

Questions for Small Groups | April 14, 2019

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The Great Explorers — Jesus at Table with the Despised – Zacchaeus, a Chief Tax Collector

Focus Passage: Luke 19:1–10

Context: Luke 19:1–44

Other Passages Referenced: Isaiah 53:5; Luke 6:24–26; 12:15; 18:24; John 1:16

Sermon Recap: In Luke 19:1–10 we find Jesus at table with another despised tax collector, this one named Zacchaeus. When Jesus is at table with Zacchaeus, Jesus reveals His table manners of seeing, seeking, and saving. *Seeing* means that Jesus came to see those whom no one wants to see. *Seeking* means that Jesus seeks those whom the crowd is unwilling to seek. *Saving* means that Jesus saves human beings who have strayed from God’s direction and lost their way. He saves those who receive Him in faith that demonstrates repentance.

Introductory Comments to Leaders

The last I heard we still need more volunteers to usher, especially during the Easter season of services. Please check with your group members to see if any of them would like to usher. If yes, contact Tommy Vereb [-tvereb@wcchapel.org](mailto:tvereb@wcchapel.org). As part of encouraging corporate worship, please remind your members about the Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services this week.

Luke 19:1–10 is a standalone story that focuses on Jesus’ encounter in Jericho with the Chief Tax Collector, Zacchaeus. However, the Zacchaeus story has connections both within Luke’s gospel and with some Old Testament teachings that we don’t want to miss. You’ll want to connect the dots back to Luke 18:22–27 with the story of the Rich Ruler who encountered Jesus but went away sad without showing fruits of repentance. That meeting led Jesus to say that it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter heaven. Yet, Jesus does save the rich man Zacchaeus in our passage, proving that “with God, all things are possible” and allowing Luke to point to Jesus as God who does the impossible. Another dot to connect is with the Old Testament legal penalties for sheep theft in Exodus 22:1, reiterated in 2 Sam 12:5–6. Question 6 in Look connects Jesus with YHWH’s promise to seek and save the lost.

Our focus passage is also a wonderful picture of someone “bearing fruits in keeping with repentance” (Luke 3:8). You may want to call attention to the connection between Luke 3:8 and Luke 19:9—true sons of Abraham bearing fruits of repentance. When we talk about putting our faith in Jesus, we sometimes fail to emphasize that in order to trust Jesus we must repent of whatever else we were trusting to save us. The sermon mentioned an “order of grace” by which changed behavior is a result of salvation, not a means to salvation. We want to emphasize the order of grace and keep in tension that fruits of repentance are indications that saving grace has truly been received.

There are three Greek words and concepts used throughout the New Testament in relation to repentance. They deal with remorse for the wrong done, a changing of mindset about the sin, and a turning around or away from sin. Biblical repentance does involve remorse but it is much more than feeling sorry for what we’ve done or even apologizing for it. James Dunn explains repentance as “not just as a feeling sorry, or changing one’s mind, but as a turning around, a complete alteration of the basic motivation and direction of one’s life. This is why the best translation for *metanoēō* is often ‘to convert’, that is, ‘to turn round’ (conversion).”¹ That conversion or complete alteration results in fruits of repentance that reflect those joyfully demonstrated by Zacchaeus.

¹ J. D. G. Dunn, “Repentance,” ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity

Depending on your group makeup, it might be an opportune time for you or someone whose testimony you know to share their personal story of **seeing** Jesus, realizing Jesus had been **seeking** them, and then coming to be **saved** by Jesus, resulting in fruits of repentance and a “complete alteration of the basic motivation and direction of their life (conversion).” In any case, try to drive home the gospel truth that Jesus became despised so that the despised might be loved and welcomed.

Background Helps

- Jericho – Ancient Jericho of the Old Testament was situated about 16 miles northeast of Jerusalem. By the time of the New Testament, the ancient city had been destroyed and a new Jericho was constructed a little over a mile to the southeast. By the time of Jesus, “Jericho was a well-known toll place in Palestine, especially for goods passing east and west between Judea and Perea.”² Ancient Jericho was pretty much the first stop of the people of Israel after crossing the Jordan River in their possession of the Promised Land. In that story we see God using the Gentile harlot Rahab as part of his mission. She later figured in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1. In the passage of this week’s sermon, Jericho is the last stop of Jesus on His way to Jerusalem to bring God’s people into His promised Kingdom.

Hook: *Pick a Question to Help Ignite Conversation*

Can you share a story of a time when you wanted to be seen by or seen with someone?

Look—Observing and Interpreting:

READ Luke 19:1–10

1. What do we learn about Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1–3?
2. How does Zacchaeus respond to Jesus inviting himself to Zacchaeus’ home?
3. What does Zacchaeus’ commitment to giving half of his possessions (not just half of his income but of his entire net worth) to the poor and his willingness to pay people back four times whatever he had cheated them indicate? Read Exodus 22:1 to add context to what the Old Testament required for someone caught having stolen a sheep.
4. Read Luke 18:22–27 and compare it to the story of Zachaeus. How did the two men compare in relation to their observance of the law before meeting Jesus? ... How about their emotional responses after encountering Jesus? ... Their willingness to part with their riches?
5. When Jesus says of Zacchaeus, “Today salvation has come to this house” (Luke 19:9), what is he saying in relation to Luke 18:24–27 in the story of the rich ruler?

² Stein, *Luke*, 467.

6. Note the connection between Jesus' statement in Luke 19:10 and the words of YHWH through the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 34:16. What is Luke saying?

Illustrations:

Illustrations and quotes can be found on the "Sermon Slides" link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org

Took: *Applying the message to our lives.*

1. Do you have eyes to see and a heart to seek? ... How does your response to Jesus seeking and saving you compare to Zacchaeus' response?
2. How might Jesus want you to be involved this week in His mission of seeing those many don't want to see, seeking those others are not willing to seek, and saving the lost?

Prayer: Please spend some time praying for one another.

What we hope members glean from the passage:

1. Zacchaeus worked as a Chief Tax Collector. He was rich. He was small in stature.
2. Zacchaeus received Jesus joyfully. (19:6) Zacchaeus committed to giving half of his possessions to the poor and giving back 4 times the amount he had defrauded anyone.
3. Zacchaeus' actions indicate fruits of genuine repentance from his sins. Repentance involves a change of mind about our sin, remorse for our sin, a turning away from our sin toward God, and doing what we can to make things right with those we've wronged.
4. The rich ruler claimed to have piously kept all of the commandments whereas Zacchaeus had not and did not claim to. The ruler went away sad after encountering Jesus while Zacchaeus was joyful. Although Jesus asked the ruler to give away all of his assets to the poor, he did not give any. In comparison, Zacchaeus gave away half of everything he owned plus the Old Testament requirements for restitution. It appears Zacchaeus did this of his own accord as an act of repentance in response to Jesus' grace.
5. Jesus can save even a rich man, which is all but impossible. Since, "All things are possible with God, Jesus was indirectly pointing to Himself as God."
6. Luke is showing that Jesus is the fulfillment of YHWH's promise in Ezekiel to seek and save the lost.