

No Small Problem

Luke 19:1-10

By [Ralph Kelley](#)

If you would, either open your Bibles or look on that sheet that's on the back table and we're going to turn to Luke 19. And we're going to look at the first ten verses of Luke 19. As you're turning there, let me just set the stage for you a little bit. Jesus is in Jericho. He's about an eight hour walk away from Jerusalem, so just a day's journey, and He has recently, in the chapter prior to that, He was just outside Jericho and He had the meeting with the rich young ruler, one of the saddest passages in all of Scripture there as Jesus is meeting with the rich young ruler - the rich young ruler chooses the things of the world over Jesus and he walks away sad and it leaves us in a spot of feeling quite depressed when you read that particular text, so that's what's happened prior to that. But now let's give our attention to our text tonight found in chapter 19 beginning in verse 1. Remember, this is the Word of God:

He entered Jericho and was passing through. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He 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 my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." 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."

I. Never Beyond the Saving Grace of Christ

Sunday, January 12, just last month, was just like most any other days flying out of Chicago. The flight crew of 4013 for Southwest Airlines had a bit of a problem though; there was a small problem. They were running late. They had a flight to get to Dallas but they were running late and the people at Southwest don't like to run late. They like to do things on time. They like to bring good customer service.

And so the crew was a little bit bothered - "But it's okay, it's a small problem. It's ten or fifteen minutes. We can maybe catch up. We do have to make a stop in Branson, a quick turn around, and then on to Dallas." So as they were flying into Branson, the crew was coming down for the landing at the Branson Airport and right as they hit the runway they realized that they no longer had a small problem but they had a big problem as they were not landing at the Branson Airport but were actually seven miles north of that at the Taney County Airport - the airport, instead of landing on the eight thousand foot runway they were landing on a thirty-seven hundred foot runway that had a cliff at the very end of it that fell to about four hundred feet. So they hit the runway, the pilot immediately dropped the flaps, hit the brakes, passengers screamed, flight attendants were sweating, and they finally came to a stop about a hundred and fifty feet or so before the end of the runway. When they had left Chicago they thought they had a small problem - they were running ten or fifteen minutes late. But when they landed at the Taney County Airport they realized they had a much larger problem.

A Much Bigger Problem than Zacchaeus realized

I think the same is true for Zacchaeus tonight in our passage. He gets up that morning and there's a big crowd gathering and the word is spreading that Jesus is in town and he wants to see Jesus. But he has a small problem and that is, he's a small man and he can't see over the crowd. And so he runs ahead and he climbs up into a sycamore tree so that he can see what is going on. We don't really know why Zacchaeus had this big interest in Jesus. He certainly isn't a man of any religious conviction that we know of here, but yet he found it interesting enough that he wanted to see who this Jesus was. And so he climbs up into the tree to see Jesus. But he finds out that day that he has a much bigger problem than just being short. He finds out that he does not have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ and that he's a sinner and that he's outside the grace of the Lord.

See, Zacchaeus was not a good fellow. He is a tax collector, we are told, and tax collectors are known for being cheats and swindlers and not good people. But he's not just any tax collector. We're told that he's a chief tax collector; the only one that we're told about in Scripture that's called a chief tax collector. So that means he's like at the top of the food chain of swindlers and thieves and nobody likes Zacchaeus. And yet there he is, looking out at that tree at Jesus. You know there's nothing in Zacchaeus that would make him attractive to Jesus. And before you knew Jesus Christ, there's nothing in you that made you attractive to Jesus, for that's the story of the Gospel - it's that Jesus comes to see and to save the lost. And if you don't know that you're a sinner and you don't know that Jesus Christ forgives sins and saves people from their sins, then I want you to hear that tonight from me because those are the facts. We all have the exact same big problem that Zacchaeus had that day. It's actually the biggest problem in the entire universe - it's men breaking the law of God and sinning against their Creator. You know, we could go around the room, we could all tell our stories

about how we came to know Christ and they would all be different and yet they would all be very similar as the story always comes back to Jesus saving us from our sins because no one is beyond the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Many of you might be sitting here tonight with heavy hearts as you think about loved ones that don't know Jesus. If you're one of those people I want to encourage you tonight, encourage you that no one is beyond the saving grace of Jesus. The Bible is full of different accounts of people that found salvation that you and I would have written off a long time ago. There are murderers and greedy people and drunkards and liars and thieves and gossipers and idol worshipers and adulterers, selfish people, scared people, lovers of this world, and even self-righteous people. Those are the people that Jesus came to save from their sins.

One of the worst people that I have ever known in my life is my grandfather, my dad's dad. He was an adulterer, an alcoholic, a gambler, abusive at least verbally to his family - he was a wicked man. I never even met him until I was in the seventh grade. My dad prayed for him often, prayed that he would come to know the Lord. He would try to share the Lord with my grandfather and my grandfather would tune him out and say, "I don't want to hear that." My dad died ten years ago this April. Six weeks after that at the age of ninety, my grandfather professed faith in Jesus Christ and died himself about six weeks after that. A day my father had always wanted to see but never lived to see but got to rejoice nonetheless upon my grandfather's home-going. Nobody in my family would have ever thought that granddaddy was ever going to be saved from his wicked, wicked sin and yet Jesus had another plan. There's nobody who is outside the grace of Jesus Christ.

So you see, lost people, they can be found. We see this in the illustration of my grandfather, we see this throughout the pages of the Bible, and we even see this in our text this evening.

Pray for the Lost

And I think there's three takeaways that I want you to have from this first thought about no one is beyond the saving grace of Jesus, and that is, that we should pray for the lost. There are probably people in your life that you think, "There is no way." We should pray for the lost.

Rejoice when Sinners are Saved

Secondly, we should rejoice when people are saved. I'll be honest with you, some people had a hard time hearing the news about my grandfather because he was a wicked man, and yet we should rejoice.

Jesus rescues Terrible People, such as Ourselves

Because, of the third point, and that is - we need to remember that Jesus rescues terrible people and we are the terrible people that Jesus has rescued. Romans 5 tells us, beginning in verse 6, "For while we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for the righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more now that we are reconciled shall we be saved by his life." See, Paul here says that we were weak, we were sinners, and we were enemies with God, and Christ died for us. We cannot lose sight that we are the unlikely ones that Christ came to die for.

II. What is Our Response to Salvation?

The second point I want us to look at is found in verses 6 through 9 of our text, and that is - what is our response to salvation? We see two responses from Zacchaeus here. One in verse 6 - "So he hurriedly came down and received him joyfully." And then in verse 8 - "And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. If I have defrauded anyone of anything I restore it fourfold.'" Now Luke included verse 6 in there for a reason and that is because Zacchaeus was joyful about his salvation. Are you joyful about your salvation? I want to give you seven reasons why you should look at your salvation and be joyful. And I picked seven; I could probably pick a thousand, but I had to stop somewhere - seven seemed like that good, Biblical number where you should stop so let me give you seven reasons why you should be joyful for your salvation.

Seven Reasons to be Joyful for Our Salvation

One is - we have a big problem and it's sin and it's curse, death. Yet in our salvation, Jesus has overcome our biggest problem. The second reason we should rejoice is - in this world, at times we can struggle with feeling loved or valued. And when we look at our salvation we can rejoice and know that we are the adopted children of God, heirs of the Lord. We can call God, "Abba, Father." If you ever struggle with feeling loved and valued, go sit down and read Galatians 4 and pray over that. Often we might feel lonely, and if we do, we can remember our salvation and know that God will never leave us or forsake us. We have reason for joy because in Jesus, we have a friend that will stick closer than a brother. Fourth reason - another is the assurance that our salvation can bring us. Jesus is the author and perfecter of our faith. Jesus Christ, who we just read about in Romans chapter 5, died for us when we were weak, when we were sinners, when we were enemies to God. He has not saved us only to later abandon us. Another reason why you can be joyful in your salvation is that when

Satan whispers in your ear that you're not worthy, that you're guilty, you can rejoice in your salvation and you can say, "You're right, Satan. I was guilty but I am also forgiven." Reason number six - when the troubles of this life seem to overwhelm you, remember your salvation and rejoice that this is but a temporary situation. You have the whole eternity of glorious peace and joy. And finally, when we remember our salvation we can have much joy and know that if Jesus has indeed overcome our biggest problem then all of His other promises are true. They are "Yes" and "Amen" and we can bask in the promises of Jesus. So the joy of Zacchaeus is one of his responses.

A Response of Action: Pursuit of Holiness

The other response is that of action. There at verse 8 you see what Zacchaeus is doing? He is immediately recognizing, "I am a lover of the world, I am sinning against people," and he immediately starts paying back, changing the way that he's living, because he knows that if he's going to be a follower of Christ that affects the way that he lives. See, you cannot love God and this world. And Christians pursue holiness. Do you pursue holiness? Alright, now there's a lot of junk going on in the evangelical world and even into the reformed circles about how Christians can live any way that they want because they've already been forgiven for their sins but that's not Biblical. That's not what God's Word teaches us. We see throughout the Scriptures that God claims us and tells us that He has saved us and then He tells us how we should live.

We see it in the Ten Commandments. You've got the preamble to the Ten Commandments where God says, "I am the Lord Your God. I brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. Therefore have no other gods before Me." You see it throughout the writings in the New Testament. The beginning of Colossians chapter 3 says, "Since you have been raised by God, therefore" - and it starts telling you how we should pursue holiness. And the entire book of Ephesians is written that way. The first three chapters of the book of Ephesians is this glorious letter about how we have been saved and then the final three chapters are wonderful application of what we should be doing and how we should be applying that salvation. God has given us His Law for a purpose. The Law is there to be a mirror of God's holiness and our unrighteousness so that we know that we need a Savior. It's there because it helps restrain against sin and evil and it is there because it reveals what is pleasing to God and what is offensive to God and how we are to respond. We cannot forget that third use of the Law. It's very critical for us as Christians - that we respond to our salvation by pursuing holiness.

III. To Seek and Save the Lost: A Picture of Salvation on the Way to Calvary

And lastly I want us to look at verses 9 and 10. They say again, "Jesus said to

him, 'Today salvation has come to this house since he is also a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.'" Today salvation has come to this house. No truer words have ever been spoken, for salvation Himself had come to the house of Zacchaeus and His name is Jesus. See, when Jesus comes into our lives He comes into every part of our life. He died for our sins and sent His Spirit to dwell in us. When we confess that Jesus is our Savior we're confessing that He's also our sustainer. And we don't just get the benefits from Jesus' death, benefits like forgiveness, escaping damnation, or the glory of going to heaven, but we get so much more. We get Jesus! We get Jesus! It's glorious. Jesus is not just a repairman that comes into our lives and fixes all of our problems and then leaves. Jesus gives us His Spirit so that we can be guided and comforted and loved continually. Today salvation has come to this house and it makes all the difference.

And then finally in verse 10, Jesus says, "The Son of Man has come to seek and save the lost." You know it's a simple message but it's a gigantic point. It's basically a summary statement of Jesus' entire ministry. "I have come to seek and save the lost." The Second Person of the Trinity took on flesh for all eternity because He wanted to save the lost. Jesus is the answer to Genesis 3:15 and every other text that points to salvation for God's people. You know, I've read this text like you many times. I grew up singing the kids song, which I wanted to sing tonight but David Strain told me it probably wouldn't fly so we didn't do that, and yet I saw something in this text this time that I hadn't seen before. And I can't help but to wonder what Jesus was thinking that afternoon. You remember I told you where Jesus was when this took place? He's in Jericho. He's an eight hour walk away from Jerusalem; it's a day's trip. Well if you have your Bibles and you let your eyes go down a little bit what you'll see is that Jesus, the next day, is headed to Jerusalem. Jesus, the next day, is entering Jerusalem for the final time, for, in a week's time, He would be crucified. So as Jesus is standing there and He's only a week away from the cross, He's only a week away from being arrested, from being stripped, flogged, spat upon, beaten, nailed to a cross, pierced with a spear and killed, and here He is with Zacchaeus celebrating his salvation. "Today salvation has come to this house!" And next week salvation will be paid for in full.

The saving of Zacchaeus and of you and of me comes at a great cost. You see, Zacchaeus thought he had a small problem, but what he learned that day was that his problems were too big for him to handle. Do you know this to be true? Do you know that you cannot save yourself? There's good news. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Jesus came to handle our biggest problem.

Let's pray.

Father God, thank You for this brief time we can look at Your Word. Lord, I pray that You will continue to work it into our hearts and minds and it will be fruitful and beneficial and that we will look to You and You alone for our salvation. We

pray this in Christ's name, amen.

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