

# Keynotes from Pastor Tims' am Sermon on 10/5/2020

## Jesus friend of sinners – Repentance

(Please read these notes whilst listening to the sermon audio file.)

### Luke 19 verses 1-10

**Luke 19:1-10** Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup> And there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. <sup>3</sup> And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small of stature. <sup>4</sup> So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. <sup>5</sup> 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." <sup>6</sup> So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. <sup>7</sup> And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." <sup>8</sup> And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." <sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

In our culture, we are constantly comparing ourselves to those around us, many of whom have more than we have, and as a result we don't see ourselves as greedy people. Our hearts are always seeking to justify our own actions so we reason that we can justify our use of money and our lifestyle because we're just living like everyone around us, or because we feel we deserve that next non-essential purchase.

**Living as we do in a culture of greed, the greed in our own hearts is hidden and may well be something which we consider doesn't matter too much.**

Jesus tells that it is, in fact, something that matters very much as we see from the narrative of the rich young man in the previous chapter (**Luke 18: 18-23**).

- Despite his wealth, the young man knew he wasn't right with God and wanted to know how to resolve this.

- Jesus exposes the heart of the young man by asking him to sell all he has and give it to the poor.
- The young man chose to enjoy the temporary pleasures of wealth rather than look forward to the prospect of enjoying God forever.
- The problem wasn't that he had wealth – it was that his wealth had him. He loved it more than he loved God.

**Luke 18:24-25** Jesus tells his disciples: "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

**Greed is an unnoticed sin that leads us to value material possessions more than we value God, and it is a sin we must recognise and turn away from if we are going to be able to really enjoy God.**

The good news for us, wealthy as we are in this part of the world, is that, though it is hard for a rich person to inherit the kingdom of God, it is not impossible. The narrative of Zacchaeus shows us three truths we need to see and believe if we are to defeat the sin of greed.

### **1. We need to see the emptiness of riches**

We often think our lives would be better if only we had, for example, more money, a bigger house, a better job or better health. Zacchaeus appears to have everything we might want **v2** He was a chief tax collector and was rich.

- He was at the top of his career and had plenty of money

Yet all was not well with him **v3** And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small of stature.

- He was rejected and hated by the people around him because he collected taxes for the Roman occupiers, and also took a cut for himself. He had sold out to the enemy.
- He was a sinner and an apostate in their eyes, because he had turned away from the people of God.

Wealthy but rejected, Zacchaeus was looking for something more because of the emptiness in his heart.

- He was curious about Jesus, but was also seeking to see who Jesus was, having a longing for an authentic relationship.

The madness of greed always has a cost to it. Our relationships will suffer because of long working hours or extreme debt, for example. Greed is a cruel taskmaster that is never satisfied, becoming master over our lives, but not filling the ache that is in our hearts. Where else can we look?

## **2. We need to see the weakness of religion.**

The people at the front of the crowd were the religious people who kept the law, prayed for the longest, attended Synagogue every week and considered themselves righteous. Zacchaeus, considered a traitor and thief, was pushed to the back and had to climb a tree to even be able to see.

- Out of all of them, who would Jesus, God in human flesh as the Bible shows us, choose to stay with?

**vv5-7** 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." <sup>6</sup> So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. <sup>7</sup> And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."

- Jesus ignored the religious people but invited himself into the home of the traitor and thief, thus showing he was willing to enter into a relationship with him and accept him as a friend.

Zacchaeus was filled with joy but the crowds, instead of rejoicing that he had found salvation in Jesus, were filled with envy and start to grumble.

- Their religion was just religion - a form of self-righteousness
- It didn't lead them to know God, though they thought they did
- It blinded them to their sin and their need of Jesus

Religion makes us measure ourselves by a man-made standard and lets us think we are doing OK, whilst all the time our heart is far away from God. Religious activity will not deal with the greed in our lives. What is the answer?

## **3. We need to see the power of grace**

**v10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” Jesus is seeking Zacchaeus, though Zacchaeus might have thought it was the other way round! **Jesus is the one who:**

- plans to pass through Jericho and then stops at the tree where Zacchaeus is sitting
- chooses to engage Zacchaeus in conversation and invites himself to his house
- is breaking into Zacchaeus’ life and committing himself to Zacchaeus

**Zacchaeus is not asking Jesus into his heart – it is Jesus who breaks into his life and declares Zacchaeus to be a saved man. v9** And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.

Jesus effectively says that the religious people are unsaved and are outside of the covenant people of God, but the sinner is saved and a true member of the covenant people of God.

- **This is all grace** – Zacchaeus is getting what he doesn’t deserve. He is a sinner, living a greedy and selfish life.
- **Yet God in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ, shows grace to him and declares him to be a saved man.**

How does Zacchaeus respond? **v8** And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” In this true account from 2000 years ago, Zacchaeus gave away 50% of his wealth and restored what he had stolen with an increase of 300%, far above what the law required of him.

**The grace of God changed a greedy man into a generous man.** It freed him from loving his money more than loving God because he saw that Jesus was a greater treasure than his earthly wealth. We know that we have truly experienced the grace of God in Christ when we are:

- free from trusting in our wealth
- free from the love of money
- free to be generous.

There is a cost to this grace, however. **2 Cor 8 v9** For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

Zacchaeus was a sinner who loved money more than he loved God, thus defrauding God of his rightful glory, just as he had defrauded the people of their money. For him to experience the riches of God's grace, Jesus had to:

- become poor, leaving the splendour of Heaven and coming to live in poverty on this earth.
- take Zacchaeus' sin on himself and pay the price in full for it.

When Jesus went to his death in Jerusalem, Zacchaeus would have recognised with great sorrow that Jesus died for him. If we can identify with that, it is evidence that we too have experienced the grace of God.

We have seen how both material possessions and/or a form of religion that relies on our performance can stop us from putting God in his rightful place and enjoying him forever.

Do you love other things more than Jesus? Be warned that these things will keep you out of the kingdom of God unless Jesus breaks into your life as he did with Zacchaeus.

- What are you loving more than Jesus? Is there any functional god (a hobby, person, possession etc) that you would not be prepared to give up if Jesus asked you to?

**Pray that, by the grace of God, you are able to put Jesus in his rightful place and give up what is preventing you from doing so.**

Are you a very religious person, trying to justify yourself through your own self-righteousness?

- Do you find it hard to understand how Jesus could accept a sinner but reject those who are trying to get themselves right before God, relying on their own performance?

**You can never do enough good deeds to merit the favour of God, and you don't have to. It is not what we do for God that counts, but what God does for us.**

Zacchaeus shows that it is Jesus alone who will secure our position in the kingdom of God. If you have an emptiness in your heart, like Zacchaeus, you need to know that:

- Jesus, the friend of sinners, is on a mission to seek and save you
- Jesus knows you and is inviting himself into your life to fill the emptiness you feel

**Will you, like Zacchaeus, respond to him with joy, and experience the transformation brought about by his grace?**