

Sought and Found By The Son Of Man

In the last couple of chapters, it seems one of Luke's main concerns has been mankind's fatal attraction to money. Which strikes at my heart because I have had struggles with desiring material things in my life at times, how about you? In chapter 18, we met a rich young ruler who was so attracted to money that he could not release it in order to lay hold of Christ and follow him. His money was what he worshipped and his devotion to it was so great that he forfeited eternal life so that he could maintain his earthly status. He departed sad because he could not have both his god of wealth and Jesus, the only true God. Do you remember what Jesus said to the crowd as the rich young ruler was leaving? In verse 24, Jesus says, **“How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.’ ²⁶ Those who heard it said, ‘Then who can be saved?’ ²⁷ But Jesus said, ‘What is impossible with man is possible with God.’”**

Last week, we learned that many of the things that took place with the blind man were prophesied in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah. Last week's account of Jesus healing the blind man was a picture, as it were, of all other healings before and their multifaceted purposes. He healed a helpless blind beggar not only restoring his sight but granting him salvation, as Jesus said to him, **“your faith has made you well.”** Jesus' healing ministry demonstrated both physical and spiritual restoration. The account of Zacchaeus (*dzak·chah·ee·yos*) is also similar in that while last week's text demonstrated that Jesus is the Messiah who heals. This week's text shows Jesus, being God, is He who forgives sin.

Our narrative in Luke picks up as Jesus enters and begins to pass through the heart of the city of Jericho located in the Jordan Valley with the Jordan River a couple of miles to the east and Jerusalem to the southwest about 10 miles away. The road between Jericho and Jerusalem is the setting where the parable of the Good Samaritan takes place found in Luke chapter 10. Jericho's location was chosen because of the several natural springs and because of the abundance of water, the city was lush and was called the City of Palms because of the large number palm trees throughout the city. It is here about a week before the cross that Jesus finds the most unexpected believer. It is here that we observe there is a difference in perspective of those saved and unsaved towards the truths of God. Those who are unsaved see the Bible from man-centered view point, so often their conclusions about what Jesus is demonstrating are wrong and as the parables unfold, they can miss their true meaning. This thought takes my mind back to the Pharisee and tax collector in the temple. The Pharisee had all the credentials and all the right answers, he was religious, he was respected in Jewish society but he sought salvation through his own efforts. On the other hand the tax collector despised by Jewish society placed himself at God's mercy, a humble sinner, and Jesus declared the tax collector went home saved.

From man's perspective it was the rich young ruler whom everyone thought highly of, who should have been given eternal life. But Jesus declared that he really had another god altogether; his god was his money. Without spiritual understanding the entire purpose of Jesus' teaching, that nothing is to be worshipped above God, the secular person thinks that this rich young ruler was not far from eternal life by what he had accomplished, but Jesus said his salvation was impossible. The simple truth Jesus presents is that rich people who love money

more than the Triune God cannot enter into heaven. For that matter anyone who loves the many things of this world more than Christ cannot enter into heaven.

Today as we enter Jericho with Jesus and His followers, we will observe many who from man's view point appear to be closer to salvation than this chief tax collector whose name ironically means "pure or righteous" but Jewish society considered this man as a tax collector the worst of sinners. Luke wants to show us that with man, eternal life is impossible, but with God all things are possible. For man getting a camel through the eye of a needle is impossible, just as it is impossible for sinful men to earn heaven.

We begin with prayer to open the eyes of our hearts and minds to God's perspective.

Please stand and hear the Word of God. Brother Ivan will read from Luke chapter 19. "*Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through.* ² *And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus (zak·chah·ee·yos, zachaios). 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.* ⁴ *So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way.* 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.'* ⁶ *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.'* 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.'* ⁹ *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.'"* (ESV)-Amen! Please be seated.

Zacchaeus Sought Jesus (v. 1-3)

Luke introduces us to a second blind man by the name of Zacchaeus; he had physical sight but he was blind, in a sense, because he was not tall enough to see Jesus. Reading verses 1 to 3, “*Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through.*” Jesus and His disciples were not staying long in Jericho but passing though on their way to Jerusalem. Verse 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.*”

We do not know much about Zacchaeus. Luke tells us that he was a chief tax collector, which means he oversaw the group of tax collectors in the city of Jericho. With this city being a hub city with many travelers and business people going through it every day, he would have had the opportunity to grow very rich because the chief tax collector got a percentage of all the taxes coming into their area.

He was the least likely man to be saved that day. He was a well-known sinner despised by almost everyone, both Jewish and Roman. Not only did he have the reputation of a sinner because of his trade, he was the leader of Jericho’s tax collectors which made him disliked all the more, he was seen as a great sinner against God and his fellow Jews.

For some reason, which Luke does not tell us, so it is beyond our understanding, he wanted to see Jesus. Perhaps he lay awake all-night thinking about his life and wondering if this is all there is. I remember when I had reached a high level in the corporate world with money and authority and thinking is this all there is? It was the time God began to grab hold of me. Perhaps he thought, as I did, *I am successful and I have money but I still have this empty feeling inside and*

I know there must be more. Perhaps he had heard something about Jesus that awakened his mind to his need for salvation. Maybe because Jesus made it a practice of reaching out to society's rejected, Zacchaeus may have heard about Jesus from another tax collector. Earlier in Luke 5 we are told one of the many reasons the Jewish religious leaders disliked Jesus. Reading from verse 30, "the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at Jesus' disciples, saying, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?'" As Jesus and his disciples traveled for 3 years, they spent a fair amount of time with those rejected by the religious leaders and Jewish people, so there certainly would have been talk among the tax collectors about this rabbi and His claim of being the Son of David. We are not given the reason he was driven to find Jesus, but I believe God had begun to awaken his soul and he felt a need to be saved.

We know there were things in Zacchaeus' life that were working against his coming to salvation. He was a sinner not only against God but his own people as a tax collector. We know he was rich and Jesus had recently taught, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." (Luke 18:25) We do know God was working on his heart and awaking his soul because when one is spiritually dead, they have no desire to seek God – for this exposes their sin and one feels as if they have been stripped naked and stand before an all righteous Judge. As Paul wrote in his letter to the believers in Rome, chapter 3, verses 10 and 11, where Paul cites Psalms 14 and 53, ¹⁰ "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God." So, we can understand from our perspective given by the Word of God, in truth, he sought not Jesus on his own, but was driven to Jesus because Jesus was sought him.

We do know the crowd was large and Zacchaeus was short so he runs ahead of the crowd and climbs a sycamore tree. He must have been determined, we have

sycamore trees that have been brought in and planted in our area, they are large trees. They are mentioned in ancient Jewish and other writings of the near East as a symbol of strength. But this determined small man climbs the tree where he can see Jesus in the crowd, but Jesus is also able to see him. Jesus had brought Zacchaeus to exactly where he wanted him.

Jesus Sought Zacchaeus (v. 5-7)

God is at work; Zacchaeus sought Jesus because Jesus was sought Zacchaeus. Reading at verse 5, “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.’”⁶ 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.’” In the crowd’s collective mind, they had to be wondering if such a sinner could be saved. How could a rabbi and teacher of God’s Word associate with such an obvious sinner? The people had to be wondering, what they should make of this situation. So, let us examine it and see what God would have us learn.

It was Jesus not Zacchaeus who took the initiative to engage in a personal encounter. Zacchaeus was only hoping to get a glance at Jesus and remain nameless. However, Jesus stops at exactly the right place and looks up and calls him by name. He did not say, *Hey you in the tree*. Instead, our Lord called Zacchaeus by name. How did Jesus know his name? The answer is obvious to us; Jesus knew his name because Jesus is God and knows all. Jesus knew Zacchaeus name before the earth was formed, just as He knew your name. God sought you before you sought Him. There is a hymn published in 1878, its author is unknown because at the time it was published this hymn had been around for some time. It

expresses this very concept of who sought who. I will not sing it, but I will put it on the screen and let you listen. It is titled,

I Sought the Lord

*I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
he moved my soul to seek him, seeking me;
it was not I that found, O Savior true;
no, I was found, was found of thee.
It was not I that found, O Savior true;
no, I was found, was found of thee.*

*Thou didst reach forth thy hand and mine enfold;
I walked and sank not on the storm-vexed sea;
'twas not so much that I on thee took hold,
as thou, dear Lord, on me, on me.
'Twas not so much that I on thee took hold,
as thou, dear Lord, on me, on me.*

*I find, I walk, I love; but O the whole
of love is but my answer, Lord, to thee!
For thou wert long beforehand with my soul;
always, always thou lovedst me.
For thou wert long beforehand with my soul;
always, always thou lovedst me.*

Jesus found Zacchaeus, just had it been planned from the beginning of time. As it is with this hymn and Zacchaeus, do you think this is true of you? You found God just where He planned you would be before the beginning of time. The things in Zacchaeus' life that to the world were hinderances for salvation was no hinderance to God, just as your sin could not stop your Creator from bringing your souls to life. Our little tax collector was a sinner, like everyone here today. Praise

God that our human sin is not a problem for God and He sought and saved Zacchaeus just as He did with you.

Why is this so? Matthew deals with this question in chapter 9, ¹⁰ “Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ ¹² But when *Jesus* heard it, he said, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means: “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.” For **I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.**” Praise God, for like Paul, I freely admit I am a sinner and Jesus saved me from eternal ruin.

In Luke Jesus admonished the grumbling Pharisees and scribes, saying, ⁴ “What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?” (Luke 15:4) Zacchaeus was the one, I was the one and you were one that Jesus would not let remain lost. Here in today’s passage, verse 10, Jesus gives the most simple and straight forward truth about His ministry, ¹⁰ “**the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.**” The purpose for which the Son of God took on flesh and came to earth and lived was to find and save those just like Zacchaeus and you and me, and He saves us.

The crowd, as the rich young ruler who left to return home, questioned, Jesus “**Then who can be saved?**” (v.26) Jesus responded, “**What is impossible with man is possible with God.**” (v. 27) Now in today’s passage, as the dumbfounded crowd looked on - Jesus stopped at the sycamore tree, looked up and said, “**Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.**” There was

only one purpose for Jesus to stay at Zacchaeus' house; because it was divinely appointed from before God formed the universe for Zacchaeus to be saved – on this day and at this time. God had awakened Zacchaeus to his need for salvation, so how does he respond to Jesus? “He hurried and came down and received him joyfully.” Can you see the work God had done in his heart? This is the first evidence of the Fruit of the Spirit in Zacchaeus life as we find where Paul wrote in Galatians, “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23) Zacchaeus was overjoyed to welcome the Messiah into his home. His salvation has begun. However, the crowd was not spiritually alive as we read in verse 7, “when they saw it, when they saw Jesus befriended this chief tax collector, they all grumbled, saying ‘Jesus has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.’” It has been true throughout history and it true today, the world condemns what they do not understand because they are spiritually dead.

Jesus Changes Zacchaeus (v. 8-10)

Remember the rich young ruler who departed from Jesus with sadness because he could not let go of his riches. Here Zacchaeus' response is very different because he knows he has met his Savior. This new spiritually converted person was no longer satisfied with the things of the world. He releases the things of the world that had been so precious to him. Reading at verse 8, “Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, ‘Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.’” This was not a statement of what he had been doing, but what he will now do. Zacchaeus continues, “And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” Jesus asked both men to do basically the same thing and yet their responses were the opposite and the results were polar opposites; the one who would not let go of the world received damnation and the one who let go and

embraced Jesus received salvation as we see in Jesus' response to Zacchaeus, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham." Jesus changed Zacchaeus, so now he was following God's purpose of restitution from the Old Testament. The issue was not if he had defrauded anyone because as a tax collector this was the common practice. As the chief tax collector, he would have been known as a cheat and a thief and as an extortioner. He sinned by abusing others in order to get wealth. But now, now he is going to give it away. Do you see how Jesus has changed him? What once gripped his affections is now a burden. I remember this change of affection in my own life. Think back, do you see how Jesus changed the order of importance in your own life?

Now after Jesus comes into this tax collector's home, He declares **three** amazing things. He **first** declares, salvation has entered into this home. That is why Jesus had to go there. It was in this place Zacchaeus was to be saved. **Second**, Jesus declares that now Zacchaeus has been saved by grace through faith that Zacchaeus is a son of Abraham. He had always been a descendant of Abraham but now he is a true son. When Paul wrote to the believers in Galatia, he was explaining this very thing. Reading from Galatians chapter 3, verses 7 to 9 and 27 to 29, Paul told them and tells us beginning in verse 7, "Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. ⁸ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.' ⁹ So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith." Jump to verse 27 with me, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise." Zacchaeus has become a true Israelite, a

true son of Abraham because now he belongs to Christ. He believes as Abraham believed and so he is now a true son of God.

The **third** thing Jesus declares is, that it is He who sought Zacchaeus in verse 10, **“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”** Zacchaeus was one of the lost sheep of Israel. We know of the Old Testament writers that Israel had lost its first love for God and instead became a nation who thought its blessings came because they were physical descendants of Abraham and by their practices of manmade religious rules and works. Jesus came to rescue the lost sheep God the Father had chosen from eternity past.

The Greek word translated as **“lost”** has much more meaning than the English language implies. In the Greek it means to lose to its destruction. Unless the lost is found it will perish. In Revelation chapter 9, verse 11, to those who are perishing and being tormented, it says, **“They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek he is called Apollyon.”** The Greek name **“Apollyon”** comes from the same root word as used in Luke 19:10 for the word **“lost”**. Apollyon is the powerful demon, the Destroyer in Revelation, so unless Jesus rescues the lost, they will belong to the Destroyer and will spend eternity in the **“bottomless pit”** of hell or eternal destruction that never ends.

So, here we have the picture of a lamb who has gotten loose and wanders off into the night. While the lamb does not even know he is lost there is one looking for this lost lamb to destroy it and there is another looking for it, the Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ, to save it. Appolyon was unsuccessful that day because Jesus sought out and found Zacchaeus sitting up in a sycamore tree waiting for

Jesus to pass by. Our Lord, who is searching for lost sheep, spotted one from His fold and that day Jesus restored Zacchaeus into the fold of God.

Remember the hymn from earlier – we think we have found Jesus, but the truth is He has found us.

*I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
he moved my soul to seek him, seeking me;
it was not I that found, O Savior true;
no, I was found, was found of thee.
It was not I that found, O Savior true;
no, I was found, was found of thee.*

My beloved, we were lost sheep found by the Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ – praise the Lord! But there are those still lost, still wondering in the night. As the ambassadors of the Living God we are called to go out into the night of the darkness of this world and tell the lost sheep of the wonderful Savior. That is our job, it is not our job to force salvation on anyone, for that it is the job of God the Holy Spirit to bring their souls to life, but our job is to tell people of the Christ that saves. If there is anyone here today that does not know Christ as their Savior; let Him rescue you from the Destroyer, let him make you into a new creation for you are precious and Jesus came to this earth to “**seek and to save the lost.**” He is calling you just as He called Zacchaeus long ago. Amen.

If you are hearing the call of Jesus, let me visit with you after this last song and tell you of the Lord of salvation!