Zacchaeus Was A Changed Little Crook - And A Blessed Little Crook Was He!

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[0:00] You can be turning to Luke chapter 19. I was talking with the elders, a couple of us in prayer, or just before or after prayer this morning, that I wondered about starting the hymn by singing the little chorus, Zacchaeus is a wee little man.

I'm sure all of you know it. It's a happy little chorus, and it's a very good chorus in the sense that, yes, he was a wee little man, and God brought him to himself.
He paints Zacchaeus in a pretty good light. This is not the picture that's here. Oh, it's great what God did for him.
We're not negating that at all. But when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the people didn't look around and sing, Zacchaeus was a wee little man.
That wasn't their attitude at all. And so, we're going to see how good our Savior is. Because Zacchaeus wasn't a good little man.
[1:23] Jesus was a great God. He wasn't afraid to seek people that in that area probably thought was the worst sinner around.

Let's look at Luke 19, the first 10 verses. The he that we'll reference is Jesus.
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 in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed 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.
[2:29] For I must stay at your house today. So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully.

And when he saw it, they all grumbled. He's gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner. 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. 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. Let's pray. Father, I thank you for this passage.
I thank you for the beautiful picture that it paints. I thank you for your grace and for your goodness. And I pray that you would open our eyes to it this morning.
[3:43] I pray that you would bless and draw us to yourself as you reveal yourself today in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, at this point, Jesus is still on his journey to Jerusalem, but he's almost done.

We mentioned this last week. Jericho was the last stop before the 17-mile hike up to the city of Jerusalem. And at this point, we see the last character that Jesus interacts with on that journey to Jerusalem, that journey he set out to give his life for his people.
And so this is the last interaction with the person before he gets to Jerusalem. And in this interaction, Jesus states his mission. Jericho is not something that just happened.
Now, sure, sure, if you're a pilgrim, and we mentioned this last week, if you're a pilgrim from the northern part of Israel, you left the land of Israel and went into the east side of the Jordan so you could go around the whole area of the Samaritans.
And you did that and came back across into the land of Judah, right across from Jericho. And yes, it was natural that you would go through the city of Jericho.

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[5:11] there was almost no bypassing it, in my understanding, at this point. And so in one sense, a person could say, this just happened. Jesus had to go through Jericho.

But after hearing and seeing the account that's here, Jesus had to go through Jericho. And he wasn't, it wasn't something that just happened.
Because we find in Jericho, this man named Zacchaeus. His name is an offshoot from a word that talks about son of righteousness or related to righteousness.
But that's not who he was. He was a Jew. But he was a wicked man. A wicked man. A very wicked man.
And everyone knew it. He was a chief tax collector. That's the only place in the scripture where it talks about a chief tax collector. That means he was a tax collector that was over tax collectors.
[6:19] He'd gotten so good at his job that he now was in charge of the tax collectors in the area. So don't think sweet. Think ruthless.

Don't think kind. Think defrauding. Don't think selfless and sweet. Think someone who's in it all for himself.
And all about the money. He was a chief tax collector. His position to all the people of the area. If he was a tax collector, it was bad.
If he was a chief tax collector, he was ruthless. He applied his craft so well. He applied his life so well that he'd been elevated.
People hated him. His position made him very rich. And oftentimes people would look at the rich and say, yes, they were blessed by God, but they didn't look at Zacchaeus and say, he was blessed by God.
[7:30] They would look at Zacchaeus and say, this man's a crook. This man is a thief, a robber, a dishonest defrauder.

He had gained his riches by lying and bullying. And our view of taxes, you know, two certain things in life, death and taxes.
Everybody hates taxes. Our view of taxes come nowhere close to their view of a tax collector. The disdain they had for tax collectors.
Now, it wasn't just that they were collecting tax. Rome was then, at this time, still overruling Israel. And had their thumb on Israel.
And they collected tax from Israel. Of course, Israelites thought, we're God's people. We shouldn't be paying taxes to anyone. But they were.
[8:36] And Rome, to be able to carry out this taxation, would assign people, often selling them this position, would assign people to be tax collectors.

And they'd say, we need X amount of dollars from you every so often. We don't care how you get it. We don't care what you do or what you say.
We just need this money. And that gave these tax collectors free reign. They would often be in places like Jericho, which were crossroads of trade.
And they would be able to say, you know, I want $50 for you to bring that sandwich across the line into Jerusalem. Not exaggeration.
But that's the way they were. Whatever price they wanted, they would name. And because they represented Rome, you had to pay it. These people, you know, you watch movies where the evil man or the evil woman is very evil and unfair in their dealings and you get so upset with them.
[9:42] That's the way these tax collectors were. They would make people furious. Everyone hated them. Most all of them were Jews and everyone said they're turncoats.

They're traitors. They're not true Jews. Zacchaeus wasn't a sweet wee little man.
But in the course of time, this account goes on to show that Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus living in Jericho, which most of the northern tribes when they came to the Passover would go through.
I'm sure living in Jericho, he heard all kinds of reports about things that Jesus had done. Why, just the previous verses on another side of Jericho or outside of Jericho, he had healed a blind man.
And the reports of Jesus had probably filtered through the city. And maybe Zacchaeus, I'll get it right here.
[10:53] Maybe Zacchaeus had heard of Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners. I'm sure Zacchaeus didn't have any friends that he didn't buy.

Everybody hated him. But this man, he sat with tax collectors and sinners. Maybe he'd heard how willing Jesus was to associate with not only these tax collectors and sinners, but outcasts such as

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lepers and blind.
Maybe he'd heard of the miracles done. Widow, son, raised. Blind people receiving their sights. Physical limbs restored.
The ability to walk. The ability or the sicknesses cast off. Things that Jesus had done and they interested him. Maybe he'd heard that Jesus could speak in such a way that the Pharisees and the scribes would have to shut their mouths.
And maybe he's thinking, this is somebody I want to see. And so he wanted to see Jesus but he was short. I can sympathize with him. Being short's difficult.
[12:11] A lot of things you can't reach. A lot of things you can't see. He couldn't see over the crowds. And I'm sure since the people didn't like tax collectors, I'm sure he couldn't say, excuse me, excuse me.

One person I read said, I'm sure that this man would try to get through the crowd and an elbow would go back. Oh, sorry. Was that my elbow?
His foot would be stomped on. These people didn't like him. These people would not have given him the time of day. They would have not done anything to make his life easy.
And he wanted to see Jesus but the crowd wouldn't let him get a glimpse of Jesus. You might say though that his curiosity drove him up a tree.
He wouldn't give up. So he ran ahead to a spot where there was an easily climbable sycamore tree so he could see.
[13:22] Maybe he could get up in there hide amongst his branches and not be seen. No one would know he was there. No one would make fun of him. But there he was climbed up in the tree trying to see Jesus because he knew Jesus would come that way.

And everything to this point looks like Zacchaeus is starting to seek Jesus. He was curious.
He tried to see. But unknown to Zacchaeus God had been arranging all this because Jesus was seeking him.
At this point the situation changed. Jesus had been walking with a crowd through Jericho. Maybe he was teaching along the way.
Whatever he was doing he was walking with the crowd through Jericho. and he stops right under the tree that Zacchaeus is in.
[14:29] And he looks up right at Zacchaeus and he calls Zacchaeus by name. We don't know if this was miraculous because he is not only man but he's God.

we don't have any indication that anyone told Jesus Zacchaeus' name. It was evident that Jesus had stopped and looked right at this man and called his name and says come down I must stay at your house today.
He didn't ask if he could stay there. He said I must stay there. Why? Because he's seeking Zacchaeus.
Why must he stay there today? Well he's seeking Zacchaeus and the next day he was climbing the hill to Jerusalem and the next day would begin the final trek where in less than a week he would die for this man that he was looking for.
Zacchaeus responded immediately and he gladly welcomed Jesus but the crowd grumbled. Jesus saw somebody he wanted.
[16:17] All the crowd saw was this wicked sinner. Jesus saw Zacchaeus' need. All they saw was a man they would never have anything to do with.

Jesus didn't have the same opinion as the crowd. And so Jesus went home with Zacchaeus. The way this is phrased the wording is such that he went home to spend the night.
He was staying. It was supper and bed was what was going to go on. And so Jesus went home. Zacchaeus had him gladly. And I'm sure there was table conversation. and I'm sure there was evening conversation.
And we have no idea what that conversation involved. But it had to concern Zacchaeus' need. It had to address the idea of what Jesus was doing.
[17:32] As I say we don't know what it was. Jesus had come to seek Zacchaeus. And at that point somewhere in that evening Zacchaeus was saved.

How do we know what's evidenced by his repentance? Repentance involves turning from your sin and following Christ and obeying his word.

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After Jesus had come to his house and presuming that this conversation had taken place. At some point Zacchaeus was saved. He was a changed man. He was so changed that he was willing to give half of everything he owned to the poor.
Now I can't picture him having given anything to the poor to this point. It just doesn't sit right with a greedy tax collector. But now his heart is such that he's willing to give half of everything he owns.
It was sometimes common for rich people to give portions of what they own to the poor. 20% was the common.
[18:58] And most felt that beyond 20% you're ruining your estate. Jesus had changed Zacchaeus so much that he was willing to give 50%.

Maybe that was to make up for what he had not done. And Zacchaeus was further willing to make restitution to those he had defrauded.
Now think about this. I've described what a tax collector did. And basically he made his living by defrauding people.
And so with 50% left of what he had he determined that I will make right every situation where I defrauded somebody.
That's real repentance for a tax collector. The Old Testament teaches that if you defraud someone you should repay what you've defrauded and then add 20%.
[20:01] If you defrauded them $100 you gave them back their $100 you gave them $20 for their trouble. But Zacchaeus was so moved that he chose to repay not just the money plus 20%.

He chose a different Old Testament standard. If you took someone's sheep and sold it or if you took someone's sheep and you butchered it and ate it or you took someone's sheep and it died the Old Testament said you had to take and give him four times.
In other words you took the sheep you gave him four sheep. You took an ox you gave him five ox.
And Zacchaeus was so moved by what Jesus has done for him.
That he bypassed the normal fraud and said I'll make it up to them four times what I've done. Now it wasn't too long ago we were reading about the rich ruler.
Remember the one who says what must I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus says you know the commandments. commandments and he lists five of the commandments and the man says I've done all these things since my youth.
[21:24] I've lived this way. And Jesus says oh well then sell everything you have and give to the poor because it addressed who he really worshipped and it addressed his covetousness.

And that rich man could not bring himself to sell everything he owned and give to the poor. here we have a man who's doing exactly that.
He was so moved by the work of Jesus for him that he was willing to give up everything for Christ.
What was impossible with man was possible with God.
The camel would not go through the eye of a needle in normal circumstances but with God all things are possible.
And God changed a greedy, crooked, despised man and made him his own.
[22:33] What one of us walking through Jericho that day would have thought I think Jesus would like that one. None of us would. None of us would have ever picked this one.

All of us would have let him pass by. Zacchaeus, Jesus had sought and Jesus had changed him.
The change was because Jesus had saved him. Christian, for what Jesus has done for you, do you want to follow him no matter what it costs you?
Is everything on the line for him? Is everything available to his command?
Jesus has addressed this several times. You need to be willing to put him before houses or lands, wife, children, reputation.
[23:48] All is his. And Zacchaeus gave that evidence. Well, in verse nine, Jesus declares Zacchaeus' salvation.

salvation. You could say, Jesus got what he was seeking. Jesus was seeking the sinner Zacchaeus. Jesus found him.
As he stood at the bottom of the tree, looked up, called his name, told him to come down, went to his house, explained whatever of the gospel he needed to hear.
and Zacchaeus was saved. Jesus got what he was seeking. In verse nine, it says, and Jesus said to him, today, salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.

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Abraham. This, I think, was said to anyone who was there, anyone who was listening, could have been the disciples, probably was the disciples, could have been others who were following Jesus to Jerusalem, could well have been those who grumbled, he eats with a sinner.
[25:07] This person that everyone despised, that all Jews thought of as an awful, despicable, rotten, terrible sinner. This one, this one Jesus sought, and he found, and he saved.

Now, all around Jesus were people who claimed to be sons of Abraham, but Jesus says that Zacchaeus was a son of Abraham.
Now, he was by birth, but many around him would have said because of his treachery, he'd forfeited his relationship to Abraham.
Jesus declares that Zacchaeus is the son of Abraham because of his faith. Galatians 3, 7 says, know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.
It's not those who try to keep the commandments who are circumcised and do all these things. It's those who are of faith. And Jesus said of Zacchaeus that day that Zacchaeus was the son of Abraham.
[26:24] And so verse 10, we have an interesting summation. Jesus sums up why he came. It says that he came to seek and to save the lost.

In Jericho, Jesus' mission to seek and to save the lost was lived right before them. It's right before us.
His mission to seek and to save the lost was lived right before us in this encounter with Zacchaeus. If you stop and think about it, Jesus was showing that everyone, the one that everyone despised, Jesus went right to his spot and sought him and saved him.
That's why, besides going to Jerusalem, he went through Jericho. Jesus took on flesh.
He died and rose again to seek and to save sinners. Jesus has been illustrating that that has been his purpose for chapters now, four and a half chapters.
[27:34] It's referred to in other places, but starting back in Luke 15, 1, that first picture of the shepherd who had a hundred sheep and one was lost, and he left in denying to go seek for that one, one.

And he hunts for it until he finds it, no matter the cost. And he brings it home, and he is rejoicing and says to others, rejoice with me, I have found the sheep that was lost.
And then Jesus shares with them this parable of the woman who had ten coins and she loses one, and she sweeps diligently and lights a lamp so she can look everywhere until she finds that coin.
Jesus, as the one who's seeking and saving the lost, is pictured by that shepherd. It is pictured by that woman with a lost coin. It's pictured by the lost son and the prodigal father in Luke 15, 11 through 32.
The father stands and waits, looking to see, is that son coming? And the moment he sees, far before the son knows.
[28:52] He's running as an old man should not, pulling up his garment that he can run fast, bearing those pasty white old man legs that we talked about. And he ran to his son because he was seeking the lost.

And he brought him back and he made him as his son again. Jesus is seeking and saving the lost. He's been showing that for chapters now.
And in between those situations, as he's seeking and saving the lost, he's been showing us what being saved involves. Salvation involves repentance.
The lost son realized, I've done a stupid thing, and he turns from his sin and goes back to his father and confesses his sin. sin. We have Zacchaeus, who repents by saying what I have taken, I will give back.
Salvation involves repentance. In those situations, we also see that salvation is not by our works, but it's by his mercy. The Pharisee and the tax collector, Pharisee tried to make it by works.
[30:06] The first tax collector back in 17 or 18 says, be merciful to me, a sinner. And Jesus says, that man went down justified.

Salvation is received by faith, that tax collector. The children who came to him, simply knowing they had a need, went to him.
The blind man, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. And not giving up, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

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Jesus calls, what would you have me do to receive my sight? And by faith, he was healed.
Salvation is evidenced by repentance.
The blind man followed Jesus. Others followed Jesus. The blind man rejoicing and following Jesus.
The prodigal son, he repented.
[31:13] One of ten of the elders repented. The blind beggar, as I mentioned, and Zacchaeus.
Jesus has been seeking sinners since before the foundation of the world.

He's been making it known to his disciples. I'm going to say beginning in one sense here at chapter 15. 15. But he's been long before that.
Before the foundation of the world. But let me just read from Ezekiel chapter 34 verses 11 and 12 and 16. For thus says the Lord God, behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep and will seek them out as a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered.
So will I seek out my sheep and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. And then verse 16, I will seek the lost and I will bring back the strayed and I will bind up the injured and I will strengthen the weak and the fat and the strong I will destroy.
I will feed them injustice. Jesus was seeking Zacchaeus because Jesus, the son of man, came to seek and to save the lost.
[32:47] Christian, if you're here today trusting Christ, it is not because you became curious. As others have said, it's not because you're smarter than the other people on the bus.

It's because Jesus sought you. Just as determined as Jesus was to stop before Zacchaeus, just as determined as Jesus was to call him by name and as determined as he was to say, I must stay at your house and explain the gospel to him, just as determined as Jesus was with Zacchaeus, he has been with all of his people.
He has sought you. He has sought you to save you. You said, but you know, before I knew he was seeking me, I was curious.
Yes, you were curious. How did you happen to become curious? Because you were dead in sin.
You were unable to do anything to save yourself. You were curious because that's what God began to use to put you in the right place, to work in your heart and prepare you for the point when he calls your name and says, I must stay at your house.
He left heaven to find you. He went to the cross to redeem you. He called you by name. He opened your eyes. He showed you your need and his provision.
[34:24] He saved you by grace because we have a savior who seeks and saves the lost.

That's a good savior. Let me challenge you to be like these others, to be like Zacchaeus, who are willing to lay it all at Christ's feet, follow him and give him glory and worship him as the one who sought you.
Friend, if you don't know Christ, are you a sinner? Jesus only seeks sinners.
He doesn't seek Pharisees who think they're better than others, who rack up their accomplishments. He seeks tax collectors who say, be merciful to me, a sinner.
Jesus only seeks sinners. He's looking for those who know they cannot save themselves. And again, take note of what he's done for sinners. Philippians 2 talks about how he laid aside his glory, took on flesh to suffer in your place, died and rose again to provide redemption for you.
[35:57] And he calls you by name. Will you go to him? Will you trust him? Will you call to him for mercy?

The promise is sure. He came to seek and to save the lost. Let's pray. Father, I praise you.
It's not bad that we have had a fun song about this man, but Father, the picture, the real picture is so much more beautiful.
Because it's not about this short man. It's about a gut who sought an awful man. None of us are beyond hope. None of us are beyond help.
Because when Jesus seeks us, he saves us. And I thank you, Father, for your mercy. We were dead in trespasses and sins. You are an amazing and awesome and gracious God.
[37:01] We praise your name. I pray that you would be with us. Help us to live our lives for you. Help us to be full of praise and thankfulness. Help us to follow you. And may we glorify you.

God, I pray that you would be with that one who doesn't know you today. As you stop beneath their tree and you call out their name, I pray that you would save them.

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They would hear and say, gladly, come to my house and may be evidenced by a life that is willing to lay everything down to serve you. And I pray that you would be gracious to those here today who don't know you.
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

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