

Open Hands Series Slide

In the long-running TV show, "The Simpsons"- there is a character by the name of Mr. Burns. He is Springfield's old & mean Billionaire- willing to do anything to make a little more money.

In one episode, Homer Simpson is sitting next to Mr. Burns enjoying some Champagne in his vacation cabin in the mountains and Homer says,

Next 2 on the same slide

"You know Mr. Burns, you're the richest guy I know."- Homer Simpson

"Ah yes. But I'd trade it all for a little more."- Mr. Burns

Mr. Burns is known as a rich miser- that spends his life consuming. Of course- if you have even the smallest familiarity with Homer- you know one of his chief goals in life is consuming. Donuts, Duff Beer, TV- Homer is a man known for consuming.

It's a funny line. But it's funny because of how non-sensical it is...even though we all participate in the foolishness of it.

What we have is never enough- so maybe more of the same will satisfy us.

Now- let's flip it around...

There's a song by another Yellow Fellow not on the Simpsons- by the name of YeloHill. The song is "Judas" and it features the rapper Lecrae.

I actually love this song and there's a lyric in it that parallels Mr. Burns' line from the Simpsons.

Lecrae is rapping about how people from his home growing up see him as successful and a model for becoming happy and content with life. His message is basically- ummm- the success I've had and money I've made really are not all you think they are cracked up to be. It doesn't stop the pain and difficulty of life. You have to have your hope in something else.

They say the Grammy's like the highest honor

[I'd] give up every Grammy in my house and trade them for a present father.

Then he ends the song with this...

**Look at God, if I never touch a hundred mil
I'ma serve a hundred meals, that's real.**

So now lets put them together

"I'd trade it all for a little more."- Mr. Burns

**"I'd give up every Grammy in my house and trade them for a present
father."- Lecrae**

That is 2 very different ways to look at money and success. One that prioritizes relationships...and the other that uses money— to get more money.

**Title Slide "Trade It All: How Jesus Changes Religion, Money, & You"
Luke 18:9-14; 18-23, 19:1-10**

Today- in the Gospel of Luke- we're gonna see the highest tension in the book of Luke.

SUMMARY

This is a Letter to Theophilus- telling a rich person there are 2 ways to go. Good rich and bad rich.

Essentially Luke is posing the question- Will you be Mr. Burns...or Lecrae?

Will you keep chasing the bag- or deliver bags of groceries?

Will you keep reaching out to touch a hundred mil

Or will you serve a hundred meals?

Will you be a present Father? Or will you will be alone with your cash?

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus tells a story about the prayer of a religious leader a Pharisee...and a tax collector. Now here's the thing about Pharisees and tax collectors in Jesus' day. Both of them are rich. The only difference is people respected the Pharisees...but they despised the tax collectors.

Luke 18:9-14

9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and looked down on everyone else: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee was standing and praying like this about himself: 'God, I thank you that I'm not like other people — greedy, unrighteous, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of everything I get.'

13 "But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even raise his eyes to heaven but kept striking his chest and saying, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner! ' 14 I tell you, this one went down to his house justified rather than the other, because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

Now let's look at two stories that come right after this in Luke's gospel....that sound like real life versions of Jesus' short story...first...the Pharisee-

Luke 18:18-23

18 A ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? "

19 "Why do you call me good? " Jesus asked him. "No one is good except God alone. 20 You know the commandments: Do not commit adultery; do not murder; do not steal; do not bear false witness; honor your father and mother."

21 "I have kept all these from my youth," he said.

22 When Jesus heard this, he told him, "You still lack one thing: Sell all you have and distribute it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

23 After he heard this, he became extremely sad, because he was very rich.

...and now the tax collector

Luke 19:1-10

He entered Jericho and was passing through.

2 There was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. 3 He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was

not able because of the crowd, since he was a short man. 4 So running ahead, he climbed up a sycamore tree to see Jesus, since he was about to pass that way. 5 When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because today it is necessary for me to stay at your house."

6 So he quickly came down and welcomed him joyfully. 7 All who saw it began to complain, "He's gone to stay with a sinful man."

8 But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, I'll give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord. And if I have extorted anything from anyone, I'll pay back four times as much."

9 "Today salvation has come to this house," Jesus told him, "because he too is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost."

Transition:

Today- I want to show you 3 ways Jesus will change you- if you decide to trust and follow him. He'll change what you think about Sinners, He'll change the way you think about God...and He'll change the way you approach money and possessions. We're gonna do this by comparing the Pharisee- the Rich Young Ruler- to the Tax-Collector- Zacchaeus.
Mr. Burns- to Lecrae.

This passage tells us that Jesus can change the meaning of Mr. Burns' sentence. **"I'd trade it all for a little more."**- from something disgusting... to something deeply wonderful.

1) Jesus changes the way you use the word "sinner".

When we read these stories- its really easy to pick out the heroes- the people we like. Zacchaeus is the good one...and the Rich Young Ruler is the bad guy.

But- if you don't know the story- if you were in the stories...instead of reading them...it actually would present the opposite way.

The Pharisee in Jesus' parable...and the Rich Young Ruler- are religious leaders. They are respected.

With both of them- we get a list of actually good things they are doing...ways they are obeying God's law.

Its their sin that's hidden.

Luke 18:9

Jesus is telling this parable to people who "trusted in themselves for their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else"

In other words- he was flipping the script on the Pharisees. He was saying "Hey- all these guys that you look up to, that seem to be doing all the right things...I'm telling you they are rotten at the core. They look down on everyone else because they think nobody is as good as they are."

18:11

Then we get to listen in on the Pharisees prayer. Listen to what he thanks God for. That he's not like other people. His prayer time is spent on noticing other people's sins...while he points out his own righteousness.

18:21

The Rich Young Ruler, is quick to answer back to Jesus- "All these commandments you've listed- I've kept from my youth."

18:22-23

But when Jesus points out something lacking in his keeping of the law...the RYR just walks away sad.

He doesn't say "You know what- you're right about that! I think its time to look the man in the mirror in the eye and make a change!"

He just walks away...sad...with all his money and his self-righteousness

"I'd trade it all...for a little more."

Now contrast that to the tax-collector & Zacchaeus.

18:13

The tax collector won't even lift his eyes. Keeps beating his chest. He calls himself a sinner. His conversation with God is not a resume of his good works and other peoples sins- its begging for mercy.

19:2-3

Zacchaeus- is clearly a tax collector- not only a tax collector- he's the boss of the tax collectors....which would have made him exceptionally rich.

So what's the big deal about tax collectors.

Tax Collectors in 1st Century Palestine were kind of like Nazi Conspirators in WW2.

They were Jews, who were working for the Romans. They were sellouts to the regime that was oppressing the Jews. And they did it all for money. The deal was Rome said to these guys, "Here's how much we want collected from each household. You can collect whatever you want on top of that. We don't care. As long as we get ours- you can get yours."

So there's a double whammy on Tax Collectors. Nobody likes them because they are co-conspirators with an oppressive foreign government...and nobody likes them because they cheat people out of their money.

In fact- Zacchaeus' problem is not that he is short. His problem is that he is short AND the crowd won't let him through. Now- if you are taller than a person- there's not really a good reason not to let them in front of you- you can see right over them.

The reason why Zacchaeus can't make his way through the crowd seems to be because no one likes Zacchaeus- and doesn't really think he deserves to be close to Jesus.

19:7

And when Jesus goes to Zacchaeus' house- they say "He's gone to stay with a sinful man"

Its more Pharisaical "I'm-better-than-you" type behavior.

But when Jesus looks at Zacchaeus- unlike the rich young ruler- Before Jesus ever even says anything- Zacchaeus is ready to repent. He sees his

own wrong and wants to make it right. He knows he has sinned. He knows his greed. He knows he has defrauded people.

19:10

And note what Jesus says at the end of his story about the Pharisee and the tax collector- and at the close of the Zacchaeus story.

18:14 & 19:10

He says those who are humbled will be exalted...but those who exalt themselves will be humbled. That's exactly what happens to the RYR & Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus is exalted- salvation has come to your house. The Rich Young Ruler is humbled- Jesus points out the one thing standing between him and eternal life- his relationship with money=- he walks away with his head hung low.

Jesus says in reply to Zacchaeus- "I've come to seek out and save the lost. Not the found. Not the self-righteous- i'm here to save those that know that they are the sinners. That they need me.

Jesus started his ministry by preaching this-

Mark 1:14b-15 (start at "Jesus went...")

He said- "The Kingdom of God is near. REPENT and believe the good news."

In other words- there is no reception of the Good News that God is going to make all things new- that right now he can take the most twisted, messed up, down and out, selfish- evil person- and do the impossible- make them wonderfully generous and secure in God's love- there is none of that transformation...without first accepting the humbling truth expressed in 4 words- "I am a sinner."

Listen to the Apostle Paul talk about himself. A former Pharisee. Now, sees himself lower than a tax collector.

1 Tim 1:15-17

This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" — and I am the worst of them. 16 But I received mercy for this reason, so that in me, the worst of them, Christ Jesus might demonstrate his extraordinary

patience as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life.

His attitude is not- "Look at how good I am, of course God wants to save me- I'm better than all those sinners who are much more evil than me." Instead he says, "i am the worst." And I know that Jesus is my only hope."

The difference between Saul the murdering Pharisee and Paul the Apostle- He had an encounter with Jesus that changed the way he used the word "sinner".

Here's Jesus teaching in the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew's Gospel.

Matthew 7:1-5

"Do not judge, so that you won't be judged.

2 For you will be judged by the same standard with which you judge others, and you will be measured by the same measure you use. 3 Why do you look at the splinter in your brother's eye but don't notice the beam of wood in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the splinter out of your eye,' and look, there's a beam of wood in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite! First take the beam of wood out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the splinter out of your brother's eye.

Ironically, this "don't judge" passage is mostly quoted to other people by a person who doesn't want to call himself a sinner.

But the intent of Jesus' teaching is for you to see your own sin as the biggest problem...and then to use the freedom and forgiveness you find from him after confessing your sin- to help another person with their sin.

This passage is never offered as a defense to "Stay out of my business!" Rather its offered as humbling teaching to get you to change the way you use the word sinner- on yourself to a greater degree than you do others.

This is the Spiritual Poverty we've been talking about.

Back to 1)

When you encounter Jesus- you see the tax collector in yourself. You don't start pointing to people outside of you...or to "the culture" and saying- "Look at all those terrible people out there! Thank you, God, that I'm not like

them!" Instead you say- "Thank you for loving a sinner like me." And it births compassion in you for others whose sin you never see as irredeemable or "worse" than your own.

If you use the word "sinner" to marginalize and separate yourself from other people- you don't understand who Jesus is and what he came to do. To seek and save the lost.

Because if Jesus can change the chief of sinners- he can change anybody.

Transition: Here's the second thing Jesus changes when you truly encounter him.

2) Jesus changes your perception of God from a means to an end.

Mr. Burns from the Simpsons said "I'd trade it all...for a little more."

That phrase shows that the only thing that Mr. Burns thinks is worth losing all his riches...is if he can use it to get richer.

A lot of us treat God this way.

That's what is at the heart of Idolatry.

Idolatry simply means that there is something ultimate that we are striving for.....that should be a relationship with God, our loving Father and creator... but instead we replace him with something else.

And our lives center around using anything we can, people, money, power- to get our idol...which can also be people, money, or power.

In fact, we even see God himself- as a means to an end.

This is when we separate religion as a way to shape ourselves to experience MORE of God...and we use it as a way to manipulate God into giving us what we really worship.

That's exactly the difference in the RYR & Zach.

Religion as a God bribe vs. Religion responding to God's grace.

First...religion is not a bad thing.

I'm not a big fan of saying that Christianity is not a religion...its a relationship"

That's kind of like saying "It's not marriage. Its loving a spouse for life."

While marriage can be separated from loving your spouse... it doesn't mean when you make a commitment to love your spouse for life...that it stops being marriage.

When my wife hurts me, or I hurt her in a argument- we don't blame it on the institution of marriage....

Imagine if my wife and I had a terrible argument- where we deeply hurt each other- and then we both said- "I hate organized LOVE! This is a relationship- not an social institution." Lets get a divorce so we can make this about REAL LOVE.

Marriage is both a good social institution- and its a deep loving relationship.

Likewise- Christianity is DEFINITELY a religion. And thats not a bad thing.

James 1:27

Pure and undefiled religion before God the Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Notice how James says undefiled- pure religion knows GOD as your FATHER- and then you Cultivate- you go to those without a present father..you don't consume and take advantage of those hurting and on the margins- you GO to them and Serve a hundred meals.

And notice- just when some of you think "What's that left wing socialist stuff"...well James comes in with the conservative- "and keep yourself unstained from the world."

Once again demonstrating the the truth is not in one extreme or the other, but both at the same time!

Religion that sees God as our Father- and then overflows that love to others- and takes seriously the commands of Jesus about righteousness and holiness- the Scripture says is "Good".

Christianity is a Religion BECAUSE its a relationship! Its not either or. If the relationship doesn't establish some habits and practices and accountability to a family of God- then its not a real relationship with God.

The key is...whether or not my religion is an empty means that makes me look like I'm worshipping God...or whether its is training me...constantly turning me away from foolish idolatry..Back to the God I love who loved me first.

Take a look at the RYR.

18:22-23

The RYR wants to have it all. He has made all his money honestly- he hasn't stolen or cheated or defrauded anyone. So he thinks, I also want eternal life. I want it all.

Id trade it all...for a little more.

But Jesus exposes his idolatry. His religion was never about shaping him to know and love God as his end. It was always a bargaining chip for eternal life.

If I'm good enough...if no one can ever point at me and say, "You made your money by cheating people" then I get to have my money and eternal life. I'll back God into a corner. He won't have a choice. There won't be any overt sin to point out. I've kept all the commands from my youth.

But Jesus, per usual, sees his heart. He sees that this mans religion has never really been about loving God with all his heart, mind, and strength.

So the command he gives him is simple. Unhitch your heart from your riches by giving it all away.

And then there is the exposure. The RYR walks away sad.

The RYR is sad because he can't have both eternal life (which he tried to get with religion) AND Riches (which he earned honestly- and therefore feels entitled)... So he chooses riches.

Think about that. Think about what that exposes about what he ultimately values. He's extremely sad that Jesus cannot give him what he wants.

But Jesus is actually offering something better.

There is a decades-old Rich Mullins song called Hold Me Jesus- that has been bouncing around in my soul like a pinball since the 7th grade. Its called "Hold Me Jesus".

And the bridge goes like this.

"Surrender don't come natural to me.

**I'd rather fight you for something I don't really want,
than to take what you give that I need.**

**And I've beat my head against so many walls,
I'm falling now, I'm falling on my knees."- Rich Mullins, *Hold Me Jesus***

This is our fundamental problem as humans. Surrender doesn't come natural. We want to be our own gods...or choose our own gods.

So God is someone to fight with...to get our way...even though our way is not what we really want...its going to end with us walking away extremely sad.

But if we would surrender...and take what God is offering that we need...even when it seems painful...we would actually find the deepest joy.

I'd Trade it all...for a little more...of what I want.

The first part of that bridge is the RYR, but the second part is where Zacchaeus is.

He has come upon all his riches dishonestly. He's defrauded and cheated people. But its brought him to a place of desperation. Realizing that he could never stack up enough cash to quell the inner desire of his soul to know and love his Creator. He'd trade it all for a Present Father.

He's beat his head against so many walls...so now...he's falling on his knees... or maybe...for Zacchaeus...he's climbing up his trees.

19:5-6

Zacchaeus is full of joy when Jesus says he's coming to stay with him, because he received Jesus...and was received BY Jesus...when every one else rejected him.

RYR wanted Jesus to affirm that he can have it all. Zacchaeus is sitting on ready to give it all away- because he has never been this loved and seen by such a beautiful person.

v 5 & 9

Notice how Jesus says...I'm coming to your house today in v 5. And in v 9 he says "Salvation has come to your house"

Other religious leaders throughout history have said "I'll show you the way." In other words- I'll bring you a religion. A series of things to do that will lead to eternal life. A bargaining chip with the gods. You do the list. They owe you eternal Life. But Jesus is different. Jesus didn't come to SHOW us the way.

Jesus said- "I am the way".
I am salvation. I am the truth. I am eternal life.

Jesus is not here to show us God. He is God.

Religion is not a means of gaining God's favor to get eternal life. It is a way of responding to the God who has already come to us and given us himself.

The order of salvation in the gospel is crucial. We don't do stuff to get God. We do stuff because we already have him.

The Prodigal Son didn't have to work to be welcomed home, but when his father welcomed him home- I guaranteed he worked on his Dad's farm like he had never worked before when he was just trying to get the bag.

v 5-6

Hospitality doesn't mean today what it did then- this is a sign of very deep affirmation- that Jesus seeks out Zacchaeus, and says I'm coming to be with you. This is why the crowd was shocked.

This is a sign of acceptance. In other words, Jesus is not waiting for Zacchaeus to promise to pay everyone back that he has defrauded... instead..he sees Zacchaeus humility...his willingness to climb up in a tree just

to see him...he sees his desperate heart... his spiritual poverty....he sees that God has become the END...not the means to get more of his idol.

That's where Jesus meets Z's Spiritual Poverty with Grace. He has compassion on Zacchaeus...and Zach welcomes him in with Joy.

You don't have v 8 (I'll change my ways) then verse 5- now I'll come to your house.

No. ZACCH in response to "I'm coming to your house" says "I'll change".

Back to 2)

Religion that manipulates God says "Well- are you going to stop being a tax collector first? Are you going to stop living the way you're living? You change- then I'll come to you."

But Religion that responds to God's grace in Jesus says "I don't need money to be my ultimate end anymore."

My worth is not in my bank account...or the lifestyle that money can buy. My worth is that the God of the universe has welcomed me in before I could prove anything about my love for him.

Money then changes for Zacchaeus. Instead of the way TO joy...that ended him up sad...Money simply becomes a vehicle for loving the world the way God has loved him. With Grace.

His religion- the giving of his money away- is a natural response- to show God's love to others and to keep God as his ULTIMATE. HIS END, not his means.

He responds in joy, not sadness like the RYR who kept all his riches. His religion is a joyful response to God's grace...not a job that leaves him with a sad sense of entitlement.

The grace that Jesus shows to Zacchaeus' spiritual poverty turns to his spiritual wealth that presses him to do something Hard. That takes GRIT.

He pays back people he's defrauded and gives away half of his income to the poor.

Transition: see...when you get grace...when you have an ongoing joyful relationship with Jesus...

3) Jesus changes your perception of money & possessions from an end to a means.

Mr. Burns said "I'd trade it all...for a little more"

Zacchaeus ended up saying said, "If I don't touch a hundred mil...i hope I serve a hundred meals"

Before encountering the grace of God in Jesus, Zach would do anything, would take any relationship and ruin it...just for more money.

But now- he's using his money to show the joy he has in knowing and being loved by his very present Father in Heaven.

v 8

He says "I'll give half my possession's. I'll pay back 4x the amount I've stolen from every person!"

First- he goes beyond the Mosaic law. Mosaic law is 10%. He says Imma give 50%

Second- Anybody I've cheated- I'm paying back 4x.

In the Mosaic law- the economic crime with the worst penalty was stealing cattle. You had to pay back 4x.

Z is taking the most dire of all economic sins and the penalties and he's applying it to himself. On top of giving away half of his income to the poor.

You see the joy...the repentance...he is willing to go beyond what people might require of him.

He's not asking "Does the Bible really teach a tithe? Is it really necessary that I give my money? This seems like a little much"

Notice how the attitude starts.

He starts with "Look Lord"- he's eager. This is not "If I change my ways...will you not smite me?"

This is "Look at me Dad! Look what I'm doing with what I have. I want to bring delight to you, because you have come to my home and embraced

me...and I want to do this for you. I just sold my Grammy's on Facebook marketplace because I KNOW I have a present Father!" Now I can do to others what you've done to me- OVERFLOW!

Back to 3)

You know in the NT- we have the RYR- Jesus said Give 100% of your money away.

Here, Zach says, "I'll give 50%" and Jesus is like "ok".

In Luke 11 Jesus says to the Pharisees "You give 10% to God...and thats a good thing"

So which is it? What's the right amount?

What do I have to give away for a relationship with Jesus?

Zacchaeus is showing us that it's the wrong question. If you ask that- you aren't getting the gospel.

Because the person following Jesus doesn't ask- what MUST I give...but what CAN I give? What can I give away with and still be responsible?

Now that I have my joy in Jesus' embrace of me- how can I release this money he's entrusted me with into the world to glorify him...and to keep me from clinging to an idol for my joy...that just will end up making me sad?

Look, Zacchaeus is in that tree because he's despised and rejected.

But Jesus says- "Z- out of sheer undeserved grace...I want you to come down. Come down from that sadness. the rejection, the isolation..and join me in a relationship."

"Will you give up a hundred mil- to come and have one meal with me?"

You ever wonder when the last time Zacchaeus shared a meal and conversation with someone was before Jesus came along?

The Romans only wanted him for his money...and he had burned every relationship he had for money. I imagine- he ate a lot of meals...alone.

But Jesus says, I see you in that tree. And I'm coming to eat with you.

You know how Jesus could do this? Accept Zacchaeus in his humility and repentance...even before Zach did anything to earn God's love?

Zacchaeus could come down from a tree- Because Jesus would later go up a different tree in his place. ... The Mosaic law says "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

Jesus was sold out for 30 pieces of silver... despised and rejected by those that called him a friend... he was the one betrayed...and yet...he took the rejection and punishment that Zach deserved...so Zach could receive the love and acceptance that Jesus deserved from his Father.

Zach comes down from the tree by his own power, but Jesus has to be carried off the tree- dead.

Jesus made himself poor so that by his poverty...we would be rich in God's love and mercy.

When you see that grace- you will religiously give your money to make that grace known to more people.

When you see that sacrifice to welcome you in...the chief of sinners...the one beating your breast...you know that God has answered your cry in Jesus... that you now go down to your house justified...you now dine with a King forever...and so you are willing to sacrifice your money to help more people come to the table.

Not how much do I have to give...but how much can I give?

For some 50%...is not a sacrifice. For some 10% is a huge sacrifice.

If you struggle to tithe, but its creating sacrifice in response to God's grace in your life...what you're doing is beautiful.

If you're scared of giving it up...you need the Zacchaeus experience...to transform you to use money as a vehicle for God's love.

You need to say, "I'm a sinner. I need your mercy God. I joyfully receive Jesus, because I know he has received me first."

Today- will you make God your end...and money a means to let the world know the joy of knowing Jesus?

"I'd trade it all...for a little more"

Giving- Our vision- I've addressed those who don't trust, now to those that do...

BAPTISM

We GET to identify publicly with Jesus- think of the joy of Zacchaeus when Jesus publicly identified with him.