

Part 67: Seeking Zacchaeus

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September 17, 2023

Where in your life do you feel lost? Maybe you can't find your way out of debt, or an addiction, or disappointment with life. Maybe despite all your efforts, you feel lost in crippling anxiety, or relational conflict, or a bad marriage.

We don't always appear to be lost on the outside. We might seem put-together. We might put up a good front. We get annoyed when people envy us and act like their life is so much harder than ours. If they only knew.

In denial, we try to convince ourselves that it's not that bad. We try to motivate ourselves with the things that used to delight us – like adventure, or entertainment, or creativity, or sexual gratification. But afterwards it might only compound the feelings of guilt and shame. Deep down, no matter how much we *take*, we can't shake the reality that we're missing something.

If you imagine being saved out of your lost-ness, what would that look like? What would it take for your life to be completely transformed? What do you hope *Jesus* can do for you this morning, in the midst of feeling lost?

In our passage today we meet a man who is lost. He has riches, career success, and status. But for all his success, he is missing something. His choices and the pursuits of his life have ruined his relationships and made him an outsider with God's people. He seems the most hopeless of cases. And yet it's from this mess and awareness of need that he seeks to see Jesus and his life is transformed.

There's a hymn that begins:

*O soul, are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Savior,
And life more abundant and free!¹*

Today we want to answer the question: "What did Zacchaeus see?" What was it about this lost man's look at Jesus that gave him life more abundant and free?

And kids in the room – maybe you have a picture book or a story bible at home with Zacchaeus in it. But even if you know the story, I want to encourage you to listen closely. See if by the end you can remember and tell your parents what it was *about* Jesus that Zacchaeus saw from that tree. Okay?

So our main point today is this: **The lost seek and receive Jesus because Jesus came to seek and save the lost.**

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¹ *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*, Helen Howarth Lemmel (1922)

And we're going to look at this in **three points**:

1. Earnest Seeking
2. Joyous Receiving
3. The Savior's Mission

Let's start with our first point: Earnest Seeking.

1. Earnest Seeking

Let's read **Luke 19:1-3**:

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.

So notice the description of Zacchaeus. He is a Jew and yet he is a tax collector. Tax collectors were hated by the Jews because they aligned themselves with Rome and got rich by taking advantage of their own people. So they were considered traitors. And Zacchaeus isn't just a tax collector – he's a "chief" tax collector. So he probably has other tax collectors working for him, and he's probably hated all the more. His wealth and oppression of God's people have made him an outsider.

Zacchaeus amassed his money in all the wrong ways and was left knowing he was missing something. But if you remember back a couple weeks ago, there was a rich ruler who had amassed *his* wealth in all the *right* ways. He was a model Jew – keeping Jewish laws and ethics - and yet his riches still caused him sorrow in the end. The pull of money is so powerful. But these two rich men illustrate that all you can gain in this world will never satisfy.

Not only that, we also see how his relationship to money put him at odds with his own people. We're familiar with the pursuit of career and wealth damaging relationships. For Zacchaeus, up to this point, the relational damage with his own people wasn't enough to motivate him to change. But when Jesus comes to town, something draws Zacchaeus to find out who Jesus really is.

If you're not a Christian or you're not sure if you're a Christian and you feel that something is missing in your life, then I'm so grateful that you're looking at this passage this morning. If you identify in some way with Zacchaeus, then this passage has good news for you.

Now think about the implications of Jesus' identity for Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus knows that he has made himself an enemy of God's people. If Jesus really is the Messiah - the long-awaited Jewish Savior- then that's probably not good news for a corrupt Roman sympathizer like him. He may have been able to suppress his feelings of guilt by focusing on his career success and wealth. But he knows the relational damage he's done to his own people and his relationship to God. We might expect that the only reason Zacchaeus would want to see who Jesus is - is out of nervousness – a desire to prove him *wrong* and ease any fears. He's not a likely candidate to hope that Jesus is the Messiah.

Maybe you feel a little uneasy about what God thinks about *your* life. But could it be that if Jesus is who he claims to be, then instead of fear, you might have reason for hope?

Let's **read v.3-4**:

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.

Zacchaeus is seeking to see who Jesus is. But there is an obstacle – the crowd. And that’s especially an obstacle for him because it says “he was small of stature.” There’s all of these barriers to Zacchaeus getting to see Jesus. Being an outsider, his stature, the unfriendly crowd. And yet, what does he do?

Zacchaeus responds to these obstacles by running ahead and climbing a tree where Jesus was about to pass by. And this would have been an odd thing for someone of his status to do. It isn’t exactly dignified for this wealthy tax collector to run and climb a tree.

Instead of being motivated by fear that Jesus is the Messiah, or suspicion that he was an imposter, or even mild curiosity – there seems to be an excitement and urgency in Zacchaeus. He’s hoping that Jesus is who he says he is. He wants to prove Jesus right. And he’s willing to look foolish in order to do it.

Maybe just going to church this morning carries with it some risk of looking foolish to classmates, or parents, or a spouse. But praise God that you’re willing to take that risk.

And look at the lengths Zacchaeus went to. He’s urgent and persistent.

We love stories of people pursuing a dream like summiting a mountain or achieving some accolade in academics or sports. But what about your pursuit of Jesus? What has pursuing Jesus looked like in your life?

I know a missionary in a country where it’s illegal to evangelize. In that area, if someone becomes a Christian, they will be ostracized and persecuted by their whole family. And yet, there are so many people that this missionary has shared the gospel with who have persistently met with him and read the Bible and asked questions wanting to know who Jesus is. And all the while they know what it will cost them if they receive Jesus. This is a costly pursuit

What Zacchaeus is demonstrating here is that **no matter how bad your sin is, no matter how great the obstacles may seem, no matter what the cost, Jesus is worth pursuing.**

Zacchaeus ran ahead and climbed the tree where Jesus was “about to pass.” He’s trying to intercept him so he can see him. But then something happens that he wasn’t expecting.

Let’s **read v.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.”

Seeing Zacchaeus

Jesus has been on the move from the beginning of this chapter. He was “passing through” Jericho and he was “about to pass that way” by the tree. But then unexpectedly, rather than passing by, he looks up. Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was, but Jesus looks up and sees *him*. Jesus’ journey through

Jericho is described in ways that seem unintentional or casual. But we get the sense that this was no accidental meeting.

And that's because Jesus not only addresses Zacchaeus but addresses him by name. Jesus isn't just reacting to an odd sight. He isn't being random in calling Zacchaeus. This is personal. And for Jesus, it's been personal for a long time.

Completely of his own accord, Jesus commands Zacchaeus to "hurry and come down." And the reason is because Jesus apparently already had plans for him. He wants Zacchaeus to host him in his house today.

Now this seems really presumptuous to us. In our culture, we're not too fond of unannounced visitors. But in ancient near-east cultures, this would have been an honor. Staying with and eating with Zacchaeus would have communicated acceptance and friendship – fellowship. And considering who Zacchaeus was, this would have been shocking. Out of everyone in the crowd, Jesus honors him. By this Jesus affirms Zacchaeus's sincere efforts to seek him.

Last week we saw something similar when Jesus asked a blind beggar, "What do you want me to do for you?" Obviously he wanted to see. And now whatever Zacchaeus was hoping to see, *he* also gets far more than he ever would have dared ask.

What you want from Jesus is infinitely smaller than what he intends for you.

You might want the equivalent of your sight back, your confidence back, your health back. Jesus offers you himself.

Running and climbing a tree doesn't seem that dramatic anymore when compared with Jesus welcoming someone who's lost, into his fellowship.

Jesus affirms Zacchaeus's seeking to know who he was. **But Jesus knows who you are before you know who he is.** Jesus showed favor to Zacchaeus even though he didn't deserve it. We call this "grace." Zacchaeus came expecting to see Jesus. What he didn't expect was to be *seen* by Jesus. But that's what grace is.

So kids, when your parents ask you later what was it about Jesus that Zacchaeus saw from the tree, you can tell them this – "He saw grace."

And this brings us to our second point: **Joyous Receiving**

2. Joyous Receiving

Let's **read v.6-7**:

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."

So Zacchaeus joyfully goes along with Jesus' presumptuous plan. He follows Jesus' directions exactly. He hurries, he comes down, and he receives Jesus into his home. Zacchaeus can't resist Jesus' call. And what we see here is something theologians call "irresistible grace." Irresistible grace is the

doctrine that when Jesus calls us by name, it's an offer we can't refuse. Zacchaeus is filled with joy that Jesus wants to stay with him.

Grumbling Interruption

But the crowd has a different response. They are not amused. Zacchaeus is a sinner. He doesn't belong with God's people. Jesus shouldn't associate with sinners. When the Messiah comes, he's supposed to liberate the Jews from people like Zacchaeus – and bring judgment on them. So the crowd is very displeased.

And this is a little ironic because the last passage ended saying that *all* the people praised God when they saw Jesus heal the blind man. But now they *all* grumbled. Why is that?

Well the same crowd that grumbled about Zacchaeus also rebuked the blind man before Jesus healed him. But miracles fit with their idea of what the Messiah should do for them. So a miracle and not mercy was what made them rejoice.

The way you think about yourself and what you deserve affects how you treat others. Remember in the last chapter Jesus told a parable contrasting a proud religious person with a repentant tax collector. And he told that parable to expose how some people trust in themselves – they esteem themselves highly – they are righteous in their own eyes, while treating others with contempt. Even the disciples showed contempt for little children who were brought to Jesus. They saw themselves as superior to children and didn't think children were worthy. Then the crowd shows contempt for the blind beggar. He's another outsider - he's not worthy either. And now they show contempt for Jesus sharing fellowship with “one of those sinners.” So there's this continual treating of others with contempt because of an inflated view of self.

You know, you can tell something about what really matters to a person by what he grumbles about. Grumbling is actually a form of anger. And anger is a response to perceived injustice. When we don't think something is fair - that something has violated our rights - then we might lash out or withdraw or grumble. And they aren't actually grumbling about Zacchaeus. They have *contempt* for him as a “sinner” - but their complaint is actually about Jesus. He's disappointing their Messianic expectations - their expectations of the mission of the Savior. The real Messiah would recognize who is deserving of honor - and it's not sinners. The true Messiah would be concerned about *my* perceived problems and would get rid of *my* enemies - like this tax collector - not *dine* with them - not *my* savior. Sharing fellowship with a sinner flies in the face of the salvation they think they need and the righteousness they think they already have.

A blind man sees, and now a tax collector “sees,” but what the crowd sees is making them grumble. And what did they see? *They* saw grace.

Kids, take note that someone *else* saw grace. This time it's the crowd. And they're *grumbling* about it.

What would make someone grumble at grace? Well if you think that your biggest problem is outside of you and then Jesus doesn't seem interested in fixing your biggest problem, then Jesus is going to seem like a rip-off.

The crowd doesn't believe that they are "sinners" like Zacchaeus. Instead they think they are worthy of a savior who will deal with "sinners" like this tax collector. Zacchaeus is joyful at being *shown* grace. The crowd grumbles at *seeing* grace. **They want salvation *from* sinners, not salvation *for* sinners.**

Your contempt for others reveals something about how you see yourself. What does the way you think about and talk about and treat others reveal about what you trust in to save you? Self-righteousness prevents us from sincerely seeking Jesus and causes us to judge others and be opposed to grace. Are there people who have wronged you or taken advantage of you to the point that you wouldn't want them to be shown grace? If you believe that your *ultimate* need is liberation from your enemies – justice on those who have wronged you – then it'll be hard to stomach a savior who eats with sinners.

Now there are appropriate ways to confront other people's sin and mistreatment of you and others – but what we're talking about here is a self-righteous attitude that doesn't think my sin is my biggest problem and only wants Jesus to meet my felt needs. Jesus *will* ultimately restore all things. One day he *will* put down every form of injustice and make everything right in the end. But they think that for Jesus to be the savior, there has to be liberation from their perceived problems today.

They thought their biggest problem had to do with their national identity, the taxation crisis, the shame of what Rome had done to them. But in reality, everyone's main problem – the thing that makes us truly "lost" – is that we are sinners too.

Remember he ended the parable of the tax collector saying, "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." The crowd needs to humble themselves and put off their self-righteousness. They need a merciful Messiah that saves from *sin* more than they need a conquering Messiah that saves from Rome.

We all want to be delivered from our problems. For Christians, where does your salvation feel distant and unhelpful to your trials? What do you really want saving from? Do you ever think, "God, I'm doing all the right things. Why does someone else get the relationship, the pregnancy, the dream job." Where has Jesus disappointed your expectations of what you thought he would do for you?

Jesus *is* going to restore all things. For believers, the relief you want will ultimately come in the end. But do you merely see yourself as lost in singleness or lost in disappointment or lost in health issues. If you realize you were lost in relation to God - separated from him by your sins - then grace is the very thing that will send you scrambling again and again to Jesus. **And the grace that puts Jesus in the living room of a sinner is the grace that will sustain us in his fellowship 'til the end.**

And this fellowship that Jesus wanted to share with Zacchaeus is a picture of what Jesus invites us to. You see what ultimately blocks each one of us from being right with God is our own guilt. We are under condemnation for our sin. But Jesus doesn't just invite us to a guilt-free life. Having your guilt removed is a means to an even more profound end – that you might share in the very fellowship of God. Those whom Jesus saves, he comes to dwell with.

We face so much rejection in this life. Most of us know what it feels like to be an outsider. And some of it is our own doing. Like Zacchaeus, we've made sinful choices that have put us at odds with others. Maybe you cheated on your spouse. Maybe your adult children are still holding on to past hurts.

Maybe you drove friends away with your neediness to constantly be affirmed. And for some of us, we live with the shame of what others have said or done to *us*. It is so sad how far-reaching the effect of rejection or mistreatment even as a child can follow us into adulthood and throughout our whole lives. We might allow criticisms to become our identity, or we might grow defensive and angry in self-protection. And it's in this mess of guilt and shame and rejection that Jesus invites himself over. This is staggering – that Jesus wants fellowship with lost sinners like us.

So we saw Zacchaeus joyfully unable to resist Jesus' presumptuous plans to stay with him. He receives Jesus in his home. And we see irresistible grace have its effect - not only in Zacchaeus's *reception* of Jesus - but also in his transformation.

Three Aspects of Transformation

Let's **read v.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."

This one verse shows a remarkable transformation in Zacchaeus. He wanted to see who Jesus was, and seeing Jesus transformed his **allegiance, his affections, and his attitude**. Let's look at these one at a time.

1) Allegiance

First, Jesus transformed his Allegiance.

Where before Zacchaeus wanted to see "who" Jesus was, now he calls him "Lord." Jesus transformed Zacchaeus's view of Jesus. And this is particularly remarkable because, up to this point, Zacchaeus's allegiance has been to Rome in opposition to God's people. Now his recognition of Jesus as *Lord* is a confession of faith and a reorienting of his whole life.

If you don't identify with the grumbling crowd we looked at earlier, maybe that's because you *expect* Jesus to accept sinners. But maybe you think that just means Jesus affirms everyone and doesn't expect them to submit to him as Lord and change their ways. But that's exactly what we're seeing Zacchaeus do. Do you see how recognizing Jesus as Lord means that he has authority to conform your life to the ethics of God's kingdom.

Zacchaeus's life will start reflecting that Jesus is his Lord because Zacchaeus now belongs to the kingdom. And this is in contrast to the rich ruler who - despite all *his* ethics, despite all *his* morality - *wouldn't* receive the kingdom of God because he wouldn't receive Jesus. Jesus doesn't call us to morality. He calls us to himself. But if you receive him, then your life will increasingly reflect that you follow him as your Lord.

2) Affections

Next, Jesus transformed his **Affections**.

He said, "the half of my goods I give to the poor." Nothing requires him to do this. This is completely voluntary.

This change in affections is a fruit of salvation. He no longer is motivated by money. And remember that his career – his whole life’s focus up to this point – has been living for riches. Now the value he placed on his riches has been surpassed by the value of his relationship with Jesus. He has surrendered his idol to Jesus so that he doesn't serve wealth anymore. Money is no longer his master. Jesus is his Lord.

Again there’s a contrast with the rich ruler. Zacchaeus only gave half of what Jesus told the rich ruler to give. Jesus didn’t tell Zacchaeus to give *anything*. Instead, the contrast is between a rich man who won’t receive Jesus because he loves his stuff, and another rich man who joyfully, voluntarily gives up *half* of his stuff because he had *already* received Jesus. The fruit of conversion, not a particular amount, is what Jesus affirms.

So he renounces his affections for money, but also look at the transformation in his affections for others. Jesus transforms his view of others.

Remember that Zacchaeus oppressed his own people as a tax collector. His own people were just a tool to expanding his own riches. Now he’s not only giving up half of his goods, he’s compassionately giving them to the poor. He’s gone from being a *lover* of money to loving people *with* his money. And that’s because now he’s viewing the “underserving” according to grace.

If you don’t consider yourself a Christian, is there something that you desire, that you're not willing to let go of that keeps you from receiving Jesus? Remember Zacchaeus received him joyfully, but the rich ruler went away sad. Don’t let the things you fear parting with leave you with a rich man’s sorrow. To truly see Jesus' grace towards you in offering you the free gift of forgiveness and restoration to God – if you receive that, it will release you to be joyously generous towards others with your life.

Receiving Jesus will transfer your affections from shallow goods to *Jesus* and your neighbor who needs mercy too.

3) Attitude

And we see that Jesus transformed Zacchaeus’s Attitude.

Zacchaeus’s view of himself changed. He’s known all along about his fraud. But now he makes a public confession of sin.

And we’re actually going to practice this together later in our service. In reading a confession of sin we’re practicing what normal confession should look like in our lives. We confess our sins directly to God knowing that our sin is first and foremost against him, and yet he is ever the solution for our sin. That’s why we always follow the confession with an assurance of pardon. We always have assurance that we are forgiven if we have received Christ.

And Zacchaeus takes responsibility to restore anything he’s taken, and he even promises to restore it “fourfold.” He’s taking this very seriously. He’s going beyond what the Law required. He’s going beyond what *anyone* would have anticipated.

This is a picture of repentance. He's not just giving up a vice (like stealing) but he's gone from oppressing the poor to generously sharing with the poor. He is exercising the opposite virtue of his vice. Where he has sinned against others, now he's doing everything he can to make it right.

Who have we defrauded? It may not be actual theft. But what do we owe that we haven't rendered. Maybe it's asking forgiveness from someone you've wronged. Has the value of Jesus himself - him welcoming you by grace - has that freed you up to humble yourself, confess your sin, and go above and beyond in trying to make it right with the person you've wronged?

Jesus transforms our allegiance, our affections, and our attitude toward him, toward others, and toward our sin.

But how. We've seen earnest seeking and joyous receiving – but how does a lost person get this salvation? And for Christians, not many of us can point to such an immediate, radical transformation as Zacchaeus's. We might start to question our salvation – I'm not living that drastically – am I really saved? And if we got ourselves found, how can we be sure that we won't get ourselves lost again?

This brings us to our final point: **The Savior's Mission**

3. The Savior's Mission

Let's **read v.9:**

And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham."

Reality 1: Sinners Must Receive Jesus

Jesus is responding to what Zacchaeus just said. But notice how salvation relates to Zacchaeus's confession and repentance. It could sound like Zacchaeus merited eternal life because of giving up half of what the rich ruler couldn't part with. But Jesus says salvation "has come" in the past tense.

That's because he's not bestowing salvation in response to Zacchaeus. Instead he's declaring the underlying truth behind why Zacchaeus has had such a remarkable transformation.

This passage isn't about salvation by giving what Zacchaeus gave, but by receiving what Zacchaeus received. What he received produced generosity – not the other way around.

So what is Jesus affirming in v.9? Well Jesus says that salvation has come "since he also is a son of Abraham."

Abraham was the great ancestor - the "father" - of the Jewish people. So considering who Zacchaeus was, this statement was a bit of a shock. Zacchaeus has spent his whole career making himself an enemy of the children of Abraham. He was not worthy to be counted by that name. And yet, he's the one out of the crowd who is affirmed as a true son of Abraham. And we know from elsewhere in Scripture that any true child of Abraham is a true child by faith.

The Scandal of Who Has Access to Jesus

Remember that "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." And Zacchaeus's name actually means "the righteous one." Remember how earlier in Jesus' parable

about the repentant tax collector, Jesus was contrasting the self-righteous and those who repent and are declared righteous by God. Like Abraham, Zacchaeus was counted as righteous merely by placing his faith in Jesus who was the true righteous one.

Look at the scandal of who has access to the kingdom.

Everything we saw in chapter 18 comes to a head in the story of Zacchaeus. Like the persistent widow, Zacchaeus is persistent in pursuing Jesus. Like the little children brought to Jesus, Zacchaeus is small in stature with nothing to make him worthy. Like the repentant tax collector and the blind beggar, Zacchaeus's only hope is that he would be shown mercy. And unlike the rich ruler, Zacchaeus goes through the eye of a needle.

Do you see the two groups of people – those who trust in themselves and those who receive Jesus. It's those who have no hope but the mercy of Jesus that receive Jesus.

Zacchaeus doesn't even *know* much. He doesn't know *how* Jesus is able to bestow salvation on him. He doesn't know that Jesus will die for his sins on the cross. He doesn't know that he is counted righteous on the merits of Jesus' perfect life. But he sought and saw that Jesus is Lord, and he knows that if a sinner like him is to be made right, it will be on account of this Jesus. He places a sincere reliance on Jesus and not himself.

Whether you're living the dream but not satisfied, despairing in guilt for the things you've done, trusting in your own goodness, or just wanting your problems to go away - the account of Zacchaeus shows us what we all need. Run to Jesus for mercy and receive him.

You can receive Jesus today by putting your faith in him. Faith is not in itself a thing that you trust in to save you. Faith has an object and that object is Jesus. Faith is not in itself a good work earning some form of merit. Instead faith is the means by which Christ's righteousness is applied to us (Eph. 2:8-9). As a result, our being right with God depends entirely on Christ's merits and not our own (Rom. 5:17-19). If you put your trust in Jesus today then you will be united to Christ by faith (Col. 2:12) and all of God's promises and blessings will be yours today (Eph. 1:3).

So it is clear that we have a responsibility to seek and receive Jesus. And maybe you want this. Maybe you've been seeking...climbing...looking...hoping and you fear Jesus won't see you. If our hope is only in our seeking then we are doomed to fail. But that's the beauty of what's *behind* our seeking. The lost seek and receive Jesus because Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

Reality 2: Jesus Seeks and Saves the Lost

Let's **read v.9-10**:

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."

In this passage, Luke spends a lot of time describing Zacchaeus's responses to Jesus – his seeking, running, climbing, reception of Jesus, and repentant response to Jesus. But remember that Jesus said it was "easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." He called it "impossible with men." Now Jesus tells us *how* Zacchaeus went through the eye

of a needle. Lost people get saved because Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. This is the Savior's mission.

Remember how it looked like random chance. Jesus was passing through. He was about to pass by a tree. Maybe Zacchaeus wouldn't be fast enough and would miss his chance. But remember the first thing Jesus tells Zacchaeus? "I *must* stay at your house today." This was Jesus' necessary plan to save Zacchaeus as the Father drew him to Jesus. We see the Savior's mission. God's providential plan must be fulfilled.

Again, when Jesus says "today" salvation has come to this "house," he's repeating two words from his earlier statement. He said "I must stay at your *house today*." Salvation came to Zacchaeus's house because Jesus came to his house. Salvation *came* to his house because Jesus *came* to seek and to save him. Salvation is the person of Jesus coming to seek and save and stay with you.

Contrary to the crowd's expectations, this is the Messiah's true mission that we've been seeing throughout the book of Luke – not salvation *from* sinners but salvation *for* sinners. It's a picture not just of what it looks like for the lost to seek Jesus – but also what it looks like for the lost to be found by Jesus because he was seeking them first.

If you are someone who's discouraged in evangelism right now, then let this truth encourage you. We have so much hope that anyone can be saved because Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Who knows what divine appointment with Jesus you might stumble into at a coffee shop or over dinner or over the fence with your neighbor.

Zacchaeus was saved because Jesus' path purposefully passed through this spot under this tree at this moment. But the only reason Jesus could stop and extend fellowship to a sinner, was because Jesus knew where the rest of his own path would lead him.

Remember that the last time Jesus referred to himself as the "Son of Man" was when he was foretelling his death.

Let's **read Luke 18:31-33**:

And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. ³² For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. ³³ And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise."

Zacchaeus could come down out of a tree and be saved because there was no one to save Jesus when he hung on a very different tree. You will no longer fear what following Jesus might cost you when you realize what it cost him. "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." He came for this purpose – that he might seek and save the lost.

Jesus isn't just the *means* of salvation. Jesus doesn't just provide an *opportunity* for salvation. When lost people start seeking Jesus – Jesus has already been seeking them.

Do *you* see what Zacchaeus saw from that tree?

In this account, we are seeing what salvation looks like. There's earnest seeking, joyous receiving, transformation, and being freed to be generous. Zacchaeus was responsible for doing what he did. But look at what is *behind* his seeking. Zacchaeus sought, but Jesus was the Seeker. Jesus came to save definitively. This is his mission. Your responsibility is to receive him. But how does anyone enter the kingdom of God? If you are seeking Jesus this morning, then take heart. Jesus says "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." The reason "what is impossible with men is possible with God" is because "Jesus came to seek and to save the lost."

Assurance

And if you are a struggling Christian who wrestles with assurance, then take heart. If you have received him, then he sought *you*. If you've seen Jesus, it's because Jesus has seen you.

We don't put our faith in our performance. Good works can only *confirm* salvation. Instead if we're lacking a sense of assurance then we need to press into the good news that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Brothers and sisters, Jesus *must* stay with you today - it is necessary because your Father has set his love on you. We can be people of such joy because instead of staring down at our small stature or our being an outsider or our sins or our lack of achievement, we can turn our gaze to Jesus and find that he still wants to stay with us today. Jesus is with us. He dwells with us. Our experiences, just like the crowds, might try to convince us otherwise. But the seeking and saving of Jesus gives us confidence that he will hold us fast to the end.

If you are lost, look to Jesus. If you are weary and troubled, look to Jesus.

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
look full in his wonderful face,
and the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
in the light of his glory and grace.²*

² *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus*, Helen Howarth Lemmel (1922)