My Story - Part 3

Bringing Jesus Home

## (Luke 19:1-10)

We’re in the final week of this series, “My Story,” and we’ve recognized that we all have stories, some that we’re proud of and some that we’re not so proud of. But the reality is that for many of us, during different seasons of life, we’re going to run up against obstacles and challenges. And so, maybe it’s a job that you don’t think you can endure another day, maybe it’s a relationship that turned south, maybe it’s something you’re trying to accomplish, and you begin to feel like it’s never going to happen. And so, it’s the decisions that we make today like, do I keep trying, do I hang on, or do I just give up and walk away? It’s those decisions that determine the stories we will tell tomorrow.

I believe there are times in our lives where we need to turn the page, where we need to start a new chapter, times when we need to walk away, but sometimes… sometimes the best decision you can make is the decision to stay. Just to move to a better position, to get a greater vantage point, even though it would be easier to give up and walk away. You see, sometimes… well the Bible says it this way,

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

And so, I believe with a certain level of certainty, that many of you at some point, at some season in your life are going to have to make a similar decision. In other words, to live out your God-given potential there is going to come a time when you are going to have to stay and wait on something even when it requires that you step outside of your comfort zone. At some point, you are going to hit an obstacle, maybe a dry season and you just don’t want to stay there, but I’m going to suggest that you don’t fix your eyes on the situation, not on the options, but instead you fix your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith…” (Hebrews 12:2). In other words, you keep your eyes on Jesus and wait for him to change your heart or change your situation.

There’s a great example of this in Luke chapter 19, it’s the story of a man named Zacchaeus, and I’m going to read this in the New Living Translation for clarity. Luke tells us beginning at verse one,

“Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. So, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way” (Luke 19:1-4, NLT).

Now, I want to pause there for a moment, because I want to explain what is happening. The Bible says that Zacchaeus was trying to get a look at Jesus, but the problem was that he was too short to see over the crowd. And the reality is that each of us are born with an innate desire to know God, because he created us, his fingerprints are all over us, and so we know something of God, but we can’t see God.

And so, whether an individual is an atheist, agnostic, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, or Christian, every human being struggles and wrestles with trying to reach God, trying to see God, but the Bible says, what may be known about God is obvious,

“For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made…” (Romans 1:19-20).

It’s obvious, it’s clearly seen, and so what do those who reject Jesus Christ as revealed in the Word of God try to do? They fabricate theories about creation in an attempt to rule out intelligent design, they gather others around them who approve of their story, but the true reason why the Bible says they can’t see God isn’t just because of the crowd around them. The real reason why they don’t see God, isn’t because of the crowd, the real reason Zacchaeus couldn’t see Jesus, was because he was too short to see over the crowd.

Now, hold on because I’m going somewhere with this, and it’s important to understand that your stature has nothing to do with seeing God, but the truth is that we all have something in common with Zacchaeus. That is that the Bible says in Romans chapter three that we all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). And so, it’s because of our stature, because we fall short that it affects the way we see God, and because it affects the way we see God, we want to blame the crowd, we want to blame other people for why we don’t have a relationship with God.

Some of us blame the Christians crowding around Jesus and we stop going to church because we say it’s full of hypocrites. But that doesn’t even make sense because Walmart is full of hypocrites too and we still shop there. In fact, the gym is full of overweight people, but we still go there when we want to get in shape. The hospitals are full of sick people and we still go there when we want to get well. And so, what I’m trying to say is that it doesn’t make sense to try to create excuses for why we don’t have a relationship with God, because the truth is that we’re just way too short, we’ve fallen short, it’s just the way we are, it’s the way we were born.

And so, we go through life trying to get a glimpse of God, making excuses for why we’ve failed, struggling with the vanity of our own imaginations, and all of our trying doesn’t get us any closer to God because with religion it’s impossible. And so, we can’t join the crowd that’s around Jesus in an attempt to see him, we’ve got to go another way, and that’s why Jesus warned us,

"Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it” (Matthew 7:13-14).

In other words, the devil knows that he can’t stop men and women from pursuing Jesus, and so he puts up counterfeit signs saying, “Go this way, Heaven’s this way.” And he gives us the safety of numbers, many go this way, and there is comfort in joining the crowd on the broad road.

The problem is that we can be in the crowd, we can be in the church, and still miss knowing Jesus. You see, it’s not the church that gets you to heaven, that’s why God had to destroy the temple, it’s only Jesus, and so the purpose of the Church is to get you to Jesus. The church exists to help you not miss heaven, to not miss your relationship with Jesus, because you’ve got to become a disciple of Jesus. You’ve got to follow Jesus, you’ve got to fix your eyes on Jesus, and that’s why the Bible says that God gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13).

And so, you can be in the church, in the crowd, and you may have a false sense of security, feeling like you’re a good person just because you go to church, but there’s a small gate and a narrow road that I want to draw your attention to. You see, I don’t want anyone to find this church, to come to this church, to be in the crowd around Jesus and still miss Jesus. Because the church can’t save you, religion can’t save you, only Jesus can save you, and so you’re going to have to stop making excuses, you’re going to have to move from your seat, and you’re going to have to move away from the crowd. I hope and pray that many of you would recognize that it’s time to stop trying with the crowd and to go after Jesus because only he can bring true transformation to your life.

The Bible tells us that Zacchaeus is trying to see Jesus, in other words he knew about Jesus, he had heard about Jesus, but he wanted more, he wasn’t satisfied. He wanted to see Jesus, he wanted to know Jesus, but the crowd is in the way. I love the fact that Zacchaeus doesn’t give up, he doesn’t get discouraged because of the crowd, he doesn’t quit trying to get closer to Jesus, but verse four says,

“He ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way” (Luke 19:4, NLT).

I love that because not only was there a tree beside the road for Zacchaeus, but God planted a tree 2000 years ago for all of us who have been pushing our way through the crowd, jumping up on our tiptoes just trying to see Jesus, trying to do everything we can to see Jesus but couldn’t.

And so, God said, “I’m going to make it easier for you, I’m going to plant a tree, a cross at Golgotha.” And he says, “If you climb that tree,” meaning if you believe the message of the cross, believing the gospel, trusting the finished work of his Son, he says, “not only are you going to see me, but I’m going to see you.” Not only that, but he also says, “I’m going to call you to come.” And the Bible says,

“When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name” (Luke 19:5, NLT).

In other words, Jesus knew that he wasn’t just looking for signs and wonders, he knew Zacchaeus’ heart, he knew Zacchaeus sincerely wanted to see God. And when you believe the Word of God, believing what he said, and you begin to seek God, he will call you and talk to you. Jesus said it this way,

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27).

And so, as you begin to seek God, listening to his voice, he will call your name, and you’ll begin to experience Jesus’ presence. It’s not because you’re jumping and pushing your way through the crowd just trying to see, it’s because you believe and you’re trusting in what Jesus did and what he said he was going to do.

Zacchaeus would do anything to see Jesus, he believed he was the Messiah, the Savior of the world. And so, when Jesus looked up and saw Zacchaeus clinging to the tree, he said,

"Zacchaeus! Quick, come down!” (Luke 19:5, NLT).

Zacchaeus is super excited, because not only did he see Jesus, but Jesus saw him and called him by name. This was incredible, because you’ve got to realize they didn’t have Facebook, Jesus couldn’t look for friends in Jericho and find him, but he didn’t have to because he knew his name. The Bible says,

“The sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out” (John 10:3).

And so, this was a dream come true, Zacchaeus was going to meet Jesus, but Jesus wanted to have more than just a conversation on the side of the road. He says, "Zacchaeus!"

"Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today” (Luke 19:5, NLT).

Now, Zacchaeus was excited, but he wasn’t prepared for this, he wasn’t ready to have a guest at home. His relationship with Jesus had just begun, and it wasn’t because he was so good, it was because he believed who Jesus said he was. And so, maybe he’s living with his girlfriend and all her stuff is there, maybe there was some stuff on the counter or the coffee table that he knew Jesus wouldn’t approve of, but I want you to see his response.

Even though he knew that his house wasn’t clean, that he wasn’t prepared to have guests, he was still willing to bring Jesus home, to bring Jesus into his mess, because he was prepared to make a change. He was willing to expose the way he was living, because he was willing to face it and deal with it. And so, the Bible says,

"Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy” (Luke 19:6, NLT).

He was excited to have Jesus as his guest, he was willing to bring Jesus home, to bring him into his mess, in spite of the shame and guilt, because there wasn’t any condemnation from Jesus. And so, he was willing to have Jesus in his home, but watch what the people did, watch what the crowd around Jesus did. Verse 7 says,

“The people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled” (Luke 19:7, NLT).

And so, all of the people judged Zacchaeus, but they also judged Jesus because of his association with Zacchaeus. They’re grumbling and complaining because Zacchaeus had a reputation, they know his lifestyle, that he was drunk at the club the night before or whatever, and so they were displeased.

Zacchaeus heard their voices, but he wasn’t fazed by their condemnation, he didn’t let them discourage him, because now he’s with Jesus. Jesus is at his house and they’re hanging out, they’re talking, and together they’re cleaning up the mess. And this is something that so many people don’t understand, Jesus is not nearly as concerned about the mess as he is with spending time with you, he already died because of your mess, and so it’s as he spends time with Zacchaeus that he cleans up the mess. In other words, they’re cleaning up together, emptying ashtrays together, picking towels up off the floor together, throwing out the beer cans together.

Here’s the problem I see in the world today, there are many groups, crowds of people, and some of them have met Jesus, they may have even trusted him as their Savior, but they don’t bring him home with them. They won’t bring Jesus home into their messy situation, into the weird stuff that nobody knows about, the things that they’re not very happy about, the things that they’re still working on, but Jesus told Zacchaeus,

“I must be a guest in your home today” (Luke 19:5, NLT).

Notice that he didn’t ask, he said, “I must be a guest in your home today.” You see, he’s not staying there at the tree, he’s not hanging out waiting for Zacchaeus to come back. He says, “I’m going with you.” In other words, he doesn’t just want to meet you at church and then be left there waiting for you to return the next Sunday. He wants to go home with you.

Jesus tells Zacchaeus, “I must be your guest,” because until we invite Jesus into every area of our lives, we won’t experience transformation, and if we don’t experience transformation our story will not change for the better. We can fight our way through the crowd on Sunday morning, only to find ourselves living just like unbelievers the rest of the week. And so, today I want you to consider what your story is going to be? Because I know it’s easy to look at other people, to look at the crowd, and look at what they’re doing, but if you don’t bring Jesus into your home you are going to struggle too.

And so, you may be saved, you may go to church, but if you don’t experience transformation, you’re not going to be able to make a difference in the world. Jesus said it this way,

“God's light came into the world, but…All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed” (John 3:19-20, NLT).

And so, unless you bring Jesus into your home, bring Jesus into your mess, you’re going to be too embarrassed to talk about Jesus to other people. In other words, your life doesn’t reflect the gospel because there hasn’t been any transformation.

And it’s not that you need to go clean your house, Jesus didn’t say that, but what he says is, “I must go with you.” In other words, for each one of us, our relationship with Jesus starts just like Zacchaeus’ did, it started as religion because we were trying to see God and we heard the gospel. And so, we saw Jesus, we believed who he is, he called us by name, but he must come to our house, because he wants us to experience his transformation.

This is what we see in the text, Jesus comes to Zacchaeus’ house, and I want you to notice what begins to happen. Jesus doesn’t start preaching, he doesn’t start telling him what to do, he doesn’t say, “Zacchaeus, there are a lot of people struggling right now because you ripped them off.” He doesn’t tell him, “You and your girlfriend shouldn’t sleep together until you make a commitment in marriage.” He doesn’t do any of that, he’s just there, he’s simply in the house, and Zacchaeus begins to feel the gentle conviction of the Holy Spirit. The Bible says,

“Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much” (Luke 19:8, NLT).

And so, Jesus doesn’t even have to tell Zacchaeus, “Hey, if you’re a believer you should be tithing.” But on his own, Zacchaeus stood up and said, “Jesus, I’m going to start giving, and I’m going to start by doing such and such.” Because he was being transformed from the inside out, because he was just being real with Jesus and he brought him home into his mess.

You see, when you receive Jesus’ gift of salvation, you need to take him home with you to clean up the mess. You can’t leave Jesus at church, you can’t leave Jesus at the Bible conference, but you’ve got to take him home as your guest. And as with any guest in your house you must entertain him, because he just wants to spend time with you. And so, you stop doing everything and you focus on spending time with them, you focus on one thing, you focus on being with Jesus. And when you focus on Jesus, it changes everything, it changes your perspective, and it changes your behavior.

Jesus responded to Zacchaeus in verse nine,

"Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost” (Luke 19:9-10, NLT).

He said, salvation has come, not because Zacchaeus was so good, not because of his prayers, not because of his Bible reading, but because he believed and surrendered to Jesus as Lord. Zacchaeus allowed Jesus to come into his mess and allowed himself to be transformed.

Jesus came to Zacchaeus house, his presence filled the house, and it affected the way Zacchaeus talked, it affected his spending, it affected everything about his life. And my point is that we need to recognize that following Jesus, being a believer of Jesus, means bringing Jesus into every area of our lives. And so, as I trust in the gospel, I take Jesus home with me, it doesn’t mean that I’m perfect, but he begins to change my story. And the more time I spend with Jesus the more I find him changing my behavior, changing my attitude, changing the things I say, and others will begin to recognize it too.

Today, if you haven’t brought Jesus home from church, can I encourage you to invite him to come into your home, to come into your mess, and to fill your life with his presence. His presence will really make all the difference in the world and that’s why Jesus said,

“When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you” (Matthew 6:6).

And so, we don’t go to prayer to find God, we go there to meet him in Jesus name and find the pleasure of his presence. You see, he just wants to come into your house, into your room, because he delights in your presence and he treasures your company. And when you do Jesus will change all those things you have been wrestling with, those things that you have been struggling with, trying to accomplish on your own, because only Jesus can clean up your mess.

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