

**Jesus Came to Seek and Save the Lost**  
**Sunday, Nov 12, 2023**

**Scripture:**

**Luke 19:1–10**

*[1] He entered Jericho and was passing through. [2] And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. [3] 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] So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. [5] And when 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.” [6] So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. [7] And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” [8] And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” [9] And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. [10] For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*

**Pray**

**Introduction**

As we come into the book of Luke today, we are coming into the longest and most detailed of all of the 4 gospels. Whereas the book of Matthew has 18,346 words and 1,071 verses, the book of Luke has 19,482 words and 1,151 verses.

There are a couple of reasons for this. One, is because of the author. Although the author nowhere identifies himself, it has been generally accepted throughout most of early church history that the author is Luke.

He is also traditionally believed to be a gentile (though it is clear from his gospel that he understood Jewish traditions).

When we look to scripture, we learn that he is both a companion of Paul and a physician.

As Paul writes in Colossians 4:14:

*[14] Luke the beloved **physician** greets you...*

When you read the gospel of Luke it begins to make sense. There’s a lot of detail and nuance within the book that isn’t necessarily contained in the other gospels which is consistent with the detailed mind of a doctor.

Secondly, when we look at the opening verses of this gospel, we also begin to see why it might have needed to be this long. Look with me at Luke 1:1-4:

*[1] Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, [2] just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, [3] it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, [4] that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.*

Luke, the doctor, is trying to write and compile an orderly account of the things that have been accomplished among them (Meaning, what Jesus did). This implies that it will probably require some detail and length to communicate, **which is why his gospel is the longest.**

But then there is the question, who is this person “Theophilus,” to whom he’s writing?

To be honest, we don’t know exactly who this man is, but Luke calls him “most excellent,” a title generally given to Roman governors and officials. So there is a good chance that Luke is writing his gospel for a Roman official, who, according to verse 4 has been taught about Jesus.

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Just a side note, though I don’t want to spoil John’s sermon in two weeks, if you turn briefly to Acts 1:1 you will see his name again. As it says:

*[1] In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,*

Because he refers to Theophilus again and to his first book, it becomes clear that Luke is both the author of The Gospel of Luke and the critically acclaimed sequel, the books of Acts.

In movie terms, Luke would be “Star Wars: A New Hope” and Acts would be “The Empire Strikes Back.”

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However, despite Theophilus being the main recipient of these letters, most commentators agree that there was a broader audience in view.

**A group of either gentile believers who had been taught about Jesus or those who were considered God-fearers. These would be Gentiles who believed in one God and were familiar with the Jewish scriptures.**

This is a reasonable assumption because the Gentiles have a more pronounced place in Luke than in any other gospel. But if Gentile believers or God-fearers are the intended audience, then what is the purpose of the book of Luke?

The purpose is found in a group of words that are used more in Luke than in either Matthew, Mark, or John. Words like “Save” (Sozo), “Savior” (Soter), “Salvation” (Soteria), and “Bringing Salvation” (Soterion).

**The prominence of these words highlights the primary focus of this book, which is salvation.**

Luke wants his gentile readers to understand that salvation is for everyone, both Jews and Gentiles. Jesus didn't just come for one particular ethnic group, but instead, he came to "seek and save the lost."

As I spent time reading and rereading the book, thinking about where this theme is most clearly seen, I kept coming back to the story of Zacchaeus, the wee little man.

Because in the story of Zacchaeus we not only get a glimpse of the type of people Jesus came to save, but we also see what is necessary for salvation and the results of salvation.

So with this story to guide us, I want to look at three important truths that help us to understand the overarching theme, *"That Jesus came to seek and save the lost."* The first one is this:

### 1. Jesus came to save the needy (Luke 19:1-5)

*[1] He entered Jericho and was passing through. [2] And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. [3] 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] So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. [5] And when 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."*

I know that many of us know this story well but let me set the stage for you. Jesus is coming through Jericho and all these people are gathering to see him. But Luke doesn't really care to tell us a lot about the crowd but instead focuses on one man, Zacchaeus.

And the main thing that Luke wants us to know about this man is that he was a chief tax collector and was rich. **Why?** Because tax collectors were considered the lowlifes of society. They were Jews who went to work for the Romans, **(the oppressors of the Jews)** and they collected taxes for them.

To make matters worse, many of these tax collectors, including Zacchaeus, defrauded people and took more money than they were supposed to. **So, it is safe to say that most Jews hated tax collectors.**

We can see this hatred in this story when Jesus goes to Zacchaeus house. The crowd responds by saying in verse 7:

*[7] And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."*

We see something similar in Luke 5:29-30:

*[29] And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. [30] And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"*

In the minds of the Jews, tax collectors were no better than the worst of sinners.

So here we have this hated lowlife sinner Zacchaeus who comes to see Jesus. And as the story goes, he can't get through the crowd because he's too short. So instead, he does the only other thing he can think of which is to **run ahead and climb a sycamore tree so he could at least catch one glimpse of Jesus.**

**This horrid tax collector did whatever he had to in order to see the Son of God. Because, despite his riches and wealth, he knew and understood that he was in need.**

And when Jesus passed by, instead of ignoring him, or scoffing at him as a lowlife, or rebuking him for being a horrible person, Jesus stops. Looks up at him and says, ***“Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.”***

And that word “stay” is the same word that is translated elsewhere in scripture as “abide” and “dwell.”

Jesus came to abide and dwell with a needy lowlife like Zacchaeus.

And this isn't a one-time event in the life of Jesus. He didn't say to himself, ***“I guess, just this one time, I will associate with this social outcast.”***

**No. This is a prominent mark of the ministry of Jesus that is heavily highlighted in Luke but is also seen all throughout the gospels.**

Look with me at the following verses:

In Luke 2:29-32 we get Simeon's prophecy about Jesus:

*[29] “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,  
according to your word;*

*[30] for my eyes have seen your salvation*

*[31] that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,*

*[32] a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and for glory to your people Israel.”*

Jesus came not only to save Jews but also Gentiles who were considered unclean in the eyes of the Jews. Or in Luke 4:17–19 we read:

*[17] And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him (Jesus). He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,*

*[18] “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives  
and recovering of sight to the blind,*

*to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
[19] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”*

Jesus is clearly stating that his mission is about proclaiming the good news (the gospel) to those who are poor and needy.

Luke 18:35-43:

*[35] As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. [36] And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. [37] They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." [38] And he cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" [39] And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" [40] And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, [41] "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me recover my sight." [42] And Jesus said to him, "Recover your sight; your faith has made you well." [43] And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.*

Jesus heals a needy blind man both physically and spiritually.

Mark 1:40-42:

*[40] And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." [41] Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." [42] And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean.*

Jesus took pity on an outcast and healed him of leprosy.

Finally in Matthew 9:10-13 it says:

*[10] And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. [11] And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" [12] But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. [13] Go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."*

Jesus came to save the needy outcasts of society because they understood that they were spiritually sick and in need of the healing he provided.

**Do you see your need of Jesus this morning?** Do you understand that apart from Christ you were poor, sick, spiritually dead, and stuck in your sin, without hope? Do you understand that apart from Christ continually working in your life, it would be impossible for you to have the new life and faith that you have been given?

I remember what life was like before Christ. I was trying to find hope in all the wrong things. Drugs, alcohol, relationships, my talent as a musician. And even though I wanted so badly for people to believe I was great, I was sick, miserable, dead in my sin, and needy on the inside.

I was a lowlife dirtbag just like Zacchaeus. Yet, Jesus came to me in a campus meeting one Thursday night, in January of 2000 and said, Ryan, **"I must stay and dwell at your house today."**

**And if you are here and you feel like Zacchaeus, the blind man, the leper, the sinners, or like I did; you look within yourself and you see a lowlife who is sick, dead, and in need of healing, then I want you to know that Jesus is calling to you this morning.**

He is reaching out to you and saying “I want to abide and dwell with you forever, will you believe in me and let me in?”

If this is you, and you hear and feel Jesus calling to you today, I would encourage you to talk with me, or one of the other elders, after service. We would love to help you understand what it means to believe in Jesus so you can be sure that he is abiding with you.

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But there is more to the story than Jesus merely coming to the needy. It is definitely true that Jesus healed the sick, that he dined with sinners and tax collectors, and that he came to save the poor, the lame, and the outcast.

**He came to heal, call, and save those who see themselves as sick and needy sinners.**

Yet, Jesus doesn't just heal someone and then tell them “You're healed, now go and do whatever you like” or “Your faith has made you well, now you are free to believe and live in any way you see fit.”

He doesn't say this to people because that isn't how salvation works. Instead, when Jesus saves people, he also tells them to **“Go and sin no more.”**

Because salvation isn't merely about changing our circumstances or getting some get-out-of-hell-free card.

Rather a genuine, blood-bought, Christ exalting salvation includes first seeing our need and turning to Jesus in faith. But second, and no less important, it includes turning away from sin and turning to Christ with a real and genuine repentance.

## **2. Jesus came to bring people to repentance (Luke 19:6-10)**

*[6] So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. [7] And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” [8] And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, **“Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.”** [9] And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. [10] For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*

So Jesus comes to Zacchaeus' house. Now remember, he may be a social outcast, but he is still a very wealthy man.

I don't know about you, but I've been in some very nice homes which are owned by people who make a lot of money. And one tendency that I have noticed in people who have those big homes is that they want to show it to you. **They want to give you the tour so to speak.**

Let me be clear, there is nothing wrong with that. In general, if I think a home is cool, I want the tour.

But can you imagine, Jesus coming into Zacchaeus' home? It's probably really nice, really decked out with the best that the first century had to offer, but is he really going to say to the Son of God, "look how great my home and stuff is?"

Absolutely not.

This lowlife tax collector has come to understand that he needs Jesus. He has all the stuff and all the riches and has realized, this isn't doing it for me.

So instead of showing Jesus his opulence and greatness of wealth, **he shows Jesus the genuineness of his need and belief, by his repentance.**

For Zacchaeus this included giving half of his wealth to the poor, and if he has defrauded people, giving them four times as much back.

Now you might be asking the question, why did he give half of his wealth to the poor and four times as much to those he defrauded?

Because even though he was hated by the Jews he was still a Jew himself who understood the law of God. And in coming to Christ it is also clear that he understands his teachings.

For it says in Deuteronomy 15:11:

*[11] For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.'*

Or as Jesus said in Luke 12:32-34:

*[32] "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. [33] Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. [34] For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

He knew that he was called by God to use his wealth to care for the poor.

Or in Exodus 22:1 it says:

*[1] "If a man steals an ox or a sheep, and kills it or sells it, he shall repay five oxen for an ox, and **four sheep for a sheep.***

Then as Jesus says in Matthew 5:23-24:

*[23] So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, [24] leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

He was convicted by God that he needed to repay the people he had stolen from in accordance with the law so that he could be reconciled with his fellow Jews.

Zacchaeus knew that if he was going to come to Jesus and believe in him, then he not only needed to turn away from sin, **which is the first part of repentance**, but he also needed to walk in obedience to Christ, who is the fulfillment of the Old Testament law.

**I think that it is very easy for us to miss this point today.** Whether we realize it or not we can often treat salvation like it's a birthright if we have grown up in the church, or we can fall into what Pastor Dan has called Greasy Grace.

We believe that we can call ourselves followers of Jesus without actually following him, or we can keep on sinning because we are saved by God's grace.

But the gospel of salvation, given by God through Christ, always comes with a call to **repentance and obedience.**

As Jesus said in Luke 5:32:

*[32] I have not come to call the righteous but sinners **to repentance.***

He also says in Luke 15:7:

*[7] Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who **repents** than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.*

Jesus after healing a lame man at the pool of Bethesda says this to him in John 5:14:

*[14] "See, you are well! **Sin no more**, that nothing worse may happen to you."*

Finally, in Luke 9:23-26, Jesus is very clear about the call to obedience when he says:

*[23] And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. [24] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. [25] For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? [26] For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.*

If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and have found yourself needy of him and have come to him to receive forgiveness of sins and everlasting life, **then the call on your life is to repent.**

To turn away from sin and turn to Christ in obedience. **And from Luke 9:23-26 we begin to see that this isn't just a half-hearted obedience.**

Rather it is an all-encompassing obedience. One that requires us to deny our human wants and desires, the passions of the flesh as James calls them, and instead calls us to pursue a life that is dedicated to making much of Christ as we work to obey his commands.

Now, for some of you, I know you hate the word obedience. Because of your background, you feel like it's opposed to the gospel of salvation by grace through faith and not of our works.



And I want to be clear, I am not saying we are saved by works, and nor do I believe that we can earn anything from Christ.

But the simple truth of the gospel that we all need to wrestle with is this: **If we have been saved by Christ, the result will be a life that is lived in obedience to Christ.**

As Jesus himself said in John 14:15:

*[15] “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”*

Now, this doesn't mean we will be perfect, and it doesn't mean that if we mess up we are not saved. **But it does mean that a life that has been saved and changed by Christ will be oriented toward living under the authority and command of Christ.** A genuine saving faith will produce the fruit of good works.

Which is why Jesus could say to Zacchaeus at the end of the story: *“Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. [10] For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*

So the question is, are Jesus and his commands central within our lives, or do we have an intellectual belief in him that is devoid of real repentance and obedience?

For we must take seriously Jesus' words to the Pharisees in Matthew 3:8 which says: *“bear fruit in keeping with repentance.”*

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But repentance and obedience are not lifeless tasks. We don't do them on repeat like a machine worker punching the same press thousands of times a day.

**But instead, repentance and obedience are what bring us into a deep fellowship with Christ that produces joy.**

This is my last point for this morning.

### **3. Jesus came to bring joy (Luke 19:6)**

*[6] So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully.*

It's clear from the story of Zacchaeus that he had responded to Jesus before he ever came to his house. He had already given half of his money away, and he seemed to be in the process of paying back those whom he had defrauded.

He was repenting of his wrongdoings and was working to keep the commands of the law and the teachings of Christ.

So when Jesus called him out of that sycamore tree and told Zacchaeus that he needed to dine at his house, **Zacchaeus was able to receive him with joy.**

Because he had a heart that was ready to commune with the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

But you might ask, pastor Ryan does our communion with Christ really depend on our repentance and obedience?

**To which I will say yes.** Because following Christ's commands is the confirmation that lets us know that our faith in him is real.

As it says in 1 John 2:3

*[3] And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.*

A genuine faith in Christ, leads to genuine repentance, and results in genuine obedience.

And scripture tells us that faith like this comes with a very real and genuine promise. **The promise is that he will abide with us and will give us everlasting joy.**

As Jesus says in John 14:23:

*[23] Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.*

Then Luke writes in the final verses of his gospel, Luke 24:50-53

*[50] And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. [51] While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. [52] And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, [53] and were continually in the temple blessing God.*

So, if you have heard these words this morning and God is showing you your need of him, come to him.

Put your trust in Christ as the only one who can save you from spiritual sickness and death and as the only one who can give you a new and everlasting life.

**And then repent.** Turn away from your wrongdoing and walk in obedience to the commands of God, through Christ. Because repentance and obedience are not lifeless duties, but are a confirmation of a genuine faith that comes with a genuine promise.

The promise of God's presence with us and his ever-present and eternal joy.

The question is this: Do you believe him, will you follow him, and will you receive his promised presence and joy? For this is why Christ came. **"To seek and save those who know they are lost."**

**Pray.**