

62. Jesus Came to Seek and to Save the Lost

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example the importance of giving glory to God for what He has done in our lives. We saw that Jesus gave both physical and spiritual sight to Bartimaeus because he recognized Jesus as the Lord and the Messiah. In our topic today, we are going to see that Jesus also gave salvation to Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector and was considered a sinner by the people of the city of Jericho and the surrounding area. However, we see that Zacchaeus was willing to do whatever it took to see Jesus. Luke 19:1-4 says, “Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now behold, *there was* a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way.” Here, we see that Jesus had now arrived at the city of Jericho as He traveled on His way to Jerusalem.

We learn several things about Zacchaeus in these verses. First, we see that he was a chief tax collector. A chief tax collector was over a larger region and usually had other tax collectors working for him. Tax collectors worked for the hated Roman government and also charged much more than they were supposed to charge. As a result, that is why the tax collectors were considered among the worst of sinners by the other Jews. Second, we see that he was rich. This was probably the result of making the people pay more taxes than they were required by the Roman law to pay. Third, Zacchaeus had heard so much about Jesus that he had a great desire to see Him. Fourth, Zacchaeus could not see Jesus over the crowd because he was a very short man and could not see over the other people.

The fact that Zacchaeus had a great desire to see Jesus would indicate that he had heard that Jesus had a great concern for sinners. Of course, one of the disciples of Jesus was a former tax collector. Matthew 9:9 says, “As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him.” Jesus had shown at the house of Matthew that He accepted tax collectors and sinners as Matthew 9:10 says, “Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, *that* behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.” Jesus also made it clear that it was possible for tax collectors to be forgiven. Matthew 9:13 says, “‘But go and learn what *this* means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” Whatever Zacchaeus had heard about Jesus caused him to want to see Jesus personally.

As a result of his desire to see Jesus, Zacchaeus did something that most rich people would never do. He ran ahead of the large crowd of people that surrounded Jesus. Then he climbed up into a sycamore tree so that he could see Jesus because he knew that Jesus would have to pass by that tree as he went. Many people are like Zacchaeus. Regardless of their past lives, they want to learn more about Jesus because they have heard that Jesus forgives sinners. In order to help them learn about Jesus, we need to share what the Bible teaches about Him. John 16:8-10 says, “‘And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me

no more.” Here, we see that the Holy Spirit convinces those who are not Christians of the fact that Jesus is the Righteous One who can forgive sin because He is without sin and paid our penalty. For many years Zacchaeus had felt rejected by the people of Jericho because they considered him a sinner. In contrast, we see that Jesus showed love to Zacchaeus. Luke 19:5-7 says, “And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.’ So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, ‘He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.’” Here, we see the way that Jesus showed His acceptance and love for Zacchaeus.

We see that Jesus told Zacchaeus to hurry and get down out of the tree. Jesus said that very day He was coming to visit the home of Zacchaeus and spend some time with him. This is actually the only recorded place where Jesus invited Himself to the home of someone. In every other recorded case, the people invited Jesus to their home. One of the greatest ways that a tax collector could feel accepted was to know that Jesus wanted to come to his house to spend time with him and eat his food. Most of the people did not want to be associated with the tax collectors and sinners in any way. Zacchaeus was so excited that he really hurried to get down from the tree. He was filled with joy to think that Jesus would be willing to come to his house.

In contrast, many of the other people from Jericho were not happy at all to see Jesus go to the home of Zacchaeus. In fact, it says that they all complained. The word translated “complained” means *to complain angrily or to complain to one another about what a person is doing*. The only other place in the New Testament where we see this word used is in Luke 15:1-2 where we read, “Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, ‘This Man receives sinners and eats with them.’” As you remember from an earlier topic, the complaining in that verse led Jesus to give the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost sons. Any Pharisees or scribes that were standing there when Jesus said that He was going to the home of Zacchaeus certainly complained that day as well.

However, we see that they were not the only people that complained. This verse says that all of the people complained, even those that were not scribes and Pharisees hated the tax collectors and wanted nothing to do with them. In contrast, Jesus was giving everyone there that day an example of the fact that He loved even the greatest sinners and wanted to forgive their sins. Jesus has said three years earlier in Matthew 9:12-13 when He had called Matthew to follow Him, “When Jesus heard *that*, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what *this* means: “I desire mercy and not sacrifice.” For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’” Christ came to call sinners to repentance. Jesus also promised in John 6:37, ““All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”” Jesus came to offer forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Zacchaeus did not even wait until he got to his home to make it clear that Jesus had changed his life at that very moment. Luke 19:8-10 says, “Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false

accusation, I restore fourfold.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.’” The very first thing that Zacchaeus did when he got to the ground was to recognize that Jesus is Lord. His statement reminds us of the statement of Saul in Acts 9:6, where we read, “So he, trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’ Then the Lord *said* to him, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’”

Zacchaeus showed that there had been true repentance in his heart by what he said next as he said that he was going to give half of his money to the poor and he was going to repay everything that he had taken by false accusation by giving the person four times as much. This is a very direct contrast to the rich ruler that asked Jesus how to inherit eternal life in the previous chapter. Luke 18:22-23 says, “So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, ‘You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.’ But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.” The rich young ruler went away sorrowful because he was very rich and his riches were his god. In contrast, true repentance gave Zacchaeus a desire to do what was good and right. Zacchaeus had probably gotten part of his money by charging people more taxes than the law required. By the time Zacchaeus gave half of his money to the poor and repaid each of those he had cheated four times as much, Zacchaeus probably became a poor man. However, he had gained eternal riches.

Jesus told everyone there that day about the change that had happened in the life of Zacchaeus. Jesus said that Zacchaeus had received salvation. The word translated “salvation” means *deliverance from the penalty and power of sin*. 2 Corinthians 7:10 says, “For godly sorrow produces repentance *leading* to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.” Here, we see that godly repentance leads to salvation and deliverance from the penalty of sin. Then, Galatians 5:1 says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” In this verse, we see that Jesus has given us liberty so that we are now free to serve Him. Galatians 5:13 adds, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” That liberty makes it possible for us to serve one another in love.

Jesus also made it clear that He came to seek and to save those who are lost. Jesus has shown throughout the book of Luke that He is seeking the lost. In Luke 15, we saw the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost sons and the rejoicing that there is in heaven when one sinner repents. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the desire of Jesus both to seek and to save those who are lost. Jesus is the only one that can save. However, He wants us and our children to join Him in seeking the lost by sharing the message of the Gospel with the lost. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children the importance of joining Jesus in seeking the lost.