

I read this on the Internet. So you know it's true, right? So there's this joke. You'll like this one. There's this lawyer in Charlotte, North Carolina, who had this affinity for really, really fine cigars.

So he bought a box of 24 cigars that were extremely expensive. And so he decided to insure them against all kinds of peril, including fire. And so he quickly got the box and he just couldn't resist. He just smoked them all pretty quickly. And then he filed a claim with the insurance company saying that the cigars were lost in a series of small fires.

Well, the insurance company said, we're not going to pay that. So the lawyer sued. He won. Because the judge says, this is ridiculous, but the way it's written, it doesn't say what kind of fire. And so, yeah, and so the insurance company, instead of appealing and dragging it out forever, decided to cut him a check for \$15,000.

So the lawyer cashed a check, thinking he was super victorious, but then the insurance company had him arrested on 24 accounts of arson.

And so he. Then again, this is probably true, right? It's on the Internet. He spent 24 months in jail and received a \$24,000 fine. Now, I have no idea if this story is true, but Brad Paisley wrote a song about it called the Cigar Song.

Okay, so there you go. That probably makes it true, right?

You say, what's the point of this thing you're doing here today? Well, the point is that the human heart, including mind, left to its own selfish ways, will always seek advantage over others. That's just the way it is in our fallen nature. We're naturally selfish, we're naturally greedy. We're naturally always looking out for number one.

Jeremiah and Paul say it like this. Jeremiah 17. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who can understand it? Paul says this in Philipians 2.

He says, Everyone looks out for their own interests, not. Not those of Jesus Christ. However, Paul, along with Jeremiah, say it doesn't have to be that way. In fact, God has made a way to change the heart. If you will look at God's mercy.

Romans 12. If you will look at what God has done, if you will look at his initiative, then you can see there is another way. And a relationship with Jesus Christ can radically change a heart that maybe even doesn't believe it's possible at the beginning. And so this is what regeneration is about. Regeneration is a 12 step journey of transformation.

And so the 12 steps, really quick. We admit that we can't fix

ourselves. We see that God can. We believe that. And then we put our belief into action and trust that he will transform us through Jesus Christ.

Then we start digging in to see why we're the way we are. And we look at our sinful patterns, we look at our idols and those kinds of things, and then we confess those to God. We confess them to ourselves, and we confess them to another human being. And then we repent, which is a change of mind, change of heart, a change of action. We make the decision that we are all in.

We're going to follow Jesus Christ no matter what. And then, as Tim talked about last week, we forgive and we forgive those who have harmed us, but we also start looking at ourselves and say, you know what. What do I need to do to make things right with people? And so that's step nine, which we're going to talk about today. Step nine is we make direct amends whenever possible, submitting to God his word and biblical counsel.

And then step 10 through 12 is this. We kind of continue the process. We go deeper with God and we share with others how God has transformed us. Do you know Zacchaeus? What?

What was he a wee little man? Who said a wee little man was he? What did he do? Do you know the song? Sing it.

Now.

Thank you.

I just want it noted. That does not count against my time. Okay, that was not on. Wasn't in the script. So Zacchaeus was a wee little man, but, man, he was hated in such a large way because he was a traitor.

Roman Empire was occupying the land of the Israelites, and they tapped a few people, Jewish people, to tax their own people. And Zacchaeus was one that said, I'll do it. And so he becomes this crooked wee little man who's taking taxes from his own people. The Roman Empire said, we don't care how much you take. We just want this amount.

And so the tax collectors were empowered to collect as much as they could, and they would take a big cut of it. Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, meaning he owned a whole bunch of tax collecting stores in the whole region. So he was incredibly rich and deeply, deeply hated. I think he loved. Loved expensive cigars, and he probably sued to get more money.

But you know what? I think Zacchaeus was miserable. I think he was miserable, and he must have heard about Jesus somewhere along the line. And maybe he heard that Jesus could radically change hearts. And

he knew.

Zacchaeus knew his heart was in need of some transformation. So he's curious and he's hoping there's a possibility to find peace, joy and confidence. So listen to Luke 19, beginning in verse one, Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town.

There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region. He had become very rich. He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.

When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name, Zacchaeus. He said, quick, come down. I must be a guest in your home today. Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. But the people were displeased.

He's gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner. They grumbled. Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, I will give half my wealth to the poor Lord, and if I've cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much.

Jesus responded, salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. For the son of man came to seek and save those who are lost. So why did Zacchaeus climb the tree? I think it's more than curiosity. Could it be that he climbed the tree because he knew he just couldn't keep living the way he was living?

It's just. Just miserable. He had money and power. These are the things that we think will fix just about anything. We still believe that.

It seems Zacchaeus had it all, but he, I think, was miserable. And I'm guessing he had very few people left in his life. He had treated, mistreated, abused and misused family and friends to get where he was. Back in 1977, Randy Newman wrote a song called Short People that we had just a snippet of just a second ago. And I was talking to Tim about it.

He said, oh, it would offend people. I think he was teasing. That song was a satire, of course. Just saying how stupid it is to make fun of people that can't change their height or other things. It's just silly.

But I'm guessing that people, if they'd had that song in the days of Zacchaeus, would have taken it very literally and would have meant it. They would have said, short people got no reason to live they got little hands, little eyes they walk around telling great big lies

don't want no short people around here.

People hated Zacchaeus, but Jesus has A very different view. And somehow Jesus knew who Zacchaeus was and what Zacchaeus was seeking. It's shocking. It is shocking what Jesus did. Jesus looks up in the tree, calls him by name, and you know his name.

Zacchaeus name is interesting. I'm guessing his parents had really high hopes for him because his name means pure, one, innocent, a person of integrity. I wonder what Zacchaeus parents thought of him as he grew up and became this traitor, hated and despised. Well, Jesus sees something different. Jesus looks at him and says, I'm coming to your house today, right now.

Now, this was an acceptable cultural move. It's unusual for us, but it was okay in that day. But there is a shocking piece to this, and the shocking piece is Jesus is who he is and Zacchaeus is who he is. And the good people, and I hate to say it, but I probably would have been one of those good people. You too, maybe saying, what is he doing?

Why is Jesus going to be with this scum? What is he doing? They don't understand. They mutter, they grumble. And I think it's because they don't understand grace and they don't understand the mission of Jesus.

It's interesting to me. Before Zacchaeus ever signals any hint of repentance, before he shares any sign of change, Jesus shows up. Jesus goes to him. Jesus takes the initiative because, and this is important for us, he loves us as we are where we are, and that's grace. And grace is not content to leave us where we are.

Grace calls us to change. Grace doesn't excuse sin, but grace is not afraid of sin. And grace is not afraid to be in its presence. It's not threatened by it. Because grace is greater than sin.

When viewed properly, grace changes things in the context of grace and in the context of God's loving presence and acceptance of Zacchaeus as a human being, an image bearer of God. Sinful as he was, Zacchaeus changes. Zacchaeus then reveals his conversion. He doesn't stand up and say, well, you know, you probably would have done the same thing. Rome offered me this incredible offer.

I mean, why? I couldn't resist it. He doesn't say anything like that. He doesn't make excuses. He just reveals that he is repented.

He has changed his mind, he's changed his heart. Now he's going to change his direction. And that change of direction, repentance, is going to lead to restitution, which means making amends. What does it mean to make amends and make restitution? It's kind of like the same word to mend some, something is to fix it.

And restitution, making amends just simply means to make things right, to repair, to restore something. It may involve compensation, it may involve money. It may involve a correction. For Zacchaeus, it looks like this. He says, if I have.

If I have cheated people out of their taxes, and he has, he says, I'm going to give back four times the amount. Now, Zacchaeus was a good little boy, a wee little boy, I'm sure. And he probably learned all about the law of Moses. And he learned about restitution, which is a big concept. He learned about making amends from his innocent and pure childhood.

As he studied things like numbers 5, verses, 6 and 7, this is what it says. Zacchaeus knew this. Any man or woman who wrongs another in any way and is so unfaithful to the Lord must confess the sin they have committed. They must make full restitution for the wrong they have done, add a fifth of the value to it, and give it all to the person they've wronged. Now, Zacchaeus goes way beyond the 1/5 or the 20% requirement.

And as he offers a fourfold restitution. And there's a reason for that. In Exodus 22:1, it says, if you have cheated someone or stolen from someone, you're to give back four times the amount. So what Zacchaeus is confessing, what he's admitting here is, I stole from people and I'm going to do what Exodus 22 says. I'm going to give back four times what I took from them.

But you know what? He's saying a whole lot more. He's saying a whole lot more. I think he's saying, my heart is broken.

I realize what I've done, and I am deeply, deeply sorry. And I want to be made whole. I want to be made new. I want to be a man of integrity. So I think he reveals that when he makes this extravagant gift.

He says, lord, I'm going to give half of my wealth to the poor. Zacchaeus. Repentance is not just in words. It's not just emotion. It's tangible, it's costly, it's active.

He's making restitution. He's making amends that lead to radical generosity in response to radical grace that he's receiving. So Luke 19:1-10 is a clear display of Jesus' mission to seek and save the lost. And Zacchaeus, who is a wealthy sinner, a social outcast, the most unlikely candidate for Salvation really becomes this model of what Jesus is trying to do, a model disciple whose repentance, restitution is joyful, it's public, it's generous, and Jesus affirms it all. He says, today, salvation has come to this home.

Look at him. Look at him. And this is. This is why I came, to seek and save people like Zacchaeus. That's why I'm here.

Zacchaeus is a living picture of step nine of regeneration. Amends. We make direct amends whenever possible, submitting to God, his word and biblical counsel. So, amends. There are five things.

I think we can leave them all up there, maybe as we go. But amends are direct. Zacchaeus went to the people he harmed. He doesn't just post online. I'm sorry if I hurt anybody or just whisper in prayer.

God, I'm sorry I hurt those people. He doesn't speak in generality. He says, I'm going to go fix it with people. And they are specific. Amends are specific.

They're not symbolic. So he names the wrong and he says, I'm going to fix it. So for us, amends may sound like this. Listen, I know I hurt you. This is what I did, and I'm sorry.

Will you forgive me? I took advantage of you before. I've done this kind of thing a few times, more than I wish, I guess, because it reflects something I shouldn't have done. But before I came here six years ago, I thought I'd cleaned everything up with everybody in the past, and I just wanted to make sure. So there's one guy I wasn't sure about.

So I said, hey, can we meet? I just want to talk to you. And so I met him at Wendy's in Bedford and said, I don't know of anything, but I just want to make sure. Did I say anything or do anything that I shouldn't have? And he said, no, we're fine, and that was a relief.

And I'm just saying that amends are direct. They're very specific. They're very personal. Number three. Amends are costly.

They're not comfortable. Fourfold restitution, significant for us. Amends may cost us some money. They may cost us more, though. They may cost us our time, they may cost us our reputation.

If it doesn't cost anything, it's probably not worth anything. Amends flow directly from transformation, not shame. Zacchaeus wasn't wallowing in shame. He was changed. We don't make amends to receive God's salvation.

We make amends because we have received it. And then finally, amends are wise and careful. We don't have time to unpack this, but if you have questions, really seek biblical counsel. Seek counsel from a wise person. A lot of 12 step programs say we make direct amends, except when to do so would cause harm.

And so there are some situations that it would do more damage to try making amend than to just let it go. And so don't use that as a cop out, though. Don't use that as a cop out.

Ever hear the word shalom? What's shalom mean? We often say it means peace. It's a very common greeting in Israel, and I think I see signs in the south that say, shalom, y' all really bothers me. So we usually say it means peace.

But you know what? Biblically, it means a whole lot more. It's a very deep holistic concept. It just means wholeness. It means being complete.

It means being at peace with God and peace with ourselves because of that. And then because of that, we're at peace with those around us. We're in harmony with God. We're harmony with ourselves and harmony with his creation and everybody around us. Now, what's fascinating to me, listen carefully here.

This is a little bit nerdy, I guess, but what fascinating me, in the Old Testament, the word for restitution, making amends, making things right, is shalom.

Shalom is the verb form of shalom, same root, same idea. And so when we practice shalom, we are trying to restore shalom. So we're trying to make whole. We're trying to repair what has been broken. We're trying to bring peace back to where peace has been lost.

We're making amends. And so when God talks about restoration, when he talks about making amends, it's not simply just paying somebody something or saying a few words. It's a much deeper concept. It's about restoring shalom. It's about bringing back what God intends.

So Zacchaeus practices shalom, which leads to shalom, where the peace of God permeates relationships and brings peace on earth. So when we make amends, when we restore what has been harmed, we are joining God in his mission of bringing peace on earth. You know, Zacchaeus shows us what happens when a heart truly encounters the grace of Jesus. It changes. Grace doesn't ignore sin, it heals it.

And then what happens is a healed person begins making things right and will continue to do so the rest of our lives. That's what step nine is all about. It's not about earning salvation. It's about responding to salvation, about responding to the shalom that we received from God. When we practice amend making, we are participating in God's work of restoring wholeness.

Shalom leading to shalom. So Jesus sought Zacchaeus. He called him by name, which is very significant. And he brought salvation to his house. Jesus still does the same thing today.

He does the same thing with us. He takes the initiative, he calls us by name, we respond in gratitude. Now here's some more nerdy stuff for you.

I was kind of stunned by this a couple weeks ago when I started seeing this and figuring it out and reading about it. There is a deep connection between shalom, shalom and Jerusalem. Jerusalem means city of peace. That's the way we usually say it. The city of shalom.

It's the place where God chose to say, this is where I'll meet you. This is the place of my presence. So it's an intersection of heaven and earth, the temple, the name carries the concept of shalom and shalom. So when Jesus passes through Jericho and meets Zacchaeus, he's on his way to Jerusalem.

Luke 9:51 says, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. He fixed his face. He's determined to go to Jerusalem to do something.

And Zacchaeus is a preview of what Jesus is going to do. Jesus comes to seek and save the lost, call them by name, restore what is broken, bringing shalom through the process of shalom. And so Jesus walks into Jerusalem and it's anything but peaceful. There's no shalom. There's just corruption, there's tension, there's injustice, there's brokenness and fear.

Yet Jesus goes there. He goes into it because he's not afraid of it. And he goes there not to condemn it, but to heal it. Jesus brings shalom. Jesus brings shalom by doing shalom, becoming the Prince of peace.

Because he makes amends for our sins. He offers restitution, pays the debt that we cannot pay. He fixes what we cannot fix. At the cross in Jerusalem, Jesus becomes our restitution. He restores what has been shattered.

He makes peace with God. He makes peace with us. He opens the way for peace within ourselves and then peace with each other. At the cross in Jerusalem, Jesus makes amends and brings shalom to us so that we can be whole, complete, and live in harmony with God and with each other. I just love that.

So Paul tells us in Romans 12, as far as it depends upon you, be at peace with all people. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus talks about the peacemaking process and his words sound an awful lot like restitution and amend making. Matthew 5, 23 and 24. You are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you. Leave your gift there first.

Go and be reconciled to them, then come and offer your gift. Last week, Tim challenged us to do it right then. I don't know if anybody did, but it was a good challenge. Make amends, repair, restore, seek reconciliation. Before taking communion, I think that Jesus would say, yeah, that's, that's, that's a good idea.

Before we take the bread and the cup today, I'm not going to ask you to get up and do anything, but I do want you to consider a couple questions, honest questions to consider before we take the bread and the cup. Number one, is there someone I have harmed and is God prompting me to make things right today?

What fear keeps me from making that step? And what would it look like to. To trust Jesus with that fear? Now hear me. These are not questions of condemnation.

I'm trying to make me feel guilty or anybody else feel guilty with these questions. I would consider them questions of shalom, questions that might motivate us to go make shalom. The end result is something beautiful. Jesus loves us as we are where we are, but I think he would say, hey, listen, if you have somebody in mind today, let's enjoy this communion together, but let's go make things right, okay? And I will go with you.

I will be with you and I will help you. Let me pray. God, thank you for the depth of your word that just can never be fully mined. Just. There's always something that I learned and I know others do too.

As we look and just see how beautiful so many things are woven together. As we take communion today, as we take the bread which reminds us of the body of Jesus and his amend making and restitution offering. Help us to be filled with gratitude as we consider the blood that he shed pouring out his life for our life. So that we may experience your shalom. May we be motivated as we take this breath bread and drink this cup to be people who are eager to do shalom so that we can be at peace and so others can enjoy that peace as well.

So just guide us this morning as we, as we commune. It's in Jesus name we pray. Amen.

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