truth and to justice, and those who hold those commitments as a matter of lifestyle, as a habit, a habitual practice in their life. We thank you for the example of Zacchaeus and what all of this study has taught us, and we just pray that you by your Spirit would grant us obedience, grant us a strengthening of our faith, and grant us great joy and gratitude in our salvation. May you be glorified, Father, in the name of Jesus, our Savior. Amen.