

Personal Evangelism in Biblical Perspective: iShare—How?

Luke 19:1-10

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February 12, 2012 – Morning Sermon

The title of our study is iShare – How from Luke 19. Luke 19:1-10 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 anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” [9] And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. [10] For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

Our focus this year is personal evangelism. It is that we personally would share Christ with other persons that they would be brought to a personal relationship with Christ. We started by going to certain texts through certain themes. We started with iShare – Who? Who is to share the Gospel with others? I am to share the Gospel – iShare. Anyone who knows Jesus Christ is to share the Gospel. The Bible is clear. When they were scattered they went about preaching the Gospel so the Gospel went from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the utter most part of the world. This is not the paid professional but all of God’s people were scattered and went to share the Gospel.

Then we asked ourselves why do we share the Gospel? iShare – Why? We noted that there are multiple motivations as to why we share the Gospel of Jesus Christ but the compelling motivation and the motivation of all motivations is that

the love of Christ compels us. It propels us to share the Gospel with others. Some of the many motivations to share the Gospel is our compassion, our desire to honor the Lord, our desire that people hear Christ and for worship covering the earth but the number one reason that moves us continually is the love of Christ which propels us, compels us and constrains us.

Then we looked at iShare – What? It's wonderful to know that we have this wonderful, glorious, powerful Gospel that is so absolutely unique that we share Good News to a world that is in bondage to bad news that sin kills. The wages of sin is bad news, death. It's spiritual death, physical death, eternal death but Good News is the Gospel. For the wages of sin is death, BUT the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23). If you come to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior you can have new life, eternal life, an everlasting life. Being outside the house of God you are brought into the family of God which is a forever family to be with God forever and ever. So iShare – what? We share the Gospel.

In this study it's iShare – How? I want to take you to some selected moments in the life of Jesus for evangelistic encounters. Jesus saved sinners through sinners who have been saved who bring the Gospel. Jesus saves sinners through saved sinners effectively sharing the Gospel. As a saved sinner I want to go to my Savior and watch the way He did it so the first one I want to bring to you is Zacchaeus. Here is why. First of all I love the Gospel of Luke because it is so personal, so insightful and there are things he mentions that are unbelievably helpful. I believe Luke 19:1-10 contains the one verse that Luke wanted to write to tell you why he wrote the book and why Jesus came into the world.

How did Luke write this book? Luke was with Paul who came back from the missionary journey to Jerusalem and Paul was arrested and thrown into jail. While Paul was in jail Luke took that time while he was in Jerusalem to do his work, led by the Holy Spirit, to compile the Gospel of Luke. Luke wrote two books in your Bible. He wrote Luke and Acts. Here's an insight. When he wrote Acts he said in Acts 1:1 says *[1] In the first book (the book of Luke), O Theophilus (meaning lover of God), I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach.* Luke 19:1-10 contains in that text the summation of what Jesus came to do and teach. Luke 19:10 says *[10] For the Son of Man (a term from the book of Daniel that Jesus loved to use to refer to Himself) came to seek and to save the lost.*

So here we are in Jericho and Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem. Jesus is just days from fulfilling Luke 19:10 of saving the lost. When you leave Jericho it's uphill all the way and they sing the songs of ascent all the way up to the temple. Jesus is headed to Mount Zion but He'll leave there in a couple of days to go to Mount Calvary. It is right there that Jesus will save His people from their sins through that glorious redeeming work of the cross. On His way to save the lost He teaches us how to seek the lost.

This is an interesting journey. He had left Galilee, come down by the Jordan River and had numerous events in this journey that He is taking to go to Jerusalem to go to Mount Calvary to save us from our sins. In this journey He told us the importance of children when He brought the children to Himself. He said "For is such is the Kingdom of God" referring to bringing the children to Himself. He healed a blind beggar right there in Jericho.

Along His journey in Luke 18 He met a rich young ruler. The rich young ruler asked Him "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" In the back story to this Jesus is kind of saying "If you want to work your way to heaven go do all the commandments" and this ruler is so dead in his sins he says "I've done all them." Jesus didn't say you haven't done all them but He shows him that he hasn't by exposing his idolatry because the next thing Jesus says is "If you've done them all go sell all your possessions and come and follow Me." Then it says in Luke 18:23-25 [23] *But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. [24] Jesus, seeing that he had become sad, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! [25] For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."* Remember that.

Jesus goes a little bit further and He is going through the streets of Jericho. Everybody is coming out to see Him. Jericho is an interesting place. It is an oasis. It is right there in the middle of a desert at the northern edge of the Dead Sea but it was a paradise because of the water that flowed there. This was the first city that was conquered when the people of Israel came in from the bondage of forty years in the wilderness. This was the city that was to be a tithe to God. This was the city that they were not to touch. This was the city where the walls fell down. God gave them the victory over this city. Later on a Roman Emperor named Marc Anthony will take this city, fix it up some and give it as a gift to Cleopatra calling it the oasis of paradise. King Herod had this city rebuilt with a Hippodrome and a theater.

Jericho was one of the three tax centers. There were three places where they collected taxes from in the land of Israel. One was Caesarea Philippi in the north. One was Capernaum at the northern edge of the Sea of Galilee and the other was down at the northern edge of the Dead Sea which was Jericho. Jericho was the biggest tax collection so they had a man there named Zacchaeus who was an "architelones" (Greek word), a chief tax gatherer. This is the only time it's used in the Bible. There was a tax collector from Capernaum who was converted, got saved and became a Christian. That was Matthew or Levi and he actually became one of the disciples. Zacchaeus is the guy that Matthew would have reported to. He is the big tax gatherer.

I want to tell you something about tax gatherers. Nobody like tax gatherers in Israel because they were Jewish, had abandoned their people and signed on with the Romans to collect taxes from the people to give to the Romans and they

didn't get paid anything to do it. The Bible just said Zacchaeus was rich. They got paid by stealing taxes from others. They were thieves. They turned against their own people, collected the taxes and they were told in order to make their money was to collect too much and you give so much to us but whatever you have beyond what you give us you just keep. This chief tax gatherer was obviously a chief thief. He was a rich tax gatherer which meant he was collecting a lot of money from everyone. That's why Jesus talks about Gentiles and tax gatherers. There was nobody more despised than these tax gatherers.

This chief tax gatherer in this place called Jericho heard that Jesus was coming so he runs ahead. He can't see Jesus because he is small. I would have sung the song about Zacchaeus being a wee little man to prove to you that one he was Scottish for being a 'wee' little man and that I could sing but all of you can say 'amen' because I didn't do that. He runs ahead and climbs the Sycamore tree and he was seeking Jesus. What he didn't know was that Jesus was seeking him. Jesus sees him and says "*Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.*" I'd love to know just how fast he got down that tree. He came down, took Jesus to his house and because of the language of the text Jesus was a friend, a guest, and had table fellowship.

That caused everyone else to say "This Man sits down to eat with sinners?!" Who would say that? It those who think they are not sinners. Then Zacchaeus unperturbed, unstopped confesses Jesus as Lord, confesses he's a sinner, confesses the sinfulness of his sin, turns from his sin to Christ, does deeds appropriate to repentance as he says he'll pay back what he stole four times and then what had left he would use to minister to the poor. Then he enters into that diaconal ministry to the poor. Jesus says "Salvation has come to this house today." Now he is really a son of Abraham. He is not circumcised in the foreskin of the flesh but he is circumcised in the heart. He has received, believed and repented the Savior who had come to his house, therefore salvation had come to that house that day.

I want to draw out some lessons because we want to share Christ and we're learning from Christ. Here are seven observations that I want to walk you through from this text. Here is the first evangelistic encounter that is effective. What do we learn from this? Effective evangelism encounters are always preceded by the motivation and awakening ministry of the Holy Spirit. You might be thinking that you haven't heard anything about the Holy Spirit from this text. There are other passages of Scripture that give more warrant to the Spirit but this passage says that Zacchaeus went up that Sycamore tree because he was *seeking* Jesus. In Psalms and in Romans 3 it says there is none who seek Me, no not one. Zacchaeus is seeking Him. Maybe the Bible is in error. There is no one who seeks Him, no not one. So why is Zacchaeus seeking Him? It is because the Lord, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit has already come to him and has awakened within him this desire to seek the Lord.

That is why the Lord says “If you seek Me you will find Me.” That’s an empty promise if nobody seeks. How can non-seekers become seekers? It’s the wonderful ministry of that Hound of heaven. It is the Holy Spirit who tracks us down. He gives us a heart to follow, eyes to see and ears to hear. That’s why Zacchaeus went up the tree. The Holy Spirit was moving him to seek Jesus. That’s why Zacchaeus came down the tree. The Holy Spirit moved him to come to Jesus. It says in Luke 19:6 that Zacchaeus came hurriedly and joyfully. That is the glorious, marvelous work of the Holy Spirit that moves into our life and then brings us to pursue Him.

A second observation from the text is be alert to Divine appointments to share Christ in the journeys and events of life. It’s amazing how the Lord can open up things. Someone asked me “Harry how do you know it’s a Divine appointment?” Sometimes you have Divine appointments that you don’t know until you start sharing and then you realize the Lord has been working here. Be alert to those Divine appointments. Just start sharing. Put the seed everywhere and be alert to it. Then all of sudden you’ll find people who begin to respond. People begin to ask questions. The Holy Spirit has moved within them, motivated them and their asking the questions which you’re ready to give the answers to them as you move into their life but always be alert for it. Maybe I should have put be ready instead of alert.

I am thinking of an illustration in my own life. I’m going to use myself as the negative. This is about as transparent as I’m going to get here. Back in the 1990s Frank Barker and I used to get to fellowship more often because we were both on the board of the Westminster Seminary and have that time at the Board meeting. At the end of the meetings almost always we’d both end up on the same plane coming back. This particular time we were not only on the same plane but we were sitting on the same row. I went back to Charlotte and he went back to Birmingham but on Delta everyone had to fly through Atlanta. I had the window seat and he had the aisle seat. We were pretty excited until we realized somebody had the middle seat. When this man asked for another seatbelt to help with the one that he already had we knew that one this was a really big man and two me and Frank weren’t going to carry on any conversation.

I was tired and the next was going to be Sunday and I was going to be preaching. I was little behind on my sermons so I was giving off my vibes to the guy between us. Don’t talk to me. I was in fort God mode giving off those vibes. Then I hear Frank say to him “Well, where ya from?” The man answered. Frank said “What are ya doing? Do you know what it means to be a Christian?” By the time we get to our destination he has led the man to Christ. Here was a Divine appointment and I was not ready. Be on the alert. Be ready to share in those moments the Lord has brought you to.

The third observation is our objective in sharing the Gospel is that lost men and women receive and follow Christ. You might think that is so obvious. In the text

Jesus says to Zacchaeus "Come down for I'm going to your house today." Jesus went to be with that sinner. The whole objective of evangelism is that lost men and women would find Christ. That's where salvation is. It's not just simply find salvation but its find Christ. Here is what the Gospel promises. It promises that Jesus Christ has gone to the cross to die for our sins, to emancipate us from our sins, set us free from our sins to bring us to Himself. He has set us free from our sins to deliver us to Himself.

There are all kinds of blessings that come with the Gospel. People become worshippers. Marriages get put back together. There are no longer the horrors of hell are upon me. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. There are now the glories of heaven. There are now a new heavens and a new earth. There are blessings upon blessings upon blessings in and through the Gospel but the objective is not simply for them to miss hell and hit heaven. The objective is not simply for them to get a changed life. The objective is not simply for them to feel better about the fact that they're forgiven of their sins. Why does Christ free us from our sins? It is to bring us from our sins to Himself. That's the objective. The blessings flow from that.

In fact, that's why heaven is heaven. It's because He is there. He says "I go to prepare a place for you so that where I am there you may be also." It's not so that the church will grow. I praise the Lord for growing churches with conversions but that's not the objective. It's not simply that a city gets changed although a city changes. It is simply this glorious truth that we want to bring men and women who are lost to the Savior that they might know Him who is life indeed. For me to live is Christ.

The fourth observation from the text is true conversion is marked by saving faith and demonstrated repentance. I praise the Lord for the blessing of the outreach of the Sportsman's Blast this past week. The Gospel was shared and 91 people said they wanted to commit their life to Christ. So we are going to do that follow up. Do I think 91 people were converted? I don't know but of those 91 who are converted they by faith received Jesus as Lord and Savior and repented of their sins who turned from it to come to Christ. You can't turn from your sins until you believe in Christ but you can't believe in Christ without turning from your sins to come to Christ and that's exactly what Zacchaeus did. He said "This is my sin. I confess it. I repent of it. I defrauded, I stole, I dishonored You, I sinned and now I turn."

Then he began to demonstrate his repentance. He went way beyond what the book of Leviticus and Numbers said to do. I said he would give it back four times and then all those poor people he made more poor by stealing from them, he started giving to them. There were all kinds of things he began to do as God laid hold of his heart. He's not writing the checks and paying back money to be saved. These aren't acts of penance. This is a demonstration of his repentance. Not only does he know what he did was sin but he knew he couldn't keep what

he took and sin. The same Savior that set him free and brought him to Himself has set him free from this idolatry. So what I took I'll give back. There will be a demonstrated changed life. It's not the changed life that saves. It's the changed life that's the demonstration. We turn from our sins to Christ as we receive Christ as Lord.

A fifth observation from the text is those who receive the Gospel will share the Gospel and those who receive mercy will be merciful. In this text this man receives the Gospel and he is ready now to share the Gospel. He confesses Christ as Lord. Who are the people who are most ready to share Christ? It's not the mature Christians, it's the new Christians and it's because they're excited that Christ has saved them from their sins. When I have received this gift I want to tell people about it. There is no other gift like this in all the world in all of eternity. This is the gift of God's Son for us and the gift of eternal life where we can have His Son in an intimate relationship declared innocent and taken to glory. That is just unbelievable. So when people receive it they start sharing it with others.

When I was in Charlotte pastoring there was this fellow we prayed for all the time. He was Jewish and I won't give you his name because I don't have permission to so I'll just call him Abe. His wife was a member of our church and she was just a wonderful lady. She had a heart for her husband and every Sunday night a couple of us would get together to pray for her husband. Then he started coming to a Bible study, then to a couple of events, then to that and then to a discovery Bible Study. The next thing that happens is I get a phone call at 9 o'clock at night. "Pastor Reeder, he's ready!" "Who's he?" "My husband Abe is ready and wants to talk to you about giving his life to Jesus. Come on over." "I'm counseling someone." "Leave them and come on over here." "I can't leave them." "But he's ready." "If this is the Holy Spirit he'll still be ready tomorrow morning." So we met the next morning at Western Sizzling and sure enough he is still ready. He said "I want to become a believer." I pulled out a napkin, wrote down a couple of things, we prayed together and he became a believer.

When I have the privilege to pray for someone I always ask them to do three things and I ask him to do three things. One, read the Gospel of John and tell me five things next week that you have learned from it. Secondly, memorize John 6:47 and thirdly go tell three people now that you're a Christian. The Bible says to confess Him with your mouth. I will never forget what this man said. He said "Tell three people?" I said "Yes" and he said "They don't have to be Christians, do they?" I said "Preferably not." He said "I have so many friends that I need to tell about this." When the Gospel comes you're ready to share it. Has the Gospel come to you? You be ready to share it.

When God has shown you mercy you'll show mercy. There were a lot of poor people about to get blessed. Last week I had the privilege to fill out some cards for some people who were headed to the mission field, seminary, people who were adopting and for some who were bringing foster children into their home.

Those things are wonderful, right, appropriate, God ordained deeds of mercy where God calls us to be merciful but do you know why those people did that? These people did these things for one reason only and that was because they had received mercy from Jesus and they wanted to give mercy. That's where real mercy begins. It's when people have received the mercy of the Gospel. Any other mercy is usually self therapy to try to get better, to try to feel better but when Jesus Christ has set you free and you have mercy then all of a sudden you want to be merciful just the way He has been merciful to you. So now people are going to get paid back whom he stole from. The poor are going to be blessed because this man has received mercy from the Lord.

The sixth observation is while sinners refuse to minimize their sin and its sinfulness they will also refuse to be silent about their Savior. A young stopped me this week in a Bible study and said "Pastor I want to thank you for the very first sermon. Why am I not sharing this? I have seven people who work for me." He started sharing with seven people and he has shared with six and now has one more to go. Of the six he has shared with two have committed their life to Christ and the other four are praying with him. It's amazing that when people come to Christ they refuse to be silent. This is my sin and I want to turn from it to my Savior but I will not be silent about my Savior.

The seventh observation is while sharing the Gospel will bring joy to both those who share and those who are saved, it will unfailingly scandalize the religionists and the self-righteous. The religionist and the self righteous say "What are you doing with sinners?!" They say that because they don't see themselves as sinners and that's why they won't reach out to sinners. If they had seen themselves as a sinner and had come to Christ who is a friend for sinners then they would want to be friends to sinners to bring those sinners to Christ as well. If they are religionists or self righteous they will look down on the sinners, they won't befriend the sinners and they will scandalize those who do. The Bible tells us in Luke 15 that the Pharisees ridiculed Jesus because He was a friend to sinners. In this text, Luke 19:7 it says that *all* rebuked Him and grumbled against Him because He would reach out to sinners.

Here is your takeaway. There is no one so lost that they cannot be saved. There is a hospital I visit regularly and on occasion I will go to visit a person and they are not there. Immediately my face brightens which means they must be doing better but there have been times that the doctor looked at me and said "No, they were discharged because they were incurable. There is nothing we can do for them." On this side of eternity there is no one so lost that they are discharged and can't be saved. He saves traitors like Peter, religious terrorist like Paul, adulterers like David, murderers like Moses and cowards like Isaiah. He saves sinners. He saved me. There is no one so lost that He cannot save them.

Why am I making a big point about this? I think this is where the text is leading us. In Luke 18 there was a rich young ruler and Jesus said that of all the

conditions of sin in this world what category of people are the toughest to lead to Christ? It is the rich. They are insulated in their riches. Their idolatry is seemingly invincible. One chapter later what is Zacchaeus? He is a rich man. What is impossible with man is possible with God and assured in Christ. There is no one so lost, even in the idolatry and insulation of riches that they cannot be saved.

My dear friends, God has some Divine appointments out there for you and you be ready for them. There are two things you can know. Every time you share the Gospel with people remember these two things. One, you are giving a unique powerful message that is non-repeatable which no religion has, of a glorious relationship that you and I who were sinners at one time where God sent His Son as a substitute for us on the cross. We continually in our life substituted ourselves for God and now God substituted Himself for us that we could have eternal life. Nobody else has that message that's revealed in the Word of God. Jesus seeks and saves sinners.

There is something else you can be assured of and that is anybody and everybody that you're talking to, if they don't know Jesus are empty. They are in despair, anger and or frustration. They may not show it. They may be dressed immaculately. Haven't you in the last hour seen it again? Where is the epitome of the idolatry of western consumerism? Go to California and see our celebrities dying in despair with all the money and all the fame. All the idols of this world are empty. You have the one Message of life which is Jesus Christ. Zacchaeus went up the tree to see Jesus. Jesus brought him down from the tree to give him everlasting life.

Go find people and bring them from the trees of life to the Tree of Life, Jesus Christ, today. Today, salvation has come to this house. Why? That is what Jesus began to do and teach, to seek the lost. Through us that is what He is continuing to do as we seek the lost to bring them to our Savior. Let's share the Gospel and ourselves. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You the moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for this marvelous testimony of what You did here in the life of Zacchaeus to lay before us these glorious testimonies of the emancipating power of the Gospel. We can almost see the chains falling off of Zacchaeus as the Gospel Key turns the lock and then Father, we get the chance to see that with many more. If You can save someone this insulated in deception, lies, thievery and riches then You are reminding us that You can save anyone and everyone. Friend, you might be reading this today and you know yours is not to go share this message yet, but yours is to come down out of the tree to Christ now. Today salvation, the Savior has come to your heart, your house, your home. Believe, repent and put your trust in Him. If you would like to pray with someone call us here at Briarwood

(205-776-5200). There is a Savior for you. Hallelujah, what a Savior! Jesus is the friend of sinners, I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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