

Zaccheus Meets Jesus

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[0:00] If we can turn back to our reading and to chapter 19, and I want to look at the story of Zacchaeus, the tax collector today.

! Zacchaeus was a man who wanted to see who Jesus was.! But what happened was he received so much more than just getting to see Jesus.

And many people in the church today are like that. At one point they thought to themselves, I would like to see a bit more of Jesus. But the reality is they receive far more than just a look at the Lord Jesus Christ.

The context we have here is in verse 1. It tells us that Jesus entered Jericho and he was passing through. He was just passing through that town on his way to Jerusalem.

And he was on the same trip as the encounter he'd had with the blind beggar that was recounted for us in the previous chapter. And in Mark, the Gospel of Mark tells us that that beggar's name was Bartimaeus.

[1:13] And he had been in a similar situation because Jesus, verse 35 of chapter 18 says, As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting begging.

And when he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. And they told him, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by. And the beggar's life was transformed by Jesus passing by that day.

And here we have him passing through Jericho. And Zacchaeus' life is about to be transformed as well. And I think the first important thing that we should see in the story of Zacchaeus is a very simple thing.

And that is that Zacchaeus had a desire to see Jesus. It tells us in verse 3, he wanted to see who Jesus was.

It's an interesting thought that there was a huge crowd out there and many of them wanted to see Jesus to get a quick look at him. If that was like today, there'd be people wanting to take selfies to see, I got my picture with this famous man.

[2:28] But Zacchaeus was actually, he was looking for something a bit more. He wanted to see who Jesus was. What kind of a person was he? Perhaps he had in his mind was Jesus.

A great speaker. Or perhaps was he a chancer who was able to pull the wool over the eyes of ignorant people. Was he a wonderful religious leader?

Or was he something more than that? We can see from the likes of the previous chapter. Where the blind man Bartimaeus received his sight.

That Jesus was able to do remarkable things. And we can see also, he had messages for rich people.

When he spoke to the rich young ruler, he said to him, all you need to do is give away all the money that you have and come and follow me. And that man had turned away sad.

[3:31] I wonder if Zacchaeus had heard that story. Or perhaps he'd heard another story that offered him a bit more hope. The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector.

Where the Pharisee had been looking to have God accept him because of who he was. Whereas the tax collector had knelt down in the temple and simply asked for God's mercy in his life.

We cannot be sure what was going on. But certainly there was something going on within Zacchaeus' heart. The desire was there to see Jesus.

But Zacchaeus had a problem. He was short. So Zacchaeus acted upon his desire. Verse 4 tells us that he ran ahead.

He wanted to see who Jesus was. So he ran away from those who were actually able to see Jesus at that point. Because he didn't want to hear from, simply to hear from people what they saw of Jesus.

[4 : 38] He wanted to see Jesus himself that day. Interesting that at that point he was actually running away from Jesus. But it was in order to see Jesus.

Because he had a reason. Since he knew that Jesus was coming that way. We read that he climbed a tree. A sycamore fig tree.

And what we have there is in that society. It was only children. As very much the same in most societies. Generally just children love climbing trees.

Adults wouldn't do something of that nature. But here we see a man in a position of power and authority.

Would want to keep their outward appearances correct at all times. At all times. But here we see him acting like a little child. And climbing up that tree in order for himself to see Jesus.

[5 : 38] In Matthew 18 we read that Jesus called a little child. And had him stand among them. And he said, I tell you the truth. Unless you change and become like little children.

You will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself like a child. Is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Here we have Zacchaeus.

Not worried about what folk would think of him. If he was going to get himself into a position. To see Jesus well. He wasn't cared about. Didn't care about any embarrassment that might come from that.

He just wanted to see who Jesus was. And he wasn't happy to accept a distant view. He wanted to get a really close up view. So he climbed that tree right by the roadside.

Because he knew that Christ would be coming that way. There must have been a great sense of anticipation. In his own heart as he saw Jesus coming.

[6 : 35] If we look back at the end of the previous chapter. You see that Bartimaeus received his sight. And it says immediately he followed Jesus praising God.

And when all the people saw it. They also praised God. So here we have. And this was right at the gates of Jericho. So he'd have been following Jesus coming in. Praising God behind Jesus.

And Zacchaeus would have been up that tree. And seeing is that not Bartimaeus? The man who is blind and here he can see. And he's praising God. That's the work of Jesus.

The anticipation would be all the more. So Zacchaeus was looking forward to Jesus coming. But what we see is that not only was Zacchaeus looking for Jesus.

But Jesus was looking for Zacchaeus that day. Verse 5. He comes. And when he reaches that spot. He just looked up at Zacchaeus.

[7 : 35] And said Zacchaeus come down immediately. I must stay at your house today. Jesus had his own plan. In terms of dealing with Zacchaeus.

It's fascinating that he was able to call Zacchaeus by name. It's one of those wonderful things when Jesus comes to people and calls them. He knows them all by name.

Because each and every one of his children. He has known and chosen from in eternity itself. To come and save them. And Zacchaeus' response was a very simple one.

He came down from the tree and he welcomed Jesus gladly. There really wasn't anything else that Zacchaeus could do than welcome Jesus. He wanted to see who he was.

He wanted to have a good look at Jesus. But he got far more than that that day. He got to walk with Jesus through Jericho. He got to talk with him. He got to dine with him.

[8 : 36] And he got to learn with him. Sitting around a table. Zacchaeus got so much more than he had planned for. And yet he got exactly what Christ had planned for him.

Because Christ had come looking for him that day. And if we think of Bartimaeus singing praises. You would think everyone else should be singing praises too.

At the fact that not only Bartimaeus. At one end of the social scale. Had met Jesus. And had a remarkable thing happen in his life that day. But something.

They should also be delighted. Zacchaeus at the other end. Was meeting with Christ. But what was the result? In that case.

The people began to mutter. He has gone to the house of a sinner. It's amazing. It's amazing. How we can decide ourselves. Whom Jesus ought to save.

[9 : 34] And whom he ought not to save. Whom we are happy. With him. Meeting. Christ is sovereign. Christ is sovereign. And it's a cause of worship and praise.

Whenever Christ meets with anybody. And it is our role and our delight. To worship God for the way that Jesus acts.

If you are unhappy. At the thought of someone. Whom Jesus has saved. Rather than yourself. It's because of the fact. That you are trying to save yourself.

By your own works. And you want God to accept you. On your terms. And not on his. But we see here. Jesus at work. In Zacchaeus' life.

Zacchaeus had the desire. To see Jesus. But we see here. Jesus acting upon Zacchaeus' desires. Money had been Zacchaeus' life.

[10 : 32] He was willing to sell out. His Jewish heritage. And become a tax collector for the Romans. So that he could get rich. And do really well. And now in the presence of Jesus.

He realized that the thing. That was most important in his own life. Was actually secondary. In life itself. He was quite happy.

To give away. His money. With joy. And what a contrast we have. With the rich young ruler. Just earlier on in the chapter. Where. Jesus said to him.

To sell everything. But he became very sad. Because he was a man of great wealth. The rich young ruler. Became sad. Because of what Jesus asked him to do.

Zacchaeus. He became very happy. Because he was willing. To do what Jesus wanted. And he was happy to give away his wealth. Amazing.

[11 : 29] The same action. That is either being asked. Or in Zacchaeus' case. Seemingly voluntarily given. It shows the difference. That Christ makes in a life. When you truly believe him.

And when you don't. God. And more than that. We can look at the remarkable nature. Of this change in Zacchaeus' life. When that young man turned away.

Jesus said it was easier. For a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Than for a rich man to be saved. And yet here we have a rich man. Being saved.

The camel has gone through the eye of the needle. That which was impossible. Has been done by Christ. At work. In the rich man's life. It's amazing.

When we think on salvation. There's nothing. That we can do to save ourselves. Christ is the one. Who saves us. He does. That which is impossible.

[12:30] And I'm sure that nobody. In Jericho that day. Would have imagined. That Zacchaeus. Would have indeed been saved by Christ. To the point of being willing to give away.

Half his fortune. And then pay back four times the amount. That he cheated any individual. I suspect that there would have been a long queue. Of people coming to his door. After that saying.

You cheated me. Can I get back four times the amount now? So while he started out. By giving away half his fortune. I suspect most of the rest. If not all of it. Will have gone.

And this is all because. Jesus entered. Into his life that day. In Jericho. It's interesting.

When we look. At what Jesus had to say in response. We don't have him saying anything. About Zacchaeus. Before Zacchaeus said.

[13:26] He's going to return all that money. And give it to other people. Jesus said to him afterwards. Today salvation has come to this house. Because this man too.

Is a son of Abraham. Here he was. Happy to declare. That Zacchaeus was a believer. After there was evidence. In Zacchaeus' life of a change.

And that's. Something really important. We should never be too quick. To declare somebody saved. On the basis of a. I say a mere confession.

We should never discourage people. From coming to Christ. But we shouldn't tell people. We think they're believers. On the basis. Of a confession. With no.

Supporting evidence. To go with it. That's a big difference. Between. An Arminian. Look at salvation. Where they claim. All you need to do. Is make a decision. And a reform view.

[14:28] Where. The reality is. The Bible tells us. If we confess. That Christ is Lord. We will do the things. That Christ wants us to do. Jesus said.

By their fruit. You will recognize them. And here we have. Great fruit. Coming through. In Zacchaeus' life. As he declares. That his money.

Which was everything to him. Is now nothing to him. Because he has met. With Jesus. And. Jesus. States quite clearly.

What his mission was. The son of man. Came to seek. And to save. What was lost. That which was lost. Is what. Christ was looking for. He knew.

Zacchaeus was lost. And he came. And he found. And he saved Zacchaeus. That day. And Zacchaeus. himself. Knew he was lost. And hence.

[15:22] His search. He went looking. To see who Jesus was. But he found. So much more. When he met. With Jesus. That day. If we think.

Of how we can apply. This to ourselves. Are you thinking. Today. That it would be. A wonderful thing. To be saved. But doing nothing. About it. If we look at Zacchaeus.

He had no. Predestination. Lethargy. Thinking. It was solely. Up to God. It was solely. Up to Jesus. To do the work. Did shortness.

Cause him. To give up. I suspect. If Zacchaeus. Had come. From Lewis. There's a reasonable. Chance. He might have thought. To himself.

Well. I want to see. Jesus. But my legs. Are too short. So obviously. God's decided. That it's not for me. To see Christ. But no. He ran ahead.

[16:17] And he climbed that tree. And sadly. There are still. Too many people. In the church. Who get caught up. On the whole idea. Of predestination. And am I in the elect. Or am I not. And that is completely. The wrong question. To be asking. You should be asking. This. He says. Am I willing. To repent. Of my sins. And trust in Christ. Or am I not. A good way. Of illustrating. The. Craziness. Of someone. Wondering about. Predestination. And whether that means. They are saved or not. I think. Can come from. An experience I had. When I was a student. I stayed in a hall of residence. Where there were about. Eleven hundred people. And. My meals were paid for. My accommodation. Was paid for. And I used to go into. The dining hall. Each night. And. There would be a guy. On the door. Letting people in. In tranches. Of sort of. Thirty or forty.

[17:13] And then. When the queue was dropping down. A bit. He would let more people in. And. One night. I was coming to. I went for my meal. Fairly late on. And. The bursar came. And he was having a chat. With the guy in the door. And he says. Oh how many folk. Are we getting at the moment. And he says. Oh. Around about. Nine hundred. To which the reply was. Oh that's quite high. So eleven hundred people. Had paid for meals. Had meals paid for them. By government grants. And by. Largest of their parents. And yet only about. Nine hundred. Were turning up. To eat their meals. Each night. That's obviously. Because some people. Would be dining out. Other folks. Would be doing stuff. Late at the university. Or whatever. But the fact is. Everybody who turned up. Would get their meal. Now. Having learned. That only about. Nine hundred people. Were eating. Each night. And they were probably. Making about. Nine hundred and twenty.

[18:08] Meals. Just to. Cover it. Would I have had. Any reason. Not to go for a meal. The next day. Would there have been. Any logic. Can me saying. Well. They're only making. Nine hundred odd meals. And there's eleven hundred people. What if I turn up tomorrow. And there isn't a meal for me. No sense there at all. And yet that's what. A lot of people do. With predestination. They use that. As if. It was excluding them. From the kingdom of God. But the reality is. Scripture tells. Each and every one of us. That we're to be like Zacchaeus. We're to use what we have. And seek Christ. He had short legs. He couldn't see. But he used those short legs. To run. And then climb a tree. And Christ came and found him. The blind man. Bartimaeus. He was blind. But he had a voice. And he could call out to Jesus. And say. Son of David.

[19:04] Have mercy. Upon me. And he was healed. And he was saved. It's marvelous. That God gives us his word. And each one of us. Should get into his word. And we should. Call out to Christ. Like. Bartimaeus. And ask him. To save us. And. See that Zacchaeus. He went to the place. Where he could see. He climbed that tree. And I think. It's not. Stretching the truth. Too far. To say that. We can. Look at God's word. A bit like. A tree. In terms of the way. God reveals himself. And. We can just have a look. Through. The scripture tree. That we have before us. It's wonderful. When we look. Into God's word. Here in the bible. There's. Something.

[20:00] That's like a great trunk. Holding up. The whole. Of scripture. And that is God. Dealing with his people. By way of covenant. Promise. And the thread.
Of the covenant. Runs right through scripture. And it holds. Everything together. As soon as. Adam and Eve sinned. God made a promise. That he would send.
One who would crush. The head of the serpent. A short time later. He met with Abraham. And he said to him. You will be the father. Of many nations. And.
It's interesting. That Jesus declared. That Zacchaeus. Was a son of Abraham. Because all those. Who are justified. By faith. Are determined.
To be sons of Abraham. Because he believed. The promise. That was given to him. By God. And you can go. And read Romans 4. And see how Paul. Picks up on that theme. This afternoon.

[20:55] Later on. He gave the covenant. The Mosaic covenant. Where he revealed. The Ten Commandments. And he gave these wonderful. Images in scripture. All the sacrificial system.
That pointed. To Christ himself. Later on. He promised. Through Jeremiah. That there was going to be. A new covenant. Not one where. The words.
Of the Ten Commandments. Were written on tablets. Of stone. But would be written. In people's hearts. And that was the new covenant. That Jesus himself. Introduced.
And for everyone. Who trusts in Christ. That covenant. Is written. On their heart. And any believer. In Christ. Will be able to see. It's a wonderful thing.
To have. Christ's. covenant. Written. On our own hearts. And to. Delight. In his word. Let's climb a little higher.

[21:51] Up some of these branches. And look at the wonderful things. That the Psalms. And the prophets say. The Psalms. Constantly speak of Christ. They give pictures of Christ.
And. The gospels themselves. It's like climbing up. Into the canopy. Where you get a fabulous view. And the light. Comes streaming in. On top of you.
Similarly. The New Testament. Letters. As Paul works out. And Peter. And John. Work out. The truth of Christ. That was revealed to them.
It's amazing. How we see. Crowds of people. From across the nations. Being changed. By their encounter. With Jesus. In God's word. Do you hear.
Christ speaking. To you today. If you don't hear. Christ speaking. You should start. Looking for him. And if you do hear him. Speaking. You should keep looking. Until you hear him say.

[22:49] As he said. To Zacchaeus. That day. Come down immediately. I must stay. At your house. Today. Christ promised. To each. And every. One of us.
As he enters. Into the heart. Of every. Repentant sinner. Father. And he calls. He calls upon. Each one of us. To turn away. From our sin. And to turn to him.
That is a great promise. That he gives. And is a sure. And a certain promise. So I pray. That each. And every one of us. Here today. Will be able. To trust in Christ. And to truly.
See him. In his word. And not just to see. An outside. Picture of Christ. But to see Christ. As he truly is. Just as Zacchaeus.
Sought to find out. That day. And Zacchaeus. Got so much more. Than he was looking for. And if you trust in Christ. You will find. You will get so much more.

[23:45] Than you could ever. Have expected. Let us pray.