



Zaccheus: a Little Man and a Big Change

Luke 19:1-10

Study Helps and Application

You may recall a few weeks ago some discussion contrasting The Rich Young Ruler (RYR) with Zacchaeus. Hopefully you will find the comparisons helpful and enlightening throughout this week's study.

Discussion 1: Zacchaeus--The Seeker

– *What Was Zacchaeus Seeking?*

[People are always searching for something... constantly seeking (even window shopping religions) to “fill that void” (we were, after all, created to worship!) Some are more desperate than others to find answers.

“Seeker sensitive” was a popular buzz word in church growth years ago. Some of the ideas were helpful--others were not. Underlying it was an assumption that people are seeking God and we just need to help them find Him. But Scripture also makes it clear that rebellious sinners are not truly seeking God. *Zacchaeus was curious and seeking something... a curious “chief-of-chiefs” among sinners--not only a tax collector, but a chief among them!*]

^{ESV} **Romans 3:10** as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God.

- *Who is really the seeker here?*

^{ESV} **Luke 19:10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

[God is not lost, sinners are. We need to be discerning about our evangelism methods. Are we getting the Seeker/"seekee" model backwards? In the next discussion we'll look at how God seeks and finds.]

– *Compare the pre-encounter Zacchaeus with the pre-encounter RYR*

[Be careful of speculation... it's best to leave these as questions when the text doesn't speak to it.]

- *Did he consider himself to be righteous?*

Z--probably not... if he'd even given it a thought

RYR--Yes.

- *How was he seeking Jesus?*
Z--Child-like, risky, reckless, without the fear of man
RYS--Interestingly, Mark's account records him running up and kneeling before Jesus. His problems were his confidence in his own righteousness and the money that owned him.
- *What was he seeking from Jesus?*
Z--Entertainment? (See a miracle...) Fulfillment of curiosity? Am I missing out on something?
RYS--Secret insider knowledge (last piece of the righteousness puzzle)? Confirmation? (You're already awesome!)

Discussion 2: Zacchaeus--The Saved

^{ESV} **Luke 18:27** But he said, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."

^{ESV} **Luke 19:9** And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house,

– *How was Zacchaeus saved?*

[We don't get a lot of details in this story. All we are given is that he was called and responded to the voice of Jesus... Zacchaeus "received him joyfully."]

^{ESV} **John 10:27** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

– *Does the simplicity (apparent ease) of this bother you?*

[We can have such a hard time accepting salvation as "impossible with men" but possible with God.]

- *Was our salvation "easy" for Christ?* [Only if we'd consider the cross easy!]
- *... but is our calling unto salvation difficult for Christ?* [For the one who rebukes the storm and it ceases, raises the dead, ...]

– *Implications for Evangelism: How is Jesus' Voice Heard? [...that His sheep may hear and follow]*

[We are his ambassadors, entrusted with his message of reconciliation: "God making his appeal through us."]

^{ESV} **2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is ^ain Christ, he is ^ba new creation.¹ ^cThe old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, ^awho through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us ^bthe ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling¹ the

world to himself, ^anot counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us ^zthe message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, ^awe are ambassadors for Christ, ^bGod making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ ^aFor our sake he made him to be sin ^bwho knew no sin, so that in him we might become ^cthe righteousness of God.

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 1:21** For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.

^{ESV} **Romans 10:13** For ^a"everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." ¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him ^aof whom they have never heard? ¹ And how are they to hear ^bwithout someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ^a"How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" ¹⁶ But ^athey have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, ^b"Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" ¹⁷ So ^afaith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

[Does the simplicity of this bother you? ...]

- *Compare Jesus' calling of Zacchaeus with his calling of Lazarus from the tomb.*
 - *Does this seem a strange comparison?* [Does the God in whom we believe give life to the dead? (Rom 4:17) Was Zacchaeus dead? (Eph 2:1-5, Col 2:13)]
 - *Which is the greater miracle?* [Lazarus was more impressive through our cloudy lenses (non-eternal perspective), but which of these was only temporary?]

Discussion 3: Zacchaeus--The Reforming

- *How are Zacchaeus' ideals and identity changed?*

[His money is clearly no longer His God... he becomes generous, immediately demonstrating fruits of repentance. He begins to demonstrate concerns for others, for justice, etc...]

[extra: "since he also is a son of Abraham"--There is also a lot here with respect to the identity of true Israel, a true Jew, ... of what it means to be a "son of Abraham"--for more information, see *Who Is the Israel of God?*¹]

- *♥ Are we (individually and corporately) bearing the fruits of repentance?*

[Transparency, openness, and confession are more common practice today, but are the accompanied by the resolve for change inherent to repentance? As we confess our helplessness, let us not forget to pray for the desire and the power to change. Focus on how we can encourage one another in growth in repentance. Don't be in a hurry to do the "lookup verses" that follow. Those are to seed the conversation. Get messy in each other's lives!]

¹ *Who is the Israel of God?* <http://objectivegospel.org/iron/IsraelOfGod.shtml>

- *Do you long not only for forgiveness, but for transformation?*
- *Have you allowed confession to be a substitute for repentance? [Confession being an end in itself...]*
- *Look up and discuss some of these references:*
 - Rom 6
 - Eph 4
 - Col 3
 - 1 Thes 4
 - James 2
 - 1 Peter
 - 1 John

Memory Verse

^{ESV} **John 10:27** My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.



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Introduction: Zaccheus

- He is a chief tax collector
- He was very rich

Tax collectors--In 1st century times were hated:

- They were often Jews (as Zaccheus likely was), which means they were viewed as traitors.
- They were one of the only street level representations of Rome's abuse / tyranny.
- They were personally dishonest. Extremely, famously corrupt – taking extra from the people for themselves. They got rich by stealing from the (ruthless).
- They were known for their wild, extravagant living. They were known for their parties, for their drunkenness and gluttony.
- No contemporary equivalent--closest: Mexican drug cartel.

Zaccheus was a *chief* tax collector -- boss/mentor of bad guys.

He was also short in stature...

1. Gaining Perspective --He climbed a tree to gain perspective. He wants to see Jesus, but he can't see over the crowd.

- No doubt, he had already heard about this Jesus.
- Everyone had been talking about his teaching and his miracles.
- Massive crowds coming into Jerusalem. (ref. later chapters)

Part of Zaccheus' desire to see Jesus might just be curiosity about what he looks like. No doubt there was a lot of interest in Bible times just to see this one that everyone seemed to be talking about.

Not just curiosity--It seems like he's interested in him. He's a seeker.

- Because he's short, his only shot to see Jesus is to run ahead of the crowd and climb a tree, but running and tree-climbing are child-like.
- Insider as a short person-- we do not like to show off our shortness or demonstrate that our shortness limits us.
- Zaccheus so wants to see Jesus that he couldn't care less what people think.

Non-Christians: Maybe you need to take that next step to gain perspective and see Jesus--a step even before conversion and believing. Sometimes it *takes risk, a carelessness*

about what others think – a carelessness that they think your pursuit is silly and childlike. It's like climbing a tree. Maybe it means...

- ...a willingness to let your spouse see you reading a Bible. *That's where you go to see Jesus today: the Bible.*
- ...coming to a church like this to gain perspective about Jesus.
- ...asking your Christian friend your questions.
- ...coming up front today after the service to ask questions of one of our leaders.

You've heard about Jesus--Isn't it time you saw Him for yourself?

Zaccheus showed ...

- ...the kind of child-likeness that Jesus just taught about (18:15-17 – you must be like little children to enter the kingdom)
- ... the need to ignore the crowd, ignore what others might say or think
- ... that the need to see Jesus takes thought and effort, but it is paramount

2. Receiving Jesus

Jesus initiates--It wasn't Zaccheus climbing a tree or later giving his possessions away that drew Jesus' attention. *"When he came to the place, he looked up"* He knew "the place" before he "looked up." This wasn't an accident; this was Jesus' plan from the beginning.

- Jesus calls Zaccheus by name (5)
- He tells him to come down
- He invites himself into Zaccheus' house. And all the words used for Jesus' visit – your house (5), received him (6), the guest (7) – all suggest that this wasn't a meal, but this was room and board.

Turning point in the story: when Jesus gets personal--*that's the way it works for anyone and everyone who believes.*

- You go out on a limb ("climb a tree") to see Jesus. You want to see the real Jesus.
- And then at some point it gets personal. It's like he calls your name.
- The invitation to be his, to be forgiven, to be reconciled to God, to join God's family and his ways becomes very personal and intimate.
- It's no longer theoretical. It's gone from being child-like to real / true. It's gone from being true to being intensely personal and real.

Jesus invited himself into his home (and his life). And Zaccheus received him quickly and happily (6).

The crowd is enraged that Jesus would share meals and life with a sinner like Zaccheus.

- We've seen that theme before in Luke – tax-collectors, prostitutes, gluttons, drunks, etc.

- He came for sinners like Zaccheus.
 - He came to **seek** them
 - He came to **save** them

3. Transforming identity and ideals.

Luke's account no doubt skips some parts of the story. No surprise- we all tell stories leaving out some details just to make the story succinct (some of us are better than others at that). Big jump from v 7 to v 8. There's actually no description of the gospel here. There's no account of Zaccheus' conversion. It skips from Jesus going to his house, to some **fruits** of his conversion. *That doesn't mean that he's saved because he was willing to give a significant part of money away.*

This big change in his approach to money and wealth is not in view of getting saved, but in view of having been saved. Jesus' declaration in v 9 - "salvation has come to this house" - is past tense. He doesn't say salvation will now come to his house, but Zaccheus'

It is a transformation of identity and ideals. His identity and ideals were bound up in his money, and that's why his money is the focus or the proof of his transformation.

1 Thessalonians 1:9 ...how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God...

Acts 19:18-19 *Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. ¹⁹ And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.*

Zaccheus gave far more than what was required.

- He gave up half of his possessions.
- Where he stole, he plans to give back four times as much (the OT law required repayment + 20%).

The point isn't specifics like every new Christian has to do a book burning, an idol smashing, or to give away as much as Zaccheus did. The point is the massive change of identity and ideals.

Ray Ortlund commenting on 1 Th 1:9--What does it mean to "accept Jesus"?

You and I are not integrated, unified, whole persons. Our hearts are multi-divided. There is a board room in every heart. Big table. Leather chairs. Coffee. Bottled water. Whiteboard. A committee sits around the table. There is the social self, the private self, the work self, the sexual self, the recreational self, the religious self, and others. The committee is arguing and debating and voting. Constantly agitated and upset. Rarely can they come to a unanimous, wholehearted decision. We tell ourselves we're this way because we're so busy with so many responsibilities. The truth is, we're just divided, unfocused, hesitant, unfree. That kind of person can "accept Jesus" in either of two ways. One way is to invite him onto the committee. Give him a vote too. But then he becomes just one more complication. The other way to "accept Jesus" is to say to

him, "My life isn't working. Please come in and fire my committee, every last one of them. I hand myself over to you. Please run my whole life for me." That is not complication; that is salvation. "Accepting Jesus" is not just adding Jesus. It is also subtracting the idols."¹

The NT says a lot about our new identity and changed behavior. This is a theme that I think we have neglected a little too much. In a right desire to react against legalism, performance, pride, haughty attitudes toward sinners, etc., we've perhaps let the pendulum swing a little too far so that we've neglected the biblical theme that Christians are different now.

- In a sense, believers are the same as unbelievers.
- In another sense, believers are very different now from what they used to be.

It's a both/and not an either/or. But it's important to see how much the difference is stressed in the NT writings

- Rom 6
- Eph 4
- Col 3
- 1 Thes 4
- James 2
- 1 Peter
- 1 John

Perhaps we've come to so cherish honesty, openness, confession, and repentance that we just don't talk enough about the expected fruit of conversion that is so frequently talked about in the Bible.

- It is prayed for
- It is rejoiced in
- It is encouraged
- It's absence is rebuked

Christians are to be different, and at the same time, engaging sinners - just like Jesus did. After all, we can't be holier than Jesus, can we?

¹ Ray Ortlund's blog: <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/rayortlund/2010/06/04/9-what-does-it-mean-to-accept-jesus/>



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 - *Did he consider himself to be righteous?*
 - *How was he seeking Jesus?*
 - *What was he seeking from Jesus?*

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- *Does the simplicity (apparent ease) of this bother you?*
 - *Was our salvation "easy" for Christ?*
 - *Is our calling unto salvation "difficult" for Christ?*
- *Implications for Evangelism: How is Jesus' Voice Heard? ...that His sheep may hear and follow* **2 Corinthians 5:17-21, 1 Corinthians 1:21, Romans 10:13-17**
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