

Luke 19:1-10
May 24, 2020

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What does it mean when Jesus tells us in the Great Commission to “Go, and make disciples?” What does that look like for you? [Let people engage]

Q: Based on your reading of Scripture, how does Jesus “make disciples?” What was His process? [Let people engage]

Transition: As I prepared today’s lesson, I found myself reading the text as one of His 12 disciples. If Jesus said to me, “Lee Ann, go and make disciples,” especially after being mentored by Him for the last 3.5 years, would I know what to do to obey Him? Would I say, “Sure. I’m on it!”

It’s easy to quote the Great Commission. We understand that it is a command for all believers. But it’s important that we know how to fulfill our obligation to be about reaching lost people. As we look at today’s text, let’s watch how Jesus makes a disciple and see if there is anything we can glean that will help us be more effective at making disciples. Let’s begin.

BOOK:

Zacchaeus the Tax Collector

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man, he could not, because of the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “**Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.**” ⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a ‘sinner.’”

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

⁹ Jesus said to him, “**Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.**” ¹⁰ **For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.**”

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Who is the Zaccheus in your life right now? Who seems to open and receptive to learn more about the Good News? For Zaccheus, his day ended in joyful fellowship with the Son of God, for he was now a changed man with a new life. Jesus is still taking the initiative to seek lost people to save them. What is our part? Are we faithfully partnering with Him to introduce lost friends to Jesus?

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 251-253). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

JERUSALEM AT LAST!

When Christopher Columbus made his voyage west in 1492, he kept two log books, one of which contained falsified information. He wanted his men to believe that they were closer to land than they really were. Apparently, Columbus felt that the morale of the crew was more important than the integrity of the captain.

As Jesus journeyed to Jerusalem, He told His disciples what would happen there, but they could not grasp what their Lord was saying (Luke 18:31–34). Some of the people in the crowd thought He was going to Jerusalem to deliver Israel from Roman bondage and usher in the kingdom of God. Still others followed Him just to see the next miracle He would perform.

In this chapter, Dr. Luke focuses on who Jesus really is as he presents Him in a threefold ministry.

The Savior Who Seeks the Lost (Luke 19:1–10)

The name *Zaccheus* means “righteous one,” but this supervisor of tax collectors was not living up to his name. Certainly, the Jewish religious community in Jericho would not have considered him righteous, for he not only collected taxes from his own people but also worked for the unclean Gentiles! And publicans were notorious for collecting more taxes than required; the more money they collected, the more income they enjoyed (Luke 3:12–13). Though Zaccheus was a renegade in the eyes of the Jews, he was a precious lost sinner in the eyes of Jesus.

It is interesting to see the changes Zaccheus experienced that day, all because Jesus visited Jericho.

A man became a child (vv. 2–4). In the East, it is unusual for a man to run, especially a wealthy government official; yet Zaccheus ran down the street like a little boy following a parade. And he even climbed a tree! Curiosity is certainly characteristic of most children, and Zaccheus was motivated by curiosity that day.

John Calvin wrote, “Curiosity and simplicity are a sort of preparation for faith.” This is often the case, and it was certainly true of Zaccheus. Why the big crowd? Who is this Jesus of Nazareth they are following? What am I missing?

Jesus said, “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God like a little child shall in no way enter therein” (Luke 18:17). Perhaps more than anything else, it is pride that keeps many “successful” people from trusting Jesus Christ.

A seeking man became found (v. 5). Zaccheus thought he was seeking Jesus (Luke 19:3), but Jesus was seeking him! (Luke 19:10) By nature, the lost sinner does not seek the Saviour (Rom. 3:11). When our first parents sinned, they hid from God, but God came and sought them (Gen. 3:1–10). **When Jesus was ministering on earth, He sought out the lost; and today the Holy Spirit, through the church, is searching for lost sinners.**

We do not know how God had worked in the heart of Zaccheus to prepare him for this meeting with Jesus. Was Levi, the former publican (Luke 5:27–39), one of his friends? Had he told Zaccheus about Jesus? Was he praying for Zaccheus? Had Zaccheus become weary of wealth and started yearning for something better? We cannot answer these questions, but we can rejoice that a seeking Savior will always find a sinner who is looking for a new beginning.

A small man became big (vv. 7–8). It was not Zaccheus’ fault that he was “little of stature” and could not see over the crowd. He did what he could to overcome his handicap by putting aside his dignity and climbing a tree. In a spiritual sense, all of us are “little of stature,” for “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). No one measures up to God’s high standards; we are all “too little” to enter into heaven.

The tragedy is, many lost sinners think they are “big.” They measure themselves by man’s standards—money, position, authority, popularity—things that are an “abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). They think they have everything when really they have nothing (Rev. 3:17).

Zaccheus trusted Jesus Christ and became a true “son of Abraham,” meaning, of course, a child of faith (Rom. 4:12; Gal. 3:7). That is as big as you can get!

A poor man became rich (vv. 9–10). The people thought Zaccheus was a wealthy man, but actually he was only a bankrupt sinner who needed to receive God’s gift of eternal life, the most expensive gift in the world. This is the only instance in the four Gospels of Jesus inviting Himself to someone’s home, and it illustrates the words of Revelation 3:20.

Zaccheus was not saved because he promised to do good works. He was saved because he responded by faith to Christ’s gracious word to him. Having trusted the Savior, he then gave evidence of his faith by promising to make restitution to those he had wronged. Saving faith is more than pious words and devout feelings. It creates a living union with Christ that results in a changed life (James 2:14–26).

Under the Mosaic Law, if a thief voluntarily confessed his crime, he had to restore what he took, add one fifth to it, and bring a trespass offering to the Lord (Lev. 6:1–7). If he stole something he could not restore, he had to repay fourfold (Ex. 22:1); and if he was caught with the goods, he had to repay double (Ex. 22:4). Zaccheus did not quibble over the terms of the Law; he offered to pay the highest price because his heart had truly been changed.

The child of God is born rich, for he shares “every spiritual blessing” in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3). We have the riches of God’s mercy and grace (Eph. 1:7; 2:4) as well as the riches of His glory (Phil. 4:19) and wisdom (Rom. 11:33). These are “unsearchable riches” that can never be fully understood or completely exhausted (Eph. 3:8).

The host became the guest (v. 6). Jesus invited Himself to Zaccheus’ house, and Zaccheus received Him joyfully. Joy is one of the key themes in the Gospel of Luke, and the word is found over twenty times in one form or another. The experience of salvation certainly ought to produce joy in the believer’s heart.

Zaccheus became the guest in his own house, for Jesus was now his Master. He was ready to obey the Lord and do whatever was necessary to establish a genuine testimony before the people. To be sure, the people criticized Jesus for visiting in a publican’s house (Luke 5:27–32), but the Lord paid no attention to their words. The critics also needed to be saved, but there is no evidence that they trusted Jesus.

When a day begins, you never know how it will end. For Zaccheus, that day ended in joyful fellowship with the Son of God, for he was now a changed man with a new life. Jesus is still seeking the lost and yearning to save them. Has He found you?

Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 251-252)

h. Jesus and Zacchaeus (19:1–10)

A second person in Jericho came to faith in Jesus. Zacchaeus, like the blind man, was considered outside the normal Jewish system because of his activities for Rome as a tax collector (cf. 5:27; 18:9–14). Zacchaeus responded to Jesus’ message in precisely the opposite way the rich ruler had responded (18:18–25). Zacchaeus, also wealthy (19:2), knew he was a sinner. When Jesus called on him, he responded with a greater enthusiasm than Jesus had asked for. This account is also a commentary on Jesus’ words that with God all things are possible (18:25–27), for Zacchaeus was a wealthy person who found salvation.

19:1–4. This incident seems ludicrous. Here was **Zacchaeus**, a **wealthy** and probably influential man, running **ahead of the crowd** and climbing **a sycamore-fig tree** (cf. Amos 7:14) to get a chance **to see ... Jesus**. Luke may have been presenting Zacchaeus’ actions as a commentary on Jesus’ words that unless people become like little children, they cannot enter the kingdom of God (Luke 18:17).

19:5–6. **Jesus** already knew Zacchaeus’ name and all about him. He instructed the tax man to **come down immediately** for Jesus wanted to **stay at his house**. This was more than Zacchaeus had hoped for, so he **welcomed Him gladly**. The word “gladly” (*chairōn*) is literally “rejoicing.” Luke used this verb (and the noun *chara*) nine times (1:14; 8:13; 10:17; 13:17; 15:5, 9, 32; 19:6, 37) to denote an attitude of joy accompanying faith and salvation.

19:7–10. As usual, many complained (**began to mutter**) because Jesus had **gone to be the guest of a “sinner”** (cf. 15:1). **But Zacchaeus stood up and** voluntarily announced that he would **give half of** what he owned **to the poor** and repay fourfold all he had wronged. He publicly wanted the people to know that his time with Jesus had changed his life. Interestingly he parted with much of his wealth, similar to what Jesus had asked the rich ruler to do (18:22).

Jesus’ words, **Today salvation has come to this house**, did not imply that the act of giving to the poor had saved Zacchaeus, but that **his change in lifestyle evidenced his right relationship before God**. Zacchaeus, **a son of Abraham** by birth, had a right to enter the kingdom because of his connection with **Jesus**. That was Jesus’ mission—**to seek and to save** those who are **lost** (cf. 15:5, 9, 24).

Butler, T. C. (2000). Luke (Vol. 3, pp. 314–315). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

A. Dedicated to Seeking and Saving the Lost: Son of Mans Goal (19:1–10)

SUPPORTING IDEA: *Jesus came to seek and save the lost, not to fulfill legalistic religious demands or to cater to religious experts.*

19:1–4. Reaching Jericho (see 18:35), Jesus continued his journey up the dangerous hills toward Jerusalem. Interruption came before he could leave the city. A short, clever tax collector was determined to see Jesus. As an administrator for the Roman government’s tax office, Zacchaeus had amassed great wealth, overcharging the Jewish people and taking a cut from the taxes gathered by other tax collectors whose work he administered. His wealth could not provide the one thing he wanted more than anything else. Unable to see over or get through the massive crowd swarming around Jesus, Zacchaeus noted the direction Jesus was taking, ran ahead, found a tree, and climbed up into its branches.

19:5. The clever tax collector did get a view of Jesus, and Jesus spotted him up in the tree. Jesus even invited himself to dinner at Zacchaeus’ house. Jesus said it was necessary for him to visit Zacchaeus—apparently a necessity initiated by God to show one more time Jesus’ central mission on earth.

19:6–7. Overjoyed at this unexpected privilege, the short man scurried down the tree. This time he had no trouble getting through the crowd to Jesus. But as they let the tax collector through, the crowd must have complained. How can this be? they grumbled. We thought Jesus was Messiah, and he is going to eat with a sinful man, a man who represents the enemy government and takes our money to give to them. How can Jesus eat and fellowship with such a traitor? Jesus showed he was an “equal opportunity” diner with traitors. Earlier he had eaten at the home of Pharisees and showed how they were traitors to God’s intentions for the Jews. Now he ate with a person whom the Jews considered a political and economic traitor.

19:8. After meeting Jesus, the tax collector/traitor was no longer the same man. He would enter the kingdom of God, but not as a wealthy man (see 18:25). He would take half of what he owned and give it to the poor. He would find the people he had overcharged on their tax bill and refund four times as much as he had cheated them. Thus, he took the Law of Moses seriously. Leviticus 5:16 and Numbers 5:7 demanded restitution plus twenty percent. Exodus 22:1 called for rustlers to repay four sheep for one (see 2 Sam. 12:6). The Dead Sea Scrolls and Roman law also contain incidents of fourfold restitution. Zacchaeus seems to have accepted the harshest penalty of the law and applied it to himself. Acceptance by Jesus made money insignificant (see 12:33). Repentance came in the form of action (see 3:12–13). He had a new lifestyle because he had a new Lord.

19:9. Jesus showed ultimate acceptance of the tax collector/traitor turned repentant sinner. Salvation had come to Zacchaeus and to his house. Jesus’ mission had basically been a mission to the Jews, and this man was a Jew, participating in the covenant with Abraham, even if he acted the part of the traitor in Jewish eyes. For Jesus a repentant Jew from such a sordid background was better than a self-righteous Jew with no sense of the need for repentance (see 5:31–32).

19:10. The scene with Zacchaeus provides Luke’s Gospel with its ultimate statement about Jesus. Jesus knew his purpose on earth. His purpose was not to reform the Jewish religion. His purpose was not to prove the Pharisees wrong. His purpose was not to bring in a military, political kingdom. His purpose was to bring salvation to lost people. Jesus dedicated the three years of his earthly ministry to finding people who knew they were lost and showing them God’s way of salvation—the way of repentance and faith.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Lk 19:1-10). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.