

Luke 19:1-10

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[0 : 0 0] Now sometimes it's very easy isn't it to see people who are lost. It's very easy to see that. ! You think of some of the people that are in our news clips. Do you remember Amy Winehouse? Amy Winehouse in some ways seemed to have it all didn't she? She had a beautiful voice. She knew international stardom that brought incredible wealth and yet she was tangibly lost wasn't she? Day after day after day. She filled our newspapers with her brokenness until finally she broke her own life. At other times though you can't see that people are lost. So compare Amy Winehouse to this article in the newspaper that I read. At 12.02 this successful career woman jumped to her death in London. Catherine Warder, a 52 year old lawyer from Rolls Royce fell 100 feet from the fourth floor of a four story hotel as horrified onlookers watched. The article underneath stated friends and neighbours were mystified last night why the vivacious, talented and wealthy solicitor took her own life. It's just one tragic story isn't it?

Out of so many that I could have chosen. Outwardly successful, financially comfortable and yet emotionally distraught. You see sometimes people look lost but lost people don't always look lost. And I guess if we have met Zacchaeus in the street we would have been quite impressed with him. That sharp Armani suit.

We'd have tried not to be too envious of him as he climbed into his large new Mercedes. And we would quietly have thought to ourselves, here is a man who is successful in his business career. Yet if we dug a little bit deeper into his assets we might have admired him a little bit less. An official who was in league with the hated authorities, collecting their taxes for them. An official who unofficially made his wealth by ripping off his own countrymen.

[2 : 2 0] In fact he was the chief tax collector wasn't he? He organised the crux. Now people that knew him well, do you see what they called him? Look at chapter 19 verse 7.

What did they call him? They called him a sinner. A little extra tax here. A little sinner charge there. An official who was a crook. But a very very successful one at that.

He wasn't sitting on a street corner begging by the last person Luke records Jesus helping. Blind Bartimaeus. He wasn't sitting there crying for mercy with nothing.

No, Zacchaeus. He might have been vertically challenged. Might be. But he certainly wasn't short of a bomb or two. Lost people don't always look lost.

And they're two very different men, aren't they? At the end of chapter 18 by Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus. Two very different men, but one common problem.

[3 : 2 1] Because Zacchaeus was lost. He was lost in the most important thing he could have. He was lost for a relationship with the God who made him. He was lost for the only truly unconditional love that has ever been offered to human beings.

Lost for the security of knowing God as his heavenly father. But the great news is verse 10, isn't it? The son of man came to seek and to save the lost.

The son of man came to seek and to save the lost. And this incident with Zacchaeus shows us that mission of Jesus perfectly.

Three very simple points. First of all, we see Jesus seeks the lost. Jesus seeks the lost. Look at verse 1. He entered Jericho and was passing through.

And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector. And was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was. But on account of the crowd, he could not because he was small in stature.

[4 : 2 7] The words in verse 3. Is actually Zacchaeus was seeking to see who Jesus was. Zacchaeus is interested in this new preacher.

And we don't know why. We just know that he's very determined, don't we? Because the crowd wouldn't let the hated tax collector through. An elbow here. Closing the ranks there. What does Zacchaeus do? Verse 4. So he ran on ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree. To see him. For he was about to pass that way. And it's not the most dignified seat, is it? For a member of the establishment. But he wanted to get a glimpse of who this man was. Who this man, who everyone was talking about. And he got far more from that.

Look at verse 5. Jesus came to the place. He looked up and said to him. Zacchaeus, hurry and come down. For I must stay at your house today. And Zacchaeus must have nearly fallen on that tree.

[5 : 27] How does he know my name? It's a mystery. Why did you stop under my tree? And Jesus isn't messing about you. There's a note of urgency, isn't there? Immediately come down.

I must stay at your house today. You see, Zacchaeus thought that he was seeking Jesus. But he found out that Jesus was seeking him. It's actually the same word that's used in chapter 18 and verse 41.

And it's used by Jesus in Luke 19, 5. When blind Bartimaeus says, I want to see. And Jesus says, receive your sight. What he's talking about is not just physically seeing.

But spiritual sight. Of trusting God and following him. It is about spiritually receiving sight. And so when Zacchaeus, when Jesus looks up into the tree. He says exactly the same words.

It says he saw Zacchaeus. He didn't just see him physically in the tree. That small little tax collector. Wanting to find out about this new preacher.

[6 : 32] It says he saw him spiritually. He saw through the wealthy exterior. To the heart, on the inside. He saw a lost man. And Jesus came to seek the lost.

That was the purpose of his mission. Finding lost people. And bringing them home. To a relationship with God. And Jesus is still seeking the lost today, isn't he?

By his spirit. As his word is taught. He is actively bringing lost people to know him.

And it's entirely his work. Even when people are seeking Jesus. They want to find out more about him. In the end. What do you find out? Every true Christian finds out.

It wasn't me seeking Jesus at all. It was the Lord Jesus. Is the one who is doing the seeking. It is the Lord Jesus who has been drawing me to himself. He is running you down. He is tackling you to the ground.

[7 : 34] And Jesus came to seek. And to save the lost. And that is the Christian message. That when you come to realise you are lost.

And without Jesus you will stay lost. But that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. So that relationship that I was created to have. With God would not be lost.

Now if you are a follower of Jesus. That must leave you pretty humble. Without Jesus seeking. And saving you. You would be lost.

Totally lost. And so our Christian faith is not the result of our family heritage. It's not the result of our intellectual ability. It is not the result of our looking into the gospel.

It is not a result of us finding the answers. It is not a result of us working out whether it's true or not. It's the result of Jesus seeking us. And saying Paul.

[8 : 34] I must come to stay in your life today. Or Michael. I must come and stay in your life today. Or Polly. I must come and stay in your life today.

And of course if we are followers of the Lord. Well we have got to be about our father's business. Don't we? We will be those who seek the lost. Seeking to take this good news to others.

That he longs to welcome people into his family. That is the whole purpose of Jesus coming. And seeking the lost. It will mean that we will take the initiative. Just as Jesus took the initiative with us. So it will mean for us. Won't it? Hanging out with lost people. Being friends. To lost people. Actively talking to lost people about Jesus.

Bringing lost people into contact with the gospel. Praying for lost people. To come to Jesus. Giving. So that others and ourselves can take the gospel to lost people.

[9 : 37] And we need to remember. Don't we? Particularly in our culture. That people who are lost. Don't always look lost. Zacchaeus might have been hated.

But he wasn't vested in it. Don't confuse being lost with being poor. Lost people is anyone. Who does not know the joy of a relationship with Jesus Christ.

And that is what Jesus offers Zacchaeus. The second thing I want us to note. Is Jesus came to save the lost. Verse 5. Jesus came to save the lost. And when Jesus came to the place. He looked up and said to Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus hurry and come down. For I must stay at your house today. Now at first it looks like just a request for tea. Doesn't it? But actually the word Jesus uses for stay. Is open ended. Now with most people isn't it? That is extremely bad news.

[10:34] Alright? I'd like to come and stay. For how long? Well I'd just like to come and stay. But with Jesus that's great news.

I want to take up residence. In your life for as long as I like. Jesus says. Verse 6. So he hurried and came down. And received him joyfully. Zacchaeus responds.

It only seems natural. But in the exchange. It sends shock waves through the crowd. Look at verse 7. And when they saw it. They all grumbled. He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.

I thought Jesus was a holy man. I thought he was a prophet. What does he do hanging around with his low life Zacchaeus? So the minister has gone to a tea with the local drug dealer.

And things are hotting up in the press. Church accepts druggies. St. Ethelbert's the home of the whore. Minister welcomes murderers.

[11:36] Well they could have been the headlines couldn't they? In the Jericho post. When Jesus was in town. Because these are just the sort of people Jesus comes for.

And Jesus doesn't grudgingly welcome those who come to him. Groveling for forgiveness. He doesn't say well you're okay. It's not that Zacchaeus went on his knees was it? No he's up a tree. Jesus goes out of his way to find these people. With open arms to show them God's love. It's not Zacchaeus.

If you say sorry. We might have a chat about your relationship with God. Well Zacchaeus make amends to your life. Get along to synagogue a little bit more.

And we will discuss the possibility of heaven afterwards. No it is Zacchaeus. I must come to your house. I must. Literally it is necessary.

[12:33] It is necessary as a Zacchaeus for you to be saved. But don't think that was easy for Jesus. It cost him dearly. Didn't it? Luke uses that same word must.

A few times. Let me give you the big instance. When he talks about the fact that Jesus must die on the cross. So in Luke chapter 24 and verse 7. He says this.

The son of man. Must. Be delivered into the hands of sinful men. And be crucified. And on the third day rise. You see when Jesus opens his arms.

To welcome sinners. It was necessary that they were nailed. Nailed to the cross. To pay the price that those sinners owed.

To take the just punishment. Their wrongdoing demanded. Jesus must come to Zacchaeus. And that means that he must go.

[13:31] And he must bear the punishment. For Zacchaeus' sin. That is the cost. To Jesus for saving lost people. Saving lost people like you and me.

And you see. Today you might not be an embezzler. Like Zacchaeus. But if you really know your life. You will know.

That you don't deserve friendship with God. Beneath the exterior. Lies so much that we regret. So much that we conceal. Much that makes us.

Lost. If only we dared to look. And would show us. How lost we really are. To the love of God. But God sends his own son.

To seek and save the lost. You see if you don't know. This morning. The acceptance. That Zacchaeus' experience is here. In Luke 19.

[14:28] Can I suggest to you. That you don't really know the true Jesus. If you are still thinking. I am a bad Christian. Compared to those good Christians. Out there.

Those ones who are able to make it. To all the meetings. Those who do lots of things. Compared to those good Christians. Out there. I am a bad Christian. Well actually then. You don't know the real Jesus.

If you think that there are times. When you need to polish up your life. To make yourself acceptable to God. If you think that there is a danger. That you are going to lose God acceptance. That you maybe just have gone.

A little bit too far. When you need to remember. Don't you? Verse 10. The son of man. Came to seek. And to save the lost. In the words of our assurance of pardon. God demonstrates his own love. For us in this. That while we were still sinners. Christ died for us. Not when we promised to try harder.

[15 : 26] Not when we said we believed. Not when we made church regularly. But while we were still sinners. While we were still God's enemies. Christ died for us. And at the same time.

We must never forget how lost we are. Without Jesus. That he came to us. That he accepted us. That he took up residence with us. It's very easy to forget.

How lost we are without him. Can I give you a little test. Of whether you've forgotten your lostness. I wonder as you hear the terrible things.

That go on in our news. Shootings. Murders. Rapes. Robbers. Do you mentally put them into the category of bad person.

And put yourself into the category of good person. My goodness isn't it terrible what people will do. Thank goodness I'm not like that. Then you are beginning to lose sight of your lostness.

[16 : 25] Because it is only God's goodness and his grace. That keeps you from smashing windows. It is only God's kindness and God's grace. That doesn't stop you losing your temper.

In such a way that you do great harm. It's only God's goodness and grace. That stops you from stealing. Because that is the nature of the human heart. And we must not forget how lost we are. And no one in Luke's account. Is more lost to the gospel. Than the self-righteous. And the people who think that they are good. And don't need him.

No Jesus took the initiative. And he offers acceptance to all. And that means if we are followers of Jesus. Well we will need to take the initiative. And we will need to offer it.

And that means if we are followers of Jesus. We will want to offer this acceptance to all. And we mustn't require people to modify their behaviour. To change their lifestyle.

[17 : 26] Before we welcome them. So it is just that. One of the great tragedies of the last 10 years. That in the press. The battleground for the truth of the Bible. Has been on moral issues.

Because in this matter. Many people. Have failed to hear that Jesus came for them. So in a church like IPC. We must not be people who say.

Oh well you can't come until you've sorted your life out. We certainly mustn't give that impression. We've got to be a church that welcomes the drug addict. While they are still on drugs.

That welcomes the drunken. While they are still drunk. That welcomes the gay and lesbian person. While they are still practising. That welcomes the person struggling in their marriage.

While their marriage is a terrible mess. That welcomes them. And loves them. And calls them to accept the salvation. That the Lord Jesus Christ offers. A salvation.

[18 : 23] That accepts them as they are. And then changes them. Because that's the last point. Jesus came to seek the lost.

Jesus came to save the lost. Jesus came to change the lost. Jesus changed the lost. And he's saved totally.

You see if you think. Becoming a follower of the Lord Jesus. Is not going to really change everything. Look at this passage. It changes absolutely everything. It affects every area of our lives. We're not told that what Zacchaeus thought about Jesus is welcome.

There are loads of details. We'd love to know about this conversation. As they have this cup of tea. But we are told. We are told how Zacchaeus responds. Zacchaeus answers the crowd.

Cynical outrage. Do you see what they say in verse 7? And when they saw it. They all grumbled. He's gone in to be the guest of a man who's a sinner. And he answers that.

[19 : 25] With radical change. In his behaviour. As he experiences. The accepting love of Jesus. He responds. By starting to right the wrongs. That have marked his life up till now.

Look at verse 8. And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord. Behold Lord. Half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I defrauded anyone of anything.

I restore it fourfold. That is the effect of grace. That is the effect of God's undeserved loving kindness to us.

That as we understand God's undeserved loving kindness to us. It transforms people's lives. And Zacchaeus doesn't respond to a quiet word from Jesus.

About how he should really have kept the commands now. He doesn't respond to some guilt inducing lecture. He responds to the unconditional love of God. As his son calls him out of that tree.

[20 : 22] And welcomes someone who is hated by everyone else. And as God loves him like that. He sees that he needs to love others. You see before Zacchaeus meets Jesus.

He is trapped in his grasp for money. He cheats others for his own gain. He is gripped by his sin. He doesn't care about anyone else.

But himself. He doesn't give a second thought to the poor. But once he has been found by Jesus. He is accepted. And he is transformed. By God's undeserved loving kindness.

He longs to give half his possessions to the poor. To lavishly restore the wealth of those he has stolen from. He goes well beyond what is required. Verse 8. Four times the amount.

It is much more than the law demanded for operation. Zacchaeus stands in contrast. Doesn't he? Have you seen what Luke does all the way through? He is wanting you to make contrasts.

[21 : 21] And so he takes us back to the Rithim ruler. The rich young ruler in Luke 18. Who thinks that he can earn salvation. And Jesus says. Oh just give away your possessions man. Verse 18 verse 23.

And when he heard this. He became very sad. Because he was a man of great wealth. Whereas Zacchaeus. Verse 2. Is rich. But Zacchaeus discovers salvation is totally free.

And he responds by giving up his money. Without even being asked. You see genuine salvation brings a response. But it is not a response motivated by obligation.

Or by guilt. It is a response motivated by grace. By acceptance. By love. The American pastor Tim Keller. Has written about The Reason for God.

It's a very good book. And he writes about a woman who grasps us for the first time. This loving acceptance. Let me read to you what happened. He said. Some years ago. I met with a woman who began coming to church at Rodina.

[22 : 23] She said that she had gone to church growing up. And she had never before heard a distinction drawn. Between the gospel. And the good news about Jesus. And religion. As trying to earn our way into God's favour.

She had always heard that God accepts us. Only if we're good enough. She said that the new message was scary. I asked her. Why was it scary? And she replied. If I were saved by my good works.

Then there would be a limit. To what God could ask of me. Or put me through. I'd be like a taxpayer with rights. I'd have done my duty. And now would deserve a certain quality of life.

But if I'm a sinner. Saved by sheer grace. Then there is nothing. He cannot ask from me. She understood the dynamic of grace and gratitude.

If when you've lost all fear of punishment. You've lost all incentive to live a good and selfless life. Then the only incentive you have to live a decent life is fear.

[23 : 21] This woman could see immediately. That the wonderful beyond belief teaching of salvation by sheer grace. Had an edge to it. She knew that if she was a sinner saved by grace.

She was if anything more subject to the sovereign lordship of God. She knew that if Jesus had really done all this for her. She would not be her own. That she would joyfully, gratefully belong to Jesus.

Who provided all this for her. And an infinite cost to himself. You see verse 8 could read. Lord, Lord I can't believe.

I can't believe Zacchaeus says that you've accepted me. That you love me. That you've come into my home. And I want to please you. I'll start by sorting out all these financial irregularities.

You see salvation is total. It is total. Jesus saves us from a life lived worthlessly. For ourselves.

[24 : 27] Jesus saves us from a life worshipping money. Or career. Or family. Or sex. Or leisure. He saves us to lead a life worshipping him as a member of his family.

Look at verse 9. And Jesus said to him. Today salvation has come to this house. Since he also is a son of Abraham. Abraham was the father of the Jewish people.

But what distinguished Abraham was not his genetic history. It wasn't even that Abraham was particularly obedient to God. If you read about Abraham in Genesis. You'll find he's incredibly ropey and sinful. What distinguishes Abraham is that he trusts God.

And therefore God treats the imperfect Abraham like a perfect child. And everyone who trusts like Abraham. Trusts God.

Is treated in the same way and is accepted as his son. So as I end. Can I ask you this. Do you know. This personal acceptance. And love.

[25 : 29] That Zacchaeus experiences. A love that. That makes no demands. And yet radically changes your life. You don't have to climb a tree.

You don't even have to come to the front. All you've got to do is to come to him this morning. And admit you are lost. You are lost. Thank you for seeking me out.

Thank you for saving me. Thank you for your death in my place at the cross. Please welcome me in. And if you do know Jesus. Do you have this joy. This desire to please.

This desire to please. Are we like Zacchaeus bubbling over. With our enthusiasm to live for Christ. Do we think this morning Zacchaeus has lost his mind.

Or has he finally got a grip on reality. As he leaps up. And he gives half his money away. Imagine you did that. Half your money. In your bank account.

[26 : 38] You know how much is in there. Half it now. Half it gone. Half your house. Half your savings. Half your holiday funds. Half the children's education.

Is Zacchaeus bonkers. Or is he seeing. As he's been accepted by Jesus. You see the danger for all of us isn't it.

The Christian life becomes something. That we have to do. It becomes. A response we have to make. It becomes a set of rules.

To keep. To please God. And if we don't remind ourselves. Again and again of this story. And the truth. That the Son of Man came to seek. And to save the lost. Probably in great trouble.

If we're not like Zacchaeus. In our enthusiasm. You see today. I can't beat you. To find this love again.

[27 : 37] I can't give you. A step by step plan. On how to love again. No. We simply have to dwell. On the fact. That we are lost. Have you thought of that freeing joy.

That enthusiasm. That quickening. That you want others to know about that. That you want to do anything for him. And then slowly.

Don't we. So many of us. We walk down. The narrow road of religion. And the rest gets deeper and deeper. And we can't see Jesus over the top. And all we can see.

Is the next thing we have to do. In the heart of being a Christian. Is seeing this. It is seeing that I am lost. And that Jesus is a saviour. And can I say to you.

Your Christian life is a drag at the moment. It's probably because. You've lost sight of how lost you are. And you've lost sight of how lost you are. Without Jesus. And how desperately you need him.

[28 : 34] And it is only then. That you see how wonderful Jesus is. That he came to seek. And to save. The lost. And that's why you need to dwell on it.

Where you were. When Jesus came and sought you. And loved you. And accepted you. Verse 10. For the Son of Man came to seek. And to save. The lost.

Let's pray.