

Luke 19 (Part 1): 1-27 • Zacchaeus - Responding in Faith

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The good news, according to Luke chapter 19. Beginning chapter 19 for our first study of the year, of the new year, of the new decade. Starting a new decade. Wow!

Luke 19. We're going to read through the first 10 verses.

It says,

"¹ He entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³ And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. ⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." ⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." ⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the LORD, "Behold, LORD, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold." ⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost." (ESV)

Let's stop there.

Thank You Father, for giving us Your Word. Thank You, Lord, for opening our hearts. And we do pray for that very thing, Lord. The opening of our hearts to hear You, to hear Your voice, Your wisdom, Your truth.

And then Father God, as always, we pray for the strength and courage to apply Your Word to our lives. Thank You, Father, for being with us and being in this place. We ask You to minister to each and every heart. In Jesus name, amen.

This is another one of those stories in the Bible that is only given to us by Luke. Were it not for Luke, we would not have the story of Zacchaeus.

We've encountered tax collectors, by the way. Zacchaeus stands apart in the fact that he is a chief tax collector, obviously some big mucky muck, sort of a person along those lines. And it's probably helpful to remember how tax collectors made their money. Because they just didn't go around collecting taxes for Rome.

Essentially, they made their money by overcharging people. There... Can you imagine somebody who actually had the job of tax collecting? And the government asks for X amount. And if they're going to make any money on the deal at all, they have to ask for money above and beyond what the government wants. And that's what they did.

And they could basically set their own amount. However much they could extort from you. However much they could manipulate you into giving. That's how much they would ask.

And you can imagine, it's pretty easy to detest people like that. Because they weren't just gathering money for their government. It wasn't their government at all. It was the Roman government. It was the oppressive Roman government that was now occupying their land that they were basically collecting money for. You could see very easily why these people were hated.

Here we have this situation with this particular tax collector. We're not told why Zacchaeus necessarily wanted to see Jesus. Obviously he was curious. He heard that Jesus was passing through. And he wanted to get a look at Him. But being a short man he had to improvise because of the crowds.

Now, at this point, there's a song going through my head from my childhood. I don't know how many of you have that same song going through your head as well. The lyric was, Zacchaeus was a wee little man. A wee little man was he.

Anybody ever? Come on, put your hands up. There you go. Do it proudly. That was what they taught us back in the day. You couldn't say that anymore because that's not politically correct. It's really tough though to fit into that lyric, Zacchaeus was a vertically-challenged man. You just... That just doesn't work very well. A vertically-challenged man was he. Eh, it doesn't happen.

Anyway, in verse 4, if you look with me again in your Bible, it says, *"So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way."*

And by the way, this is interesting because the sycamore fig trees in Israel are very leafy sorts of trees. It is very possible that Zacchaeus got up into this particular tree not only to see Jesus, but so as not to be seen by the people. Because it would be fairly easy in a tree like that to hide yourself.

But there was no... There's always... There's no hiding from God. I think we all know that. Jesus had other plans. Verse 5, it 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.'"*

And it says *"...he hurried and came down and received him joyfully."* There was an instant response by Zacchaeus here.

And we're told here that *"he received him joyfully."* And those are good words. And probably important words for us to look at, *"...received him joyfully."* Received Him into his home, it means, joyfully.

Now, there's a lovely picture here if we'll pause long enough to notice it, that is going on in these verses. That conveyed to us the balance and the symmetry of two biblical pictures. Because you guys are probably aware that there are two camps in the Christian church that are actually opposed to each other.

And there's one camp that is all about God's... How God calls us. And it's all about election. And the people that are in that camp emphasize the sovereignty of God. Which it's hard to overemphasize the Sovereignty of God. But they talk about how you are the elect. In other words, you are chosen by God. And I believe that because the Bible teaches that we are chosen.

But did you notice the beautiful balance that this passage also conveys to us? You see, by the way, the election, or the choosing in this particular passage. Because you see that Jesus called Zacchaeus. He's going... He's walking through or leaving Jericho with this huge crowd of people.

And there's this man in this tree. And Jesus walks up to this tree, looks up there and says, Zacchaeus, come down. I need to stay at your house today. You see the pursuit of God to the individual. Right? And that is election.

But you also see man's free will happening here in the sense that Zacchaeus responded to the Lord with joy. And it says, he received the Lord with joy. Do you see that other side of the equation? And it's really a beautiful picture.

And it... And by the way, that's the other camp. People love to get in camps. I'm not sure why. I think that when we jump into a camp though, we take on all kinds of blind spots. Because once I join a camp, I stop... I start defending my camp. And then I stop looking at the other camp as even a possibility. Because I'm in this camp and I'm... And we're against you. It becomes a very adversarial sort of a thing.

You got two camps. You got the one side that says it's all about God's choosing us. God's election. And then you have the other camp over here. It says no, it's all about us receiving Him and choosing. It's all about our free will. And so you have these people going at it.

And the Bible teaches both. And I wish we'd get out of our camps and just get into the Word. The Bible teaches both. But see people who are in those camps, they struggle with it. Because the people over in the sovereignty camp, they say, well, if it's all about sovereignty, then how can it be about choice at all? It has to all be about sovereignty or nothing.

And the other camp basically says the same thing. And they can't reconcile the two positions. The Bible doesn't struggle at all reconciling the two positions. It simply just lays them out there. And it teaches them both. And I love that about God's Word. And I love it about not being in camps, too.

Pastor Paul, what camp are you in? Are you in sovereign camp or free will camp? I'm in neither. I'm in the Word of God. And I just love the fact that it just lays things out that really, in our human minds, are irreconcilable. I like that. I like that.

Anyway, it's a beautiful picture here. You see this Jesus pursuing Zacchaeus. You see Zacchaeus receiving. Because not everybody receives that's sort of an invitation.

You'll remember in the last chapter we dealt with there was another wealthy man. Young man, who came to Jesus. Posed to Him a very important question about eternal life. But you remember what happened in that situation? Again, that man walked away sad. He did not... He wasn't rejoicing. He didn't receive with joy. He walked away with sadness. And we're told why.

We're told in the verse 23 of that last chapter that he walked away sadly because he was extremely rich. Well, guess what? Zacchaeus was extremely rich too. The one man couldn't part with his wealth.

Look at how Zacchaeus... Look in verse 8. Look how Zacchaeus responded as it relates to his wealth. It says, *"And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold."*

Wow! He says, if I've defrauded anybody. There was probably a really good chance he had. That's how they made their money. But he... This sort of a response by Zacchaeus, this is completely in keeping with what biblical repentance is really all about.

The rich young ruler in the last chapter, he'd been challenged also related to his money. But in this case, Zacchaeus volunteered. We don't have any record of Jesus even mentioning Zacchaeus' money.

Zacchaeus just came forth with it and said, all right, Lord, here's the deal. I'm going to, first of all, before I do anything else, I'm going to take half of what I've got and I'm going to give it to the poor. And then I'm going to, I'm just going to say right here and now, if I have defrauded or cheated anyone by any means, I will restore it four times the amount that was taken. Which, by the way, was more than the law required. This was a very, generous, gracious thing to do.

But don't think about it as generosity. Think about it as repentance. Because it is real repentance. It's genuine. It's an overflow of the heart upon meeting the Savior. And it's beautiful. And it's what real repentance is. Real repentance puts action behind it. We got to remember that.

Let me remind you of something that the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth. I'll put it on the screen for you from 2 Corinthians. Paul wrote and he said,

2 Corinthians 7:10-11 (ESV)

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourselves is what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal...

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. For see what earnestness this godly grief has produced in you, but also what eagerness to clear yourself is what indignation, what fear, the fear of the Lord, what longing, what zeal...

Paul is talking about the fact that real genuine repentance carries certain actions, certain things that we do. And it's an overflow. It's not me trying to convince you that I've repented. It's just flows. It comes out as Zacchaeus, look, Lord, I just, I love you so much. I'm going to give half of what I have right now to the poor.

And if I've defrauded anybody I'll, four times over, I'll give it back. And it's just bubbling out of him. There's no pulling. Because you can't pull that sort of thing out of somebody.

Paul talks in that passage we put up about godly grief. And that's an interesting term. The NIV calls it godly sorrow. But it's hard for us to think of grief being good in any sort of a way. We usually think of grief in pretty negative terms, don't we?

I actually looked up the word grief. Do you know what synonyms it gave to me? Check this out: sorrow, which again, most Bibles actually translate that sorrow. Not most, some. But listen to the other words it listed for grief: misery, sadness, anguish, pain, distress. Those all sound pretty negative.

And yet Paul said there's such a thing as godly grief, or godly sorrow. And of course the godliness is seen in what we do with it. In what we do with it. The rich young ruler was grieved. And walked away sad. Zacchaeus was grieved by his own sin. But he responded in a godly way. And that's what makes the difference.

And then you have, there's other biblical examples. Judas was a man who responded with worldly sorrow. And what did Paul say about worldly sorrow? It ends in death. Peter denied the Lord three times. But rather than being overcome by worldly grief, he had a godly grief that brought repentance and restoration, reconciliation with the Lord. And it turned to life. And that's what Zacchaeus is doing in this passage.

And the result we read in verse nine is, look at this, it's beautiful. Verse 9, this is really good. And Jesus said to him, *"Today's salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham."*

Now, I want you to pay close attention to that verse. Because that's a very important verse to read. Because I think some people don't stop to think about what it means. Notice he said, *"salvation has come to this house... (this day for this man) is ...a son of Abraham."* What's he mean when he says, he's a son of Abraham? Is he simply saying for this man is a Jew? I mean that's what son of

Abraham essentially means. That's what they thought it meant. Yeah, but it means a whole lot more than that.

Right here in this verse, verse 9. And I want to camp on this just for a minute. We take a step forward into understanding why someone responds to grief with repentance. And why some people, like Judas, respond to grief with worldly sorrow that leads to death. Okay? Verse 9 is the key. Is the key. All right? And it's right there when Jesus says, *"he also is a son of Abraham."*

Let me show you. Paul wrote about what it means to be a son of Abraham in a couple of his different letters. And I'm going to put two statements out of two different Pauline epistles up on the screen. Check this out. First from Romans. He says, not all children of, excuse me,

Romans 9:7 (ESV)

...not all are children of Abraham because they're his offspring...

...not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring...

In other words, you're not considered a children of Abraham simply because you have the DNA of Jewish blood.

Galatians 3:7 (ESV)

Know then, that it is those of faith who are sons of Abraham.

Know then (Galatians 3:7) that it is those of faith who are sons of Abraham.

The two statements are, first of all, not everybody who is born a Jew is a true son of Abraham. Why? Because to be a son of Abraham, you have to exude the heart of Abraham, which is the heart of faith. Trusting God. And that's why Jesus said about Zacchaeus, salvation has come to this home today, for this man is a son of Abraham. In other words, he expressed faith. And that is the key response to turning grief and sorrow, from a worldly sort of an expression, to a godly expression.

Do you remember Judas? Again, we're coming back to this worldly expression of sorrow. Judas was sorrowful when he betrayed the Lord. You know that. Right? He was sorry for what he did. Do you know that he tried to return the money? He tried. He took the silver that he'd been paid. He brought it. He took it back. And he said, I don't want this. The Pharisees and stuff didn't take it back because they said it was blood money. They couldn't take it back into the

coffers. But he tried. He tried getting rid of it. But beyond that, his response to his grief was hopelessness. And because of his hopelessness, he ended up taking his life.

But the opposite of that, what we're seeing here in these passages, is that when there is faith, I can take the grief that I have over my sin. And when faith comes in to my heart and life, it produces hope and repentance and life. Right?

See, we all have to come to a place of grief over our sin. And when I say to the Lord, I've sinned, I am a sinner, I'm a rotten sinner, that's my grief speaking. But when I also say to Him, but You are a big Savior. That's hope. That's faith. Right? That's my faith, that regardless of the size of my sin, my faith rises up. And says, but what You did on the cross for me, that was enough. It was good enough and I accept it. I embrace it. And because of that, it produces repentance that gives life. And it's a beautiful picture.

And if you want to know why our faith is such a powerful element of this whole equation of producing hope in the face of grief, it's all laid out for us in verse 10. Look at verse 10 in your Bible. The last verse of this passage. It says, *"For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost."* Listen, if you believe that, if you believe that, then your grief will never overwhelm you.

The grief about your sin, which is very normal and very good, ultimately, will not overwhelm you if you believe this statement. That the Son of Man came to both seek and to save the lost. And that basically means, that Jesus is ever on the lookout for people - sinners - who understand that they're sinners. They understand who they are. And they're ready to turn from their grief to life. He's ever on the lookout for people like that.

Even though Jesus is right now, physically seated at the right hand of God in heaven, He is working through the Holy Spirit, to actively seek those who want to turn away from their old life that only brings grief. And want to turn to Him. And place their faith in Him. And in His finished work on the cross. Isn't that a beautiful idea? I mean, it's what gives us hope in the face of grief.

I still sin. I'd love to tell you that I've stopped sinning. I can't say that. I wish I could. But although my sin grieves me to this day, it does not produce hopelessness in me. Because I know that Jesus is bigger.

I know that what He accomplished on the cross was enough. And I know that my sin will never overwhelm the work of the cross. The cross overwhelms the work of my sin. That's wonderful news.