

Christ and Zacchaeus

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[0 : 00] So we're going to start this evening looking at a, we're going to do a series on Wednesday nights of people Jesus met with, named people for the most part. And we're going to start tonight with Zacchaeus.

And there's a reason I'm doing this. I just think because it's always good to be learning from the Master. That's just, that's what we are.

That's what we do. And the way he interacted with people is really great. So we're going to do that. Now, I know that Zacchaeus is a really well known story.

And if I asked you to give me the five or six main points of the story of Zacchaeus, you probably all come out with the same things as I'm going to say. But I'm hoping that will be challenged. But it's a long, long time since I preached about, spoke about Zacchaeus.

So we're going to read Luke chapter 19. And we're going to read from the beginning, just the 10 verses that tell the story. Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through and behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus.

[1 : 07] 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 couldn't because he was small in stature.

So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him. For he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to that place, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, Hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.

So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled. He's gone to be the guest of a man who's a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, 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 your house, to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham, for the son of man came to seek and to save the lost.

So it's a great story, isn't it? I know all of you are just sitting there going, Zacchaeus was a very little man because that's always what we think of when we think of Zacchaeus.

[2 : 20] Well, at least that's what I think of when I think of Zacchaeus. I think of the song that we knew the story connected to. But in Jeremiah 8 and verse 20, it says, The harvest is passed, the summer has ended, and we are not saved.

And that's really my motivation for beginning to look at these characters. Because for me, I feel very much that the time is short.

And I feel that more and more. And I feel about, especially about my friends who I've known for a long, long time, who don't know Jesus. And I feel sometimes that the harvest is in, the summer is passed, and yet they're not saved.

And so I want us all to learn a little bit from the interaction of Jesus. I want to learn again, fresh in a new way, the interaction with Jesus, with people, which was so effective and which was so kingdom centered.

And I hope that will spark really great discussions in city groups and just with your friends in church and with one another as we think about it. So I really don't want to go into it in great depth.

[3 : 37] It's not going to be a theological unpacking. It's just going to, in a sense, go through the story and get some lessons that I hope will provoke discussion with you.

And if at the end of the short time, if you do have any immediate questions, then it would be great to just throw them out and before we go to prayer. But the story is very well known, isn't it?

Zacchaeus, he was determined to find out more about Jesus. We know that, don't we? That he was really determined and he was a small wee man and he climbed up a tree.

It's a funny story. It's a nice funny story. He was a chief tax collector. He wasn't really funny at that level. He would have been a pretty, we can presume he would have been a pretty ambitious character, probably quite unscrupulous, definitely wealthy, absolutely unpopular because tax collectors, well, you all know that and a chief tax collector, even more so, he was shunned by his own people and outcast clearly.

So he didn't really know people in terms of having friends. He might have had a professional relationship with some of the Romans, the Romans that he worked for, but they kind of just despised him as well a little bit.

[4 : 55] If you've watched any of the tremendous online series about Jesus called Chosen, if you've seen any of that, then you'll get an insight into the whole tax collector character in Matthew.

It's very interesting. But, you know, whatever made up his character, clearly spiritually, he was lost. He was empty and he needed saving.

He needed to be put right with his God. And I think he clearly knew that. Whatever that meant to him, whatever he understood by that, he clearly wanted to know this Jesus who was someone very different.

There was a loneliness, presumably some kind of dissatisfaction and unhappiness and a desperation. Maybe he'd heard about Matthew. Probably the tax collector spoke together because no one else would speak to him.

Matthew, he thought he left his tax collector's booth to follow Jesus. Weird. So maybe he'd heard through that. We don't know. But anyway, he was determined to find out about Jesus and he was badly labeled really, wasn't he?

[6 : 09] In verse 7, we're told that, you know, the crowd were disaffected because Jesus had gone to be the guest of a man who was a sinner. So really, we know that from round about there was this antipathy.

Is that the right word? There was an unhappiness anyway about Zacchaeus being there. The crowd weren't sympathetic to him. He knew that. That's why he didn't kind of try and push through the crowd as a wee man. So he's like, well, let me get to the front.

Because he knew people weren't going to be sympathetic to him, to his request. He might have even potentially got beaten up. But he was the kind of guy, I suppose, who would be rather ignored, unnoticed, or maybe even worse than that.

So he was badly labeled by the crowds really. And you know, when Jesus spoke to him, they said, well, why are you speaking to this guy for this chief?

Why? You know, this he's a no hopper of all the people in the crowd. Jesus, why are you speaking to Zacchaeus? He's beyond the pale. There's a case.

[7 : 12] And then Jesus enters this great dialogue. Jesus enters into the story really in verse 5. Jesus came to the place and he looked up and said, Zacchaeus, hurry, come down.

I must stay at your house. You all would have had this point, wouldn't you? He called him by name. He called him by name. Now, how did he know his name?

Oh, of course he knew his name. He's God. Well, he was God who emptied himself. He was God who learned obedience. He was a God who was a baby in the womb.

He was a God who was in every point just like we are, yet without sin. Surely it must have been in his relationship with the Father and in his sensitivity to the Spirit that he knew and was guided to Zacchaeus and told about Zacchaeus.

He called him by name. And Jesus here was clearly doing the Father's will. We wrote that at the end of the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. That is why Jesus had come.

[8 : 21] He was calling out those who had come to save. Zacchaeus was one of them. And the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit had known that since before the creation of the world.

Zacchaeus was going to be one of the ones that he would come to save. And Jesus, therefore, took the initiative here, didn't he? Jesus says, he doesn't say, Would you mind if I come to your house? He says, Zacchaeus, get down and must come to your house. Tremendous authority in what he says. That request alone would have had more power and more authority than a million sermons that Jesus could have preached.

Nobody wanted to go to Zacchaeus house. Nobody. And here is this Jesus that he's come to see. And Jesus is demanding to go to his house.

He's saying, I want your friendship. I want your hospitality. You have a home. I'm coming to your home. I'm coming into your life. I'm coming into the place where you're comfortable in your security zone.

[9 : 26] I'm coming in here. Took the initiative. And in all of this, we feel that Jesus has given Zacchaeus his undivided attention. He doesn't care about what the crowd are saying round about.

It's as if what we have here is nobody in the universe except Jesus and Zacchaeus at this point. Tremendous interaction between the two.

So Jesus. And then let's go briefly again to Zacchaeus. You know, particularly in verses 6 and 8. He hurried and came down quickly, received him joyfully.

And then, you know, he's gone to his house. And we presume there's some kind of time lapse between verse 7 and 8. Because Zacchaeus stood then and said to the Lord, Behold, Lord, have my good, I give to the poor and everything.

Most of the commentators presume that there's what Zacchaeus says here is after Jesus has visited and spent time in his house. But the moment that Zacchaeus starts, hurries down from the tree.

[10 : 31] I think at that point, the rebirth has begun in his life. At this stage, there's not been a sermon. There's not been a gospel presentation. He hasn't given him, you know, the Roman road to the gospel story.

You know, we're all sinners. We all need Christ and here's the gospel. All we have at this point is a warm welcome and being called by name.

And Zacchaeus responds to that in obedience. Obviously, there's something already clearly miraculous happening. And the first conversation he has with Jesus has changed everything in Zacchaeus's life.

And that is because he had been found. Okay. The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. So we all often think this is about Zacchaeus seeking Jesus, don't we?

But in reality, what comes across in this story is this is about Jesus seeking Zacchaeus. He's come to seek him and to find him.

[11 : 38] And even in the very bare bones of the story we've got here, there's inexplicable and clear evidence of someone who's been transformed by the truth of the person of Jesus, warmed by his person and by his love.

Obviously, there's much we don't know and much we're not told. But a new person was born and I'm not sure if there's any specific significance in it.

But when Zacchaeus in verse 8 it says, and Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, I may be reading into that, but he stands up at that point to make a declaration.

He's not hiding behind the crowd. He's not hiding in a tree. He's standing up and declaring in front of everything that he's been changed. In front of everything that's been changed.

The one thing that's been Zacchaeus' idol, which is clearly wealth and money, has become all quickly his greatest servant and his greatest outworking of a changed heart.

[12 : 49] His greatest character failing, which I suppose was miserliness. More than anything, he wanted money rather than relationships with others.

It has turned into generosity and joy and a willingness to share what he has with others. So that's the story. You all know the story. I've just gone through it quickly there.

Isn't it a brilliant interaction, wonderful interaction? But maybe you're thinking, well, it just all seems a bit distant from my life and my experience as a Christian.

You know, this is Jesus. He knew Zacchaeus' name. There was something miraculous going on because he's the Son of God. But, you know, we're all called today to partner with Jesus who has gone back to heaven.

He's ascended back to heaven. And we are called to be those who usher in his kingdom. And I would really love you at this city groups to discuss these interactions that Jesus has with people and ask, what is it mean for me?

[13 : 57] What is Jesus saying to us as a church? What's involving it? Very quickly, I want to say there's four practical points. The first is we have a duty to be praying like Jesus.

There's nothing in this passage talks about Jesus praying. But it's clearly part of the revelation of his life that he was in communion with his father and was doing his, you know, that's why he's come to seek and save the lost.

That was his understanding of his mission as God was continuing to reveal who he was to himself. And the Spirit made that clear and he grew and grew and learning and understanding. And he was doing God's will. And we have a responsibility to pray similarly, to learn obedience to God through prayer.

And can I talk sort of evangelistically that in prayer ask God to lead us to the people who Jesus is already calling, who are God's people.

[15:09] Now there's, I know there's mystery there and another faith required there. But recognizing that there's a sensitivity to prayer as something that's two-way. I think we often always think of prayer as one way.

We're bringing our requests and everything to God. But are we hearing and listening to who the Holy Spirit wants us to speak to? Or listening to where we are being guided and recognizing our relationship with God is a living conversation.

Now, I don't know what that looks like necessarily. I'm not expecting God to speak to me and you know, audibly say go and speak to that guy over there. I don't mean that.

But I mean that we're so sensitive to the Spirit's leading that we're aware of what God wants us and the friendships and the conversations and the opportunities that he's putting our way.

I also think and we're praying, we should be praying. Okay, I know, stuck record, praying together. You know, I'm still so aware that as a church, there's not a lot of people have been converted through us recently.

[16:18] And that can become a pride thing. It can become a numbers thing. I know there's all kinds of motives we have to fight against. But we are grasping the crucial nature of our relationship with God and they're calling together to be a people who want to see His kingdom coming.

So praying like Jesus. Secondly, being aware that it's very easy for us to side with the crowd rather than with Jesus. I think that's easy for us all to do.

It's easy for us and this is all about relationship with people. It's easy for us to judge by appearances or by past behavior. You know, we interact with people or we see people and we think, well, I'm going to avoid them.

Jesus is not going to rescue them, they're not His type. And we can judge by appearances and we forget that we are all Zacchaeus. We are all Legion.

We are all Mary Magdalene. We are all those who need rescued before God without Christ. And we're in that position.

[17:24] So it's always vital, I think, for us never to write off people. The people that look the most unlikely converts. Might be the ones that Jesus is working. Don't write off people.

See them as fellow image bearers. See people, see people broken, lost and needing a savior.

And therefore taking time to know the person behind the image, the company to keep the behavior, the characteristics that are kind of ugly and annoy you and make you think, oh, I don't want.

I don't even know if I want them to become a Christian. And also in terms of that whole being aware, I don't think we should presume on the heart condition of anyone based on their outward prosperity.

Maybe. And by that, I mean, you know, people that look like they've got it all together. Maybe more of the type of people we mix with because of our socioeconomic background.

[18:24] They may seem to have it all together. In their lives, I've got no spiritual interest. They'll never be interested in reading the Bible.

And there's nothing there. But they may be like Nicodemus, like Zacchaeus utterly destitute inside, completely lonely, possibly having prayed the day you met them when they woke up in the morning, a suicidal prayer for help.

You might be the person that God sends. And that's that happens again and again and again.

People that look like maybe life is good for them. So there's that challenge of not judging like the crowd, but but connecting like Jesus.

The third thing is the power of simply reaching out. I think we spend so much time despairing about the gospel formula about what I will see, how I will get the whole picture across the people.

Talk about sin and talk about their need and talk about Christ and the gospel. And that will all that will all find its place. But the first contact you have remembering someone's name, being led by the spirit to visit someone to say hello, to invite them to your home, to somehow give them in your life, their your undivided attention where nobody listens to them.

[20 : 09] They may be converted by that. They may become Christians before they've even heard about Calvary because God is at work and Calvary and the message will all come.

I remember in Roskeen, someone coming in the days when we you came forward and spoke to the session before a communion. Usually it was at a time. Remember someone in Roskeen who had no no gospel background, who that week had clearly been saved and met with the elders, but who couldn't articulate it in any kind of gospel, gospel, meaningfully way.

He said, there's just been an incredible change in my life. And he went on to grow and develop and become a leader in the church and an office bearer and all that came. But he was he was clearly converted without knowing the details of the gospel.

But he had met with Jesus and that simple reaching out might be what Jesus uses to convert someone. It's a confidence, isn't it?

That God has this person. It's not my not my convert. It's not my expert explanation of the gospel message. It's in God's eternal will.

[21 : 31] And we just go out with love and all our weakness and all our failure and reach out and remember their name. And the last thing is meeting with Jesus in truth.

The truth in Jesus will always lead to a positive change. Always. And that goes that really is where it comes home and affects us.

You know, all of us. Because it's an ongoing thing, isn't it? That meet on going meeting with Jesus. I'm not speaking necessarily here in conversion here, but it on going meeting with Jesus leads to positive change.

It leads to generosity and overflowing. That mean and angry and judgmental and negative cynical greedy proud lustful spirit that we wrestle in battle with changes when we meet with Jesus.

We don't stay the same when we're in relationship with Jesus. That's a very challenging thought.

[22 : 36] If you lurch back to your Christian life 10 years ago, as I lurch back to mine. We don't change. We don't stay the same when we're in a relationship with Jesus.

There's always growth. There's always positive change. And that's again being together where we disciple one another into that change and also new Christians.

So I think there's an amazing challenge there for us in St. Columbus. Living in the light of eternity and living together in the atmosphere of miraculous grace, which is how Jesus lived.

And what he promises is a way that we can live in the power of the Holy Spirit. How does that affect our interactions with people?

You will all spend a lot of time tomorrow with people. And that will all reflect a relationship you have with Jesus, how you deal with him, how I deal with him.

[23 : 40] And I hope there's quite a lot in that to discuss together. There's no pressure on Hunter at all, but Hunter's doing the questions for next week. So if you have questions from this that you would like, you think would be good as part of the city group, it's a Hunter and you'll share them, but surely there's provocative discussion we can have when we think about the way Jesus interacted with Sakeas.

Okay, right, I'm done.