

Found by Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] Let's pray to God as we get ready to hear His Word. Dear God, we thank you for your Word from Luke chapter 19, verse 1 to 10.

I pray that you guide me that I may preach your Word faithfully and clearly this morning. As we hear your Word, give us the understanding and let us be encouraged by it and respond rightly to it. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Can you think of a time when you or someone you knew got lost? Maybe as a kid.

And how scary that was. And how relieved it was to be found. I have one experience. It happened when I was probably about 7 to 8 years old.

I was walking with my father along one of the shop lots in the city centre. I think there was some event going on and it was quite crowded. And while walking, suddenly I saw this very interesting toy displayed in one of the shops.

[1 : 1 0] I can't remember exactly what it was, but I stopped and stared on it for a moment. And after a while, I realised that my father was not near me anymore.

I walked a few metres around and tried to find my father, but he was nowhere to be seen. That's the moment that I realised I was lost. I got panicked and felt really terrified.

What will happen to me? Will I ever get to see my father again? To cut the story short, a few minutes later, I think it was at least about 10 minutes, my father came back and found me.

You can imagine how relieved I was. Today's passage is also about being lost and found. The tragedy of being lost and the joy of being found by Jesus.

It is about a man who really wanted to see Jesus for whatever reasons that he may have and eventually found and saved by him.

[2 : 1 5] This is probably one of the most famous stories in the Bible, especially if you grow up in a church and been to Sunday school. But this story from Luke 19, verse 1 to 10, is not just about a sinner who is saved.

It is a profound example of the very heart of the Gospel. In this encounter, we witness how Jesus seeks the lost, offers grace and transforms lives in a way only he can.

It is a reminder that no one is beyond his reach and the Gospel is good news for all who come to him in faith. The passage begins with an introduction to Zacchaeus, who lived in Jericho.

Immediately, Luke gives us two key details about Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector and he was wealthy. These facts tell us much about Zacchaeus' status and character.

As a tax collector, Zacchaeus was working for the Roman Empire, the occupying force in Israel. Tax collectors were notorious for exploiting their fellow Jews by overcharging them and keeping the assets for themselves.

[3 : 3 3] The profession itself was synonymous with dishonesty and greed. And Zacchaeus, as a chief tax collector, was at the top of this corrupt system.

He was likely overseeing other tax collectors and becoming wealthy from their dishonesty. That means, not only is he exploiting his fellow Jews, he was organizing others to do the same.

Imagine that. And for this reason, Zacchaeus was a social outcast. He was wealthy but hated. People didn't want to talk to him.

People avoided him in the streets. He wasn't invited to any parties. After all, he was seen as disloyal and a traitor. His riches were stained by his corruption.

And his reputation among his people was one of betrayal. He had compromised his integrity for financial gain and aligned himself with the oppressive Roman government.

[4 : 3 5] This made him both a sinner in the eyes of the people and lost the sight of God. In the bigger context of the Gospel of Luke, the tax collectors are very much synonymous with sinners.

Here are two examples. In Luke 15, verse 1 to 2, it says, Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus.

But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, These men welcomed sinners and eat with them. And in Luke 18, verse 10 to 12, in his parable, Jesus says, Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed, God, I thank you that I am not like other people, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. So from these two examples, we see that tax collectors are very much equated to sinners. Point B, Zacchaeus' lostness before God.

[5 : 52] In Zacchaeus, we see a picture of spiritual lostness. Though wealthy, Zacchaeus was impoverished in the things of God. Though powerful, he was alienated from his community and from the God of Israel.

Zacchaeus' story is a reflection of what sin does. It isolates and corrupts. For example, think of what happens when you lie to someone.

If the person finds out you have lied, you have lost his trust, and the relationship is broken, isolating you from that friend. Or even if the friend doesn't find out, you might still keep your distance from your friend.

Because you fear, he might discover your lie. You are still isolated. You might even justify your lie. And so your conscience is corrupted.

And sin doesn't just isolate us from others and corrupt us. It leads us far away from God. If you live for worldly gain, you are not living for God.

[7 : 01] And so, you become disconnected from the source of true life and meaning. The gospel truth here is that no matter how successful or wealthy a person might appear on the outside, sin leaves us spiritually bankrupt.

Romans 3.23 tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Zacchaeus represents each one of us in our natural state, lost and separated from God because of sin.

Point two, Jesus seeks the lost. Despite his wealth and status, something stirred in Zacchaeus' heart. When he heard that Jesus was passing through Jericho, Zacchaeus was eager to see him.

In verse 3, we read that Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was. Perhaps, he had heard of Jesus' reputation as a teacher, healer, and friend of sinners.

Zacchaeus might have longed for something deeper than the wealth he had accumulated. He knew there was something missing in his life and he was curious about Jesus.

[8 : 22] However, Zacchaeus faced an obstacle. He was short and could not see over the crowds. So, in an act of determination, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to get a glimpse of Jesus as he passed by.

This moment is significant because it shows that Zacchaeus, though lost in sin, had a longing to encounter Jesus. His climb into the tree is symbolic of how desperate he was to catch a glimpse of the Savior.

And as Jesus walks by, something unexpected happens. Jesus stops, looks up, and calls Zacchaeus by name.

Zacchaeus, calm down immediately. I must stay at your house today in verse 5. This is remarkable for several reasons. First, Jesus knew Zacchaeus' name.

He didn't need an introduction. He already knew Zacchaeus before Zacchaeus even met him. This speaks to the truth of God's foreknowledge and his personal care for each of us.

[9 : 38] In the same way, Jesus knows each of us by name. He knows our hearts, our sins, and our deepest needs. Second, Jesus takes the initiative.

Zacchaeus was trying to see Jesus, but it was Jesus who sought him out. You see the irony? who is seeking who actually? I must stay at your house today, Jesus says.

This is not a casual invitation, but a divine appointment. Jesus knew that Zacchaeus needed saving, and he sought him out in love.

Can you think of a story where someone chose someone surprising? Like a teacher who chose the most unlikely student to be the class monitored or to win a prize?

This is exactly what is happening here. You would not imagine that God would choose to interact with someone outcast by the society and deem undeserving like Zacchaeus.

[10 : 44] And this shows to us the heart of the gospel. Grace always initiates salvation. We do not seek God on our own. God seeks us.

Romans 5, verse 8 tells us that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Zacchaeus did not earn Jesus' attention or favor, but Jesus extended grace to him before he even asked for it. And salvation is not something we achieve through our own efforts or merit. It is the result of God's initiative and grace. And that also means anyone can be saved.

If Jesus was willing to extend grace even to a man like Zacchaeus, he is willing to extend grace to anybody. Friends, if today you think God will never be bothered with you because you are too much of a sinner, this episode tells us otherwise.

salvation is not about how bad you are, but about how gracious God is. Point C, Jesus' mission to seek and to save.

[12 : 05] This moment reflects Jesus' mission in the world. Later in the passage in verse 10, Jesus declares, the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

This is the gospel in a single sentence. Jesus' entire purpose in coming to earth was to seek out those who were lost in their sins and bring them back into the fold of God's kingdom.

Zacchaeus, with all his wealth and corruption, was lost, but Jesus sought him out. This is a picture of what Christ does for each of us.

He seeks us in our lostness, calls us by name, and offers us grace. And what else does this tell us? Well, this also tells us that Jesus' primary purpose of coming was not to bring us wealth, health, wisdom, or to make us become morally good persons.

He came to seek and to save us. God to God to God to God to God to know Jesus or wanted to see Jesus for different sorts of reasons.

[13 : 24] But do we really recognize who he really is and why he has come? point number three, the joy of salvation.

When Jesus calls Zacchaeus, we read in verse 6 that Zacchaeus calmed down at once and welcomed him gladly. This is a crucial turning point in the story.

Zacchaeus didn't hesitate or refuse Jesus' offer. He responded with joy and eagerness. He opened his home and heart to Jesus.

This is in contrast to the rich young ruler in the previous chapter who refused to give up his treasure for the sake of following Jesus. Jesus said, Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.

But what is impossible with men is possible with God. Zacchaeus' joyful response is a picture of the proper way to respond to the gospel.

[14 : 34] When we hear the call of Christ, we are invited to respond with joy and faith. Zacchaeus was overjoyed that Jesus, the Holy One of God, would come into his home.

In the same way, when we recognize the depth of our sin and the magnitude of God's grace, our response should be one of overwhelming joy. But what if we call ourselves a Christian, but we recognize that our response is not like Zacchaeus?

Well, could it be because we don't realize how lost we were? Could it be because we don't see how horrible our sin is? You see, if we think sin is just a little thing, then being saved from our sin will also bring us only a little joy.

And if sin is just a little thing, we won't be motivated to go see Jesus. But if we want to experience the joy of Zacchaeus, then we must acknowledge how much we've gone against God, and therefore, how rich in mercy God has to extend his hand towards us.

Let's get back to the story of Zacchaeus. Point B, the crowd's grumbling. However, not everyone was happy about this encounter. In verse 7, the people began to mutter, saying, he has gone to be the guest of a sinner.

[16 : 13] The crowd couldn't understand why Jesus, a righteous teacher, would associate with someone as sinful as Zacchaeus. In their eyes, Zacchaeus was unworthy of Jesus' attention or favor.

And this reaction from the crowd reflects a misunderstanding of the gospel. The people were still thinking in terms of merit that only the righteous or deserving should have access to Jesus.

But the gospel is for sinners, not the righteous. Jesus didn't come to congratulate the holy. He came to save the broken.

This is why Jesus' ministry was often criticized, because he dined with tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners. Friends, we must be careful not to fall into the same mindset as the crowd.

Sometimes we can grumble. Grace extended to people, we deem undeserving. Imagine, for example, if Jesus invited someone who stole billions from a government institution to have a relationship with him, how will we feel?

[17 : 33] But grace, by definition, is undeserved. The gospel is good news for sinners. And we must rejoice when the lost are found, no matter who they are.

Point number four, the transformation of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus' encounter with Jesus didn't just result in a joyful dinner. It led to a radical transformation.

In verse eight, we see the evidence of Zacchaeus' changed heart. Look, Lord, here and now, I give half of my possessions to the poor.

And if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount. This is a picture of true repentance. Zacchaeus didn't just feel sorry for his past actions.

He took concrete steps to make things right. He was willing to part with his wealth. Half of his possessions would be given to the poor, and he would make restitution to anyone he had defrauded.

[18 : 46] This is what happens when the grace of God penetrates a sinner's heart. It leads to repentance. And repentance and faith are two sides of the same coin.

That is, repentance is needed to take hold of Christ's grace. And repentance is not just a change of mind, life.

To put it another way, it is a change of mind that leads to a change of action. Zacchaeus' actions reflect the depth of his transformation.

No longer is he driven by greed and selfishness. Now, he is moved by generosity and justice. Jesus' statement here is profound.

By calling Zacchaeus the son of Abraham, Jesus is not just referring to Zacchaeus' Jewish heritage. He is affirming that Zacchaeus is now part of the covenant family of God, not because of his ethnicity, but because of his faith and repentance.

[20 : 06] In Galatians chapter 3, verse 6 to 9, it says, So also Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. Understand then that those who have faith are children of Abraham.

Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham. All nations will be blessed to you.

So those who rely on faith are blessed together with Abraham, the man of faith. Salvation had come to Zacchaeus' house, not because he earned it, but because he responded to Jesus in faith.

His transformation was the evidence of the salvation that had already taken in his heart. And this is the essence of the gospel. We are saved by grace through faith, and true faith results in a transformed life.

Zacchaeus' radical generosity was not the cause of his salvation, it was the result of it. As we come to the conclusion of this passage, we are reminded of the central message of the gospel.

[21 : 26] In verse 10, Jesus says, For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. This is the mission of Christ, and it is the mission of the church.

The story of Zacchaeus is a reminder that Jesus seeks out those who are lost. Who are the lost, you might ask. It's easy for me to make a list of lost people that doesn't include myself, my loved ones, or people I look up to.

It's easy to make a list of Zacchaeus, people I don't like, but that's not very honest, is it? The truth is that we are all lost, whether we realize it or not.

And not all the lost look very lost, isn't it? Zacchaeus didn't come to Jesus first. Jesus came to him. In the same way, Jesus seeks out each of us. He comes to us in our sin and brokenness, offering us grace and inviting us to receive salvation.

[22 : 39] salvation. The gospel is not about us finding our way to God. It's about God coming to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

We are lost in our sins, unable to save ourselves, but Jesus comes to seek us, just as he sought Zacchaeus. Isaiah chapter 53 verse 6 says, we all like sheep have gone astray.

Each of us has turned our own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Jesus, the good shepherd, seeks out his lost sheep, and when he finds them, he brings them back into the

fold.

The ultimate purpose of Jesus' seeking is to save. He didn't come just to point out our lostness. He came to save us from it.

Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus ends with salvation. And Zacchaeus was saved not because of his efforts, but because of Christ's initiative and grace.

[23 : 57] The gospel declares that Jesus has done everything necessary for our salvation. On the cross, he took the penalty of our sins, and through his resurrection, he offers new life to all who believe in him.

Zacchaeus' story is a beautiful reminder that no one is beyond the reach of God's saving grace. Now, how can we apply this directly to our church in terms of evangelism?

This is one way. We are going to have our Christmas musical presentation in December called Joy Has Dawn. And this is a great opportunity to share with others on the true meaning of Christmas, that Jesus has come into the world to save us.

If you're thinking of inviting someone to Joy Has Dawn, but you're not sure if that person might be interested, or that person doesn't look like the obvious person who might come to know Jesus, but you never know.

I hope this will motivate you to invite them, knowing that no one is beyond the reach of God's saving grace. As we reflect on the story of Zacchaeus, we see the gospel come to life in vivid detail.

[25 : 24] Zacchaeus was lost, but Jesus sought him out. Zacchaeus was a sinner, but Jesus extended grace. Zacchaeus was transformed, and salvation came to his house.

This story is a reminder that the gospel is for all of us, no matter how far we may feel from God. Jesus comes to seek and to save the lost.

He calls us by name, offers us grace, and invites us into a life of transformation. If you have not yet responded to Jesus' call, today is the day.

Like Zacchaeus, climb down from whatever tree you've been hiding in, and welcome Jesus into your life with joy. He is seeking you, and he offers salvation to all who believe.

For those of us who have already received this salvation, Zacchaeus' story challenges us to live lives marked by repentance, generosity, and joy.

[26 : 34] May we never lose sight of the amazing grace that sought us out and saved us when we were lost. The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost, and he is still doing that today.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, help us recognize that we are the lost, and that you have come to seek and to save us, through your Son, Jesus.

We thank you that it is you who came to seek us first, because in our sinfulness, we can never ever have the ability or even the will to look for you.

Help us then, Lord, to recognize who Jesus really is, and to put our trust in him as our Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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