This SAME Jesus at Jericho

Luke 19:10
For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Zacchaeus

• It was one of those days.
  o Everything that could go wrong did.
• He was frustrated, angry and disappointed.
  o This wasn’t the way
    ▪ this day was supposed to have played out.
  o This wasn’t the way
    ▪ things were supposed to go.

• Today was going to be his day.
  o This was going to be his moment.
    ▪ He may have been grasping for straws
      • but he was hoping
        o that this would be the day
        o that would turn his life around.
  o But nothing ever came easy for him,
    ▪ and on this day,
      • just like so many others,
        o the obstacles were insurmountable.

• This was one of those moments
  o where his money didn’t matter.
    ▪ If he could,
      • he would buy his way
        o through the crowd.
    ▪ If he could,
      • he would bribe his way
        o into the meeting that he
          ▪ so desperately hoped would happen.
  o But nobody was interested in his money today!

• Who was he kidding?
  o Nobody was ever interested in his money.
• Wealth has privileges.
  o That was one of the things he had banked on.
    ▪ Wealth opens doors into high society.
  o Wealth makes one accepted in the circles of the elite.
• But he was painfully aware
that there were some things
  • that money cannot buy.
    • Money can buy a nice house.
    • Money can buy nice clothes.
    • Money can buy all of the most desirable toys.
      • But money cannot buy respect.
      • Money cannot buy friendship.

And money cannot fill
  • the void of emptiness on the inside.

He was a wealthy man.
  • His business was quite lucrative.
    • When it came to money,
      • he was, quite literally, rolling in it.
  • The problem with the money
    • is that his money was dirty money.
  • He made his riches
    • from extortion
      • and everyone knew it.
  • People respect money
    • and they fear power
  • but, when both
    • are the ill-gotten gains
      • of an illicit enterprise,
        • they talk about you
          • behind your back.
      • They snicker when you walk by.
        • They won’t look you eye to eye
          • and say anything bad,
        • but the second you turn your back
          • the tongues go to wagging.

All they saw was a short, frumpy,
  • arrogant, pompous, wealthy guy
    • who was trying so desperately
      • to live beyond his station in life.

What they could not see
  • was the hurt on the inside.
    • They could not see the deep loneliness
      • that haunted his soul.
    • They would never understand
      • that the thing that he wanted most
        • was simply to be accepted,
          • simply to fit in.
        • He wanted to have friends,
          • real genuine friends,
This SAME Jesus At Jericho

- who cared for him
  - because of who he was,
    - not what he had.
  - He wanted to feel accepted,
    - loved even,
      - by people who actually
        - wanted to be around him.
- But money couldn’t buy that.
  - Wealth hadn’t earned it.
    - And his profession insured
      - that it would never happen.
- He was a tax collector.
  - As a matter of fact,
    - he was a chief tax collector.
  - He was over a whole network of tax collectors.
- They made their money
  - and he made his,
    - by preying on people
      - who were afraid of the Roman Empire.
        - It was a shakedown enterprise.
  - And he was good at what he did.
    - He had risen through the ranks
      - until he finally became
        - a tax collector at Jericho.
- Jericho was a wealthy city,
  - a custom collection center
    - for the government
      - and a very lucrative place
        - to be a tax collector.
- He had one of the biggest houses around,
  - he had the nicest things money could buy,
    - he had all of the accouterments of success.
- From the outside, his life looked perfect.
  - But on the inside
    - there was a deep sense of loneliness,
      - and a terribly frustrating emptiness.
        - Money could not buy
          - what he really needed.
- It was that emptiness that brought him here.
  - Somewhere, somehow,
    - he heard that Jesus was coming to Jericho
  - and he had left his office early,
    - slipped out onto the streets alone,
  - hoping that he might meet this Jesus,
• hoping that something in that encounter
  o might change his life.
• He wasn’t like many of the others,
  o just pressing their way in
    ▪ to catch a glimpse of a celebrity figure.
• He had heard that this Jesus was changing lives.
  o He had heard that
    ▪ he loved the unlovable,
    ▪ touched the untouchable
      • and had compassion on those
        o who did not deserve compassion.
  o And he knew that he didn’t deserve it,
    ▪ he knew there was nothing good in him,
      • but everything within him
        o longed for a moment with Jesus,
          ▪ a moment that could change his life forever.

Obstacles Hindered Him

• But, now it looked as if
  o that moment would never happen.
• It seemed that everyone in the city
  o had heard that Jesus was coming.
    ▪ They came from everywhere.
    ▪ They came out of the woodworks.
• The crowds were massive
  o and there was no way for him
    ▪ to get down to the street
      • where Jesus would be passing by.
• It was the same old story.
  o Zacchaeus, for all of his success in business,
    ▪ never seemed to succeed in life.
• He had everything
  o except the things that really mattered.
• And somehow, those important things,
  o those meaningful things
    ▪ were always just beyond his grasp.
• That’s how he found himself in a tree.
  o A tree, of all places.
• Zacchaeus, the chief publican,
  o a man of position,
    ▪ a man of power,
    ▪ a man of great wealth,
  o and here he was
    ▪ perched in a tree
      • like some desperate school child.
• But there he was in his tree,
  o hoping against hope
    ▪ that he might simply catch a glimpse
      ▪ of this Jesus who was changing lives.
• He had already consigned himself to the fact
  o that this was not his day.
    ▪ He would not have an encounter with Jesus.
• After all, how could you do that
  o from the branches of a sycamore tree?
    ▪ But, at least he would see him.
    ▪ At least he would be close to him.
• So he ignored the snickers,
  o the sidelong glances
    ▪ and the whispered comments.
• He swallowed his pride
  o and clung to a tree branch
    ▪ and watched intently
      ▪ for Jesus Christ to come walking by.

**Jesus Sought Him Out**

• What Zacchaeus did not know
  o was that as bad as he wanted to see Jesus,
    ▪ Jesus wanted to see him.
• This was the point
  o of the whole visit to Jericho
    ▪ in the first place.
• Much like the journey to Gadara,
  o which we talked about last night,
    ▪ Jesus came to Jericho
      ▪ specifically for an encounter
        o with Zacchaeus.
• If Zacchaeus had only known
  o how bad Jesus wanted to see him,
    ▪ he wouldn’t have had to climb that silly tree,
      ▪ because not even the crowd
        o could stop Jesus from coming
          ▪ to where Zacchaeus was.

• What was so special about Zacchaeus?
  o He was one of the lost sheep of Israel
    ▪ and Jesus was the good shepherd
      ▪ who leaves the sheepfold
        ▪ and goes out into the darkness of night
• and hunts down that one lost sheep.
  • Zacchaeus was the epitome
    o of a man who has lost his way
      ▪ along the way.
  • He never intended
    o to end up knee deep
      ▪ in crime and corruption,
    o he never intended
      ▪ to become an outcast,
      ▪ the pariah of society.
  • All he ever wanted was to fit in.
    o All he ever wanted was to be loved and accepted.
  • But he made some bad choices along the way.
    o He trusted the wrong people,
      ▪ followed the wrong advice
        ▪ and eventually lost his way.
  • If ever there was a man who was lost,
    o Zacchaeus was lost.
      ▪ And Jesus Christ came to Jericho
        ▪ for one lost man.

• Can you imagine Zacchaeus’ surprise
  o when he finally sees Jesus
    ▪ and Jesus seems to be walking
      ▪ right to where he is.
  • At first he marvels at his good fortune,
    o he’s going to be closer
      ▪ than he ever thought possible,
    o but then he realizes
      ▪ that Jesus is walking straight to his tree.
    o He’s not just going to pass close by.
      ▪ He’s coming to where Zacchaeus is!
  • Luke records that Jesus walked
    o right up to that tree
      ▪ where he stopped
        ▪ and looked up into the branches
          ▪ and did the unthinkable.
      o He called Zacchaeus by name
        ▪ and invited himself over for dinner.

• In that moment everything changed.
  o As the crowd looked on
    ▪ in awe of the fact
      ▪ that Jesus was actually talking
        ▪ to this chief publican,
Zacchaeus realized,
  - if he knows my name,
    - he knows my heart,
    - he knows my hurts,
    - he knows my pain,
  - he knows the emptiness on the inside
    - and he knows my desire to change.

- All of a sudden hope springs up.
  - All of a sudden Zacchaeus realizes,
    - that he doesn’t have to be the same anymore.
      - He doesn’t have to live this way anymore.
  - For the first time in his life,
    - he has found hope
      - and mercy
      - and grace
      - and love
      - all wrapped up in this Jesus from Galilee.
  - In that moment he realizes
    - that Jesus came to Jericho
      - just for him!

The Double Life

- The truth is that we aren’t that different from Zacchaeus.
  - We tend to try to hide our hurts
    - and our emptiness
    - behind the appearance of a perfect life.
- Most of us don’t have the kind of wealth
  - that Zacchaeus had,
    - but anymore, it doesn’t take a lot of money
      - to create the perception of a life
        - that is better than it really is.

- Social Media has become the great equalizer.
  - There are 80 million photos posted
    - in Instagram every day.
  - Those are 80 million
    - carefully chosen,
      - glimpses into our lives.
  - Those photos contain the narrative
    - that we want people to see.
  - They portray a picture perfect life,
    - a fake reality,
    - a fairy tale,
• the kind life that we want people	on to think that we are living.
  o The photos contain the perfect smiles,
    ▪ the pretty scenery
    ▪ and the little pieces of “Pinterest perfection”
      o that we want the world to see.
  o But they don’t tell the whole story.
    ▪ They can’t portray the hurts
      ▪ and disappointments
        o that are a very real part of our lives.

• Social scientists tell us
  o that more and more people
    ▪ are living two lives:
      • one online
        o and another offline.
  o Social Media has given us,
    ▪ what Zacchaeus’ wealth gave him,
      ▪ a platform that we can use
        o to conceal our hurt and our pain,
      ▪ a way to hide the emptiness
        o that lurks behind the appearance of happiness.
  o But the studies show
    ▪ that, instead of making us
      • feel better about ourselves,
    ▪ these enhanced versions of our lives
      • make us more vulnerable
        o to depression and loneliness.

• Her name was Madison Holleran.
  o She was a 19 year old,
    ▪ Ivy League student,
      ▪ a star athlete
        o and all-around popular girl.
  o Her Instagram account
    ▪ reinforced that image:
      ▪ there were pictures of her at parties,
        o pictures of her smiling with friends,
          ▪ and photos of track meets
            • with her dad cheering her on.

• But Madison was keenly aware
  o that there was a deep divide
    ▪ between her online life
      ▪ and her real one.
  o Her mother recalled a time
• when she turned to her daughter and said,
  • “Madison, you look like you’re so happy at this party.”
• But Madison sadly replied,
  • “Mom, it’s just a picture.”
  o And that’s all it was.
    • A one dimensional snapshot of a life.
      • A brief glimpse of happiness
        o that concealed a deep hurt and longing
          ▪ that Madison simply couldn’t express.
  o Behind the picture,
    • below the surface,
      • there was a whole lot of pain,
        o a whole lot of loneliness,
          ▪ and a tremendously empty life.
    • No one would understand that
      • until it was too late.

• One January night, last year,
  o Madison posted a photo
    • of trees strung with lights,
      • bulbs glowing against the twilight.
  o It was a picture perfect evening
    • in the big city,
      • the kind of thing you only see
        o on movie sets.
  o It was the image of a happy life.
    • Perhaps it was the image
      • of the life that Madison longed for.
  o But, an hour later,
    • she jumped to her death
      • from the ninth floor of a parking garage.
  o No one ever knew
    • the hurt,
    • the pain,
    • the depression
      • that drove her to give up on life.
  o No one ever realized
    • that the perfect online persona
      • of a teenage girl
        o living the dream in the big city
    • was a carefully crafted charade
      • that concealed
        o a soul that was adrift,
        o a heart that had wondered astray,
          ▪ a life that was lost.
Jesus Still Seeks The Lost

- Luke ends the story of Zacchaeus
  - with these words from Jesus,
    - “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost!”
- I come to this house this evening
  - to tell you that the same Jesus
    - who made a special trip to Jericho for one lost soul,
  - is in this house tonight
    - and he has come to seek and to save that which was lost.
- He’s still in the business of saving lost souls.
  - He’s still in the business of rescuing those who have lost their way.
  - He’s still the good shepherd seeking out those who have wandered off into the darkness of the night.

- Jesus is still seeking lost people.
  - Jesus is still searching for people just like you and me,
    - normal, ordinary people who have lost their way, along the way.
  - People who are not inherently bad but have made a few mistakes.
  - Normal people, who are not the epitome of evil but have just gotten lost along the way.
  - People who made a bad choice, people who followed the wrong advice, people who find themselves in places where they never meant to be doing things that they never meant to do.
- Lost people, who never meant to get lost
  - but just somehow lost their way and found themselves in a place where they no longer know how to get back to where they came from.

- Jesus is looking for lost people.
  - He came to seek and to save the lost.
• I want you to know that Jesus
  o came to this house tonight
    ▪ to find you,
    • just like you are,
    ▪ but he has no intentions
    • of leaving you that way.

• He sees past the image
  o that you want everyone else to see.
    ▪ He sees all the way to a hurting heart
    • and he’s here tonight just for you.
      o He’s here tonight to save the lost.
  o He’s here to give purpose
    ▪ to lives that have lost their purpose,
    • direction to hearts
      o that have lost their way,
        ▪ hope to the hopeless.

• The same Jesus who went to Jericho
  o to change the life of a man named Zacchaeus,
    ▪ has come to this house tonight
    • to change your life!

• Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever.
  o He has not changed.
    ▪ Anything he ever did, he can still do!

• He never encountered a life he couldn’t change.
  o He never met loneliness
    ▪ that his love couldn’t overcome.
  o He’s never met an emptiness
    ▪ that his spirit couldn’t fill.
  o He’s never found a depression
    ▪ that the joy of his presence couldn’t cure.

• Whatever is going on in your life,
  o Jesus Christ is the answer.
    ▪ You can trust him with the real you.
      • You can trust him
        o with the hidden places of your heart.
          ▪ He came to save the lost.

CLOSE

• When Jesus looked up into that tree
  o and called Zacchaeus by name,
    ▪ to come down and take him to his house,
  o there was only one possible response.

• Jesus didn’t just come to chat for a moment,
  o he wasn’t looking for just a chance encounter,
• he wanted to go home with Zacchaeus,
  • he wanted to change his life forever!

• Zacchaeus was smart enough
  o not to let that moment escape him.
    ▪ There was only one right answer.
  o Zacchaeus, with the hope
    ▪ of a brand new day
      • dawning on his soul,
  o raced down that tree
    ▪ and into the promise of a new life.

• Jesus is in this place tonight,
  o and he came here just for you.
• Even now,
  o he’s gazing up into your tree
    ▪ and calling your name.
• The only question is what will you do next?
  o Will you pretend that you don’t hear him?
  o Will you hope that he eventually gives up and moves on?
• Or will you embrace the opportunity
  o that he has given you?
• Will you let the power
  o of the gospel of Jesus Christ
    ▪ change your life forever?