

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: N/A
TITLE: Transforming Grace

SCRIPTURE: Luke 19:1-10

DATE: January 1, 2017
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It's that time of year. As if an internal clock is alarming, we begin to sense the new year approaching which wakes up something inside of us and we reason to ourselves, "If the year is becoming new I should too." Thus begins the list of resolutions and attempts at life change. Today, we look at one man who certainly had plenty of reasons to make resolutions of change and what (or rather: *who*) finally enabled him to follow through.

Context of Passage:

- **Place:** Jericho
- **Jesus:** Passing through Jericho. At this point in his time of public ministry he was well known and his reputation preceded him, which explains the crowd gathering.
- **Zacchaeus:** A [chief] tax collector. He became very rich through questionable methods. He was short and had to climb a tree to see Jesus. A radical transformation takes place between the beginning and end of the story.
- **Tax Collector:** A common profession in this time, but what makes Zacchaeus' role so interesting is that he was a Jewish man collecting taxes from other Jews on behalf of the Roman government, who were Gentiles oppressing the Jews. This made him very unliked in the community of Jericho. Furthermore, when it came time to collect the taxes he would ask for more than what people owed, pay to Rome what they were expecting, and then pocket the profits. He made his riches by robbing money from innocent and oppressed people.

The Story:

Jesus is passing through Jericho and the town catches wind of this. Desiring to see him, the crowds begin to gather, but one man in particular, Zacchaeus, makes an extra effort to get a front row seat.

- Though the Scriptures don't make a strong point to draw out the shadiness of Zacchaeus' character, when you begin to understand how crooked of a man he was in his profession, it is not far off to assume he is edging his way to the front, though others may have arrived first, and maybe even thought that Jesus would want to see him!

Jesus stops under the very tree Zacchaeus climbed and invites himself to dinner at Zacchaeus' house. This was an invitation Zacchaeus was joyful to receive, but the crowds were shocked to hear, which prompted grumbling among them all.

- Think of the context of who Zacchaeus is in this town. I daresay we would be grumbling too if Jesus chose to eat at his house over ours. But you don't see Jesus defend his actions or make an excuse to why he chose Zacc. He doesn't toss it up in the name of evangelizing. He simply stops, looks up the tree, and invites himself over.

True Life Change:

Something miraculous happened. We don't know anything that was said or done over that dinner, but by the end of it we see a transformed heart in Zacchaeus.

- We see the first glimpse of evidence in verse eight where Zacchaeus stands and calls Jesus "Lord," a term of reverence and worship.
- The immediate *response* to salvation is to make right what was made wrong.
- Zacchaeus isn't working *towards* salvation. His works come *after* his belief. Good works cannot save you, but should definitely be evident of the fact you have been saved.
- Zacchaeus' response to grace is so overwhelming he goes above and beyond the Old Testament guidelines for repayment! "Half of my goods I give to the poor and if I've defrauded anyone of anything I restore it fourfold."
- Zacchaeus wasn't just committing to restore what he took, but to a change in lifestyle as well. His response to grace was immediate, and long term. His response to grace was transforming. It was a true, permanent change.

In the last verses of our passage Jesus leaves us with no doubt whatsoever about Zacchaeus' actions. They weren't for show and certainly weren't misplaced. Jesus himself declares that salvation has come to the house of Zacchaeus and also reinforces the very reason of his mission—to seek and save the lost.

For Discussion:

1. What do you notice about the story? What stands out at you? What are some things you may have never thought of before? Did you know Zacchaeus wasn't just a "wee little man" but was incredibly corrupt and sinful?
2. Think about when you get unannounced company and the initial jolt of thinking through having them in your home unprepared. What would it be like if Jesus invited himself into your home (and life) unexpectedly. What would be your response? Would you try to clean up first?
3. Are we guilty of the same thing the crowds did—grumbling, gossiping, or judging when people we know spend their time with "sinful" people? What's wrong with this mindset?
4. Think about your life and specifically your salvation. What is your transformation story? How have you responded to the grace of Jesus? (Share out loud if in a group.)