

INI

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
October 11, 2015
20th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: 1 Kings 21:17-25, Ephesians 6:1-9
Hymns: 38; 386; 391; 800 (242:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Luke 19:1-10

Then *Jesus* entered and passed through Jericho. ²Now behold, *there was* a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. ³And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that *way*. ⁵And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." ⁶So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. ⁷But when they saw *it*, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."

⁸Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."

⁹And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; ¹⁰for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God my Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Looking for someone in a crowd.

That can be quite a challenge. There is a sea of faces and even though you are very familiar with the person, be it a friend or relative for whom are looking, it can be very hard to pick that one face out of that sea of faces. I have been at ball games when I knew friends were there also, but in a stadium with thousands of faces all packed together, even if I knew about where they were sitting, I had difficulty finding them, or even gave up.

Sometimes the person you're looking for is lost. You got separated. That changes everything. You may feel a sense of desperation if it's a child. You need to find that one who is lost before something bad befalls them! When it is simply matter of curiosity of fun, you may give up quite quickly, but when you really need to find that lost child or vulnerable adult, then you persist. Then you know that it may be a matter of life and death. You quit caring about the ball game or any other matters and remain focused on finding that one who is lost until you find him. Sometimes that ones who are lost are impervious to the search. They are not even aware that they are lost or that those who are looking for them are making this desperate search to find them and bring them home.

In our text we see Jesus in such a situation. He is searching out one who is lost, one who needs to be saved. That person isn't even aware that Jesus is looking for him. He is in that vast crowd, and his curiosity is aroused. He wants to see what all the fuss is about. He would like to catch a glimpse of this man named Jesus, but Zacchaeus didn't know that he was lost and needed saving. But Jesus did, and Jesus searched out Zacchaeus in that sea of faces in Jericho while on His way to Jerusalem where He would suffer and die for the sins of the world. Our text leads us to appreciate that just --

**THEME: As Jesus Sought out Zacchaeus to Save Him,
So He Sought Us Out for Our Salvation.**

That's what Jesus does.

I. Jesus Seeks Out the Sinner.

Luke 19:1-5 Then *Jesus* entered and passed through Jericho. ²Now behold, *there was* a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax

collector, and he was rich. ³ And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.”

Zacchaeus was not a popular person among the Jews. Not only was he a tax collector for Rome, he was a chief tax collector. He had used his position well to make himself wealthy. There is little doubt that he was as crooked as he was rich. That becomes clear from his words a little later in our text. He had climbed a tree in order to see Jesus because he was short. It had nothing to do with what was to follow. Jesus did not focus on Zacchaeus because Zacchaeus had gone to such lengths in order to catch that glimpse of Jesus. Jesus knew Zacchaeus, not in the way you may know someone that they were familiar with one another before this occasion. Jesus knew Zacchaeus in the same way that Jesus knew and knows you. Jesus knew Zacchaeus perfectly. Jesus knew his name. Jesus knew what Zacchaeus did for a living. Jesus knew that Zacchaeus was a thief. Jesus knew Zacchaeus according to the election of grace just as He foreknew us from before the world began. Recall the words of Paul to the Romans:

Romans 8:28-30 “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

Jesus had a plan for this trip through Jericho, a plan that included Zacchaeus. He knew Zacchaeus before the world began and predestined to call him to faith so that Zacchaeus might be one of those who would be saved. This was not because of Zacchaeus noble character, but rather in spite of his character, in spite of his sin.

And so it is with us also. Jesus knew us also from before the world began. Jesus knew us by name before we believed. He knew of the

sin in our lives and in our hearts. He knew all that and loved us with an everlasting love. He called us according to that grace and love.

Next please note how the Lord not only invited Himself into Zacchaeus' house, but made it a matter of great urgency. He **must** stay with him that day. This calling had an authority which Zacchaeus would not deny. It moved Zacchaeus to act according to Jesus' gracious invitation.

And so it is with us also. The Lord has called us according to His grace and according to His power to save. His gospel call moved our hearts to come to Him. It was His power and His authority and His grace and His love that drew us to the Lord in spite of our sin, not because of our stellar character. We see the Lord's power in Zacchaeus' response.

Luke 19:6-7 So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. ⁷ But when they saw *it*, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."

Zacchaeus eagerly received Jesus into his home where Jesus likely remained not only for dinner but for the night. This was a defining moment in the life of Zacchaeus. Jesus was with him, and bringing him the gospel of the kingdom of God.

Hearing Jesus' message in our homes is equally important. For our homes to be Christian homes Jesus needs to be present with His grace and power and love. This is where Jesus wants to be with us, opening up to us His truth and the way of salvation. We need to hear His gracious call. We need to open His Word and allow Jesus to talk with us and direct our lives throughout this life that we might walk the way to heaven.

Jesus inviting Himself to Zacchaeus' Home didn't go over so big with the crowds of people who had an ingrained resentment for tax collectors for Rome. They complained about Jesus going to Zacchaeus' house, after all Zacchaeus was a sinner, indeed a Sinner with a capital "S"! Zacchaeus was simply not worthy of Jesus' favor. Zacchaeus was far more worthy of a lightning bolt from

heaven than grace and forgiveness. And that was most certainly true!

Just as we see it happening in our text, so it remains to this day. It is always easier to see the other person's sin, and why the Lord should bring judgment down upon them instead of grace. Indeed at times this is where people will even challenge the existence of God. "If there were a God in heaven," they postulate, "why would He allow evil people to perform their evil deeds? He should stop them! He should eliminate the evil from the face of the earth." They fail to consider where that line of evil should be drawn, an when and if it should include them.

Thanks be to God that the Lord does not deal with us according to our sin, but rather according to His grace. Even though He knew our sin, He called us to faith in His forgiving grace. He covered our sin with His own blood. He called us to be His own.

II. Jesus Brings Salvation.

We see the difference Jesus brought into the heart and life of Zacchaeus.

Luke 19:8 Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."

This just didn't just happen spontaneously from the goodness of Zacchaeus' heart. His heart was changed. Jesus had come into Zacchaeus' home and Zacchaeus' heart. Jesus wasn't there to feed Himself but rather to feed Zacchaeus and his household the Bread of life which is Christ Himself, and give them the living waters of the Word of God, which were then flowing with springs of life from Zacchaeus' heart. This is what prompted Zacchaeus to stand and vow, (for any word of promise to the Lord is most certainly also a vow) he vowed that as much as it was within his power he would set things right with any whom he had cheated. He would not only uphold the Old Testament law, he would exceed its demands, not because he was compelled by the law, but because now the love of Christ moved his heart.

That is what faith looks like. That is what faith looks like in our lives also. Fruits of repentance are evident. The child of God repudiates the sin in his life and, to the glory of His Savior, deals honorably with his fellow man. He confesses his sin, and shows his love and devotion for Jesus by responding to Jesus' forgiving grace by fruits that line up with repentance. Repentance is not only sorrow over sin, but also understanding the forgiveness that Jesus brings us. It responds with love for our fellow man, and a genuine desire to live in a manner that brings glory to Jesus' name.

We need to give special attention to Jesus' words in response to Zacchaeus' confession and promise.

Luke 19:9 “And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham.””

This is a precious pronouncement coming from the Lord. He declares Zacchaeus to be saved. This is justification. It comes not by works but by faith. Jesus is declaring the genuineness of Zacchaeus' faith. Zacchaeus believed the Lord, and it was accounted to him as righteousness! It was a telling and meaningful declaration that Jesus pronounced Zacchaeus to be a son of Abraham. Jesus is not stating the obvious based upon Zacchaeus' ethnicity. Jesus is ascribing to Zacchaeus the same state of faith and salvation that Abraham possessed through faith in the promised Savior. Now Zacchaeus knew and believed that Jesus was his Savior. He acted according to faith, and Jesus credited Zacchaeus with righteousness. It is all as the Apostle Paul explains for us in his epistle to the Galatians.

Galatians 3:6-7 “Just as Abraham “believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”⁷ Therefore know that *only* those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

So it is that this declaration of Jesus, this justification of a known sinner brings comfort and assurance of salvation to us also. Even as we have been called to faith through the gospel of Christ, so it is that we are justified by faith; we also are eligible to be classified as **sons of Abraham**.

Jesus makes it clear that all this is in perfect alignment with His mission.

Luke 19:10 The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

The Father in heaven sent His Son down to earth for this precise cause to be fulfilled. God had compassion upon lost sinners like us. He sent His Son to seek out the lost, those oppressed by sin, that He might save that which was lost.

“Oh draw us ever unto Thee,
Thou Friend of sinners, gracious Savior;
Help us that we may fervently
Desire Thy pardon, peace, and favor.
When guilty conscience doth reprove,
Reveal to us Thy heart of love.
May we, our wretchedness beholding,
See then Thy pardoning grace unfolding
And say: “To God all glory be:
My Savior, Christ, receiveth me.”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 398:5)

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.