

Luke 19:1-40 "Without Him I can't; Without me He won't"

Have you ever thought; God you are so big and I am less than a speck of dust compared to you. Why do you want me in your family and why do you want to use me when you could do a better job all by yourself. This passage begins to address that question. He can speak planets into existence with a word and yet he wants me to take a meal to the sick old lady down the street. He could just zap her a three course meal better than any restaurant could provide. Why bother with me at all?

I am going to attempt a sizeable portion of scripture this morning because I think that it all flows together and each part complements the other if we read it as a whole.

We have only a few weeks left in our journey through Dr Luke's account of the life of Jesus. We begin in chapter 19:1 this morning and we find Jesus in the last week of His life as a man, walking deliberately towards Jerusalem knowing full well what lies ahead, the betrayal, the torture and the suffering that He must go through if we are to be brought into God's family. He is 15 miles northeast of Jerusalem and he comes to the city of Jericho.

Luke 19:1-40 (CEV)

Zacchaeus

1Jesus was going through Jericho, 2where a man named Zacchaeus lived. He was in charge of collecting taxes and was very rich.

Now an IRD agent for the Romans was a very unpopular job because these Jews had to collect taxes from their own people to give to the Romans. It wasn't a well paid job however commonly these traitors were rich because instead of just collecting the taxes due they would inflate a person's tax and keep the extra that they had charged. That's how Zac became very rich.

3-4Jesus was heading his way, and Zacchaeus wanted to see what he was like. But Zacchaeus was a short man and could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree.

Picture this, there is this short man, wearing the business attire of his day, suit and tie and polished shoes or something similar. Who would WALK around in a dignified manner runs and climbs up in a tree so that he can see Jesus. That was a very undignified thing to do in that culture.

What happens next must have blown Zac away because

When Jesus got there, he looked up and said, "Zacchaeus, hurry down! I want to stay with you today." 6Zacchaeus hurried down and gladly welcomed Jesus.

Jesus calls out to Zacchaeus by name and says to this sinner, this turncoat, this man who rips his own people off, come down here I want to hang out at your place today.

6Zacchaeus hurried down and gladly welcomed Jesus.

7Everyone who saw this started grumbling, "This man Zacchaeus is a sinner! And Jesus is going home to eat with him."

What is the Rabbi doing? He asked if he could have lunch with; hang out in the home of this scumbag, this traitor, this swindler. What is going on?

People are grumbling as they often do as God begins to call you and I by name out of a confused and lost world, as we begin to seek him and find out who Jesus and what life is all about. People grumble. Oh you are not good enough. Jesus wouldn't want to hang out with you. Don't bother going to church, it's not for people like you.

But as Zacchaeus hangs out with Jesus over a meal, just talking to the Lord, hanging around the Lord faith

comes into his life and as a result of faith a different way of thinking and living results. Now down through the years there have always been churches that are very much social service based. They don't push the gospel and they quote

James 2:18-23 (CEV)

18Suppose someone disagrees and says, "It is possible to have faith without doing kind deeds."

*I would answer, "Prove that you have faith without doing kind deeds, and I will prove that I have faith by doing them." 19*You surely believe there is only one God. That's fine. Even demons believe this, and it makes them shake with fear.

20Does some stupid person want proof that faith without deeds is useless? **21**Well, our ancestor Abraham pleased God by putting his son Isaac on the altar to sacrifice him. **22**Now you see how Abraham's faith and deeds worked together. He proved that his faith was real by what he did. **23**This is what the Scriptures mean by saying, "Abraham had faith in God, and God was pleased with him." That's how Abraham became God's friend.

They say, hey don't talk to me about your personal faith get out there and do something, salvation is through works – look at Abraham the Father of faith, because he was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac that action proved he was a man of faith.

Others argue that being a Christian is all about having a personal faith in God that it is a private matter and they quote scriptures like

Romans 4:16-17 (CEV)

16Everything depends on having faith in God, so that God's promise is assured by his great kindness. This promise isn't only for Abraham's descendants who have the Law. It is for all who are Abraham's descendants because they have faith, just as he did. Abraham is the ancestor of us all. **17**The Scriptures say that Abraham would become the ancestor of many nations. This promise was made to Abraham because he had faith in God, who raises the dead to life and creates new things.

It's all about a personal faith they say and they too point to Abraham saying its by faith alone that you are saved.

What we are about to see Zacchaeus illustrate is that you cannot have one without the other. As I have said before

Real saving faith: Is not faith and works

It is not faith or works

It is faith that works

If a person says that they are a Christian, they believe in God but they don't pray, they don't fellowship, there is no real evidence of a changed life they are only fooling themselves.

True faith always produces works. It is a faith that works.

Zacchaeus has a real faith encounter with God as he eats and enjoys Jesus' company and as a result he becomes a different man.

James 2:18-23 (CEV)

18Suppose someone disagrees and says, "It is possible to have faith without doing kind deeds."

*I would answer, "Prove that you have faith without doing kind deeds, and I will prove that I have faith by doing them." 19*You surely believe there is only one God. That's fine. Even demons believe this, and it makes them shake with fear.

20Does some stupid person want proof that faith without deeds is useless? **21**Well, our ancestor Abraham pleased God by putting his son Isaac on the altar to sacrifice him. **22**Now you see how Abraham's faith and deeds worked together. He proved that his faith was real by what he did. **23**This is what the Scriptures mean by saying, "Abraham had faith in God, and God was pleased with him." That's how Abraham became God's friend.

Back in the day Hebrews all believed they would be welcomed into God's kingdom because they had the right ethnic heritage. I have the right skin colour; I have the right heritage therefore for I am already one of Abraham's descendants and headed for heaven. We see in Zacchaeus's response that he had faith that works, that result in a different life.

Now I have Scottish blood in me, I don't spend money I don't have to and the Jews of that day had a similar reputation. I actually wonder if Jesus had a big smile on his face and a chuckle in his voice when he hears Zacchaeus promise to pay back four times what he had cheated from people, wow, this is a God think, and this Hebrew man is giving away tonnes of money. He is a real child of faith.

When I look at Zacchaeus' conversion I see parallels to what you and I have been through.

Three things to notice about Zacchaeus' conversion

(i) We see a man becoming like a child

Wealthy business men of that era did not run ever, and they certainly didn't climb trees. This is child like behaviour.

John Calvin said "The Foundation of faith is childlike curiosity and simplicity."

I'm with John on this. Just back a page in our bibles in Luke 18:17 we hear Jesus teaching that unless you humble yourself and become like a little child, in the way that you trust in the Lord, you cannot enter the kingdom of God. Salvation begins when we say to the creator of the universe, I am just a speck, there is a whole lot in this life I just don't get but I am going to trust you in the same way a little child will trust their mum and dad. We enter the kingdom as a little child.

We see a grown man becoming like a child.

(ii) We also see a seeking man found.

Zacchaeus wants to find out about Jesus, he feels that Holy Spirit tug at his heart to ask questions to go and see. But who finds who? Really! Initially he is seeking God but then God the son calls him by name and says Zac I want to hang out with you personally Zac today, come on down. That was me, and you. I was seeking God. I had lots of questions and then as I came to church and opened the bible God began to speak to me – as he did to you. And when he found you and I we were able to look back over experiences and conversations and situations that seemed somehow divinely set up and we realize he found us.

We have to trust God as a little child, we need to seek him initially but then we will be found by him and thirdly

(iii) We see a little man becoming big.

Up until this point Zacchaeus had a small mindset. Everything was about him. Get it. Grab it. Accumulate it. Me, me, me and I. People like that don't stand out in a crowd; they don't get remembered by anyone after they die. No one names a building after them or builds a memorial to them but those that give financially. And yet those that give their lives away in the service of others, they are remembered. They are celebrated long after they have finished this brief life. They are the big people. A little man became truly big. All of us have sinned and fallen 'short' of the glory of God but can become big people like Zacchaeus.

Jesus having just seen a man come to faith and show faith that works by his change of attitude and lifestyle in the way he handles his finances goes on to teach a parable.

The parable of the ten servants.

Now some people confuse the parable of the talents with this parable. They are so different. In the parable of the talents each servant is given different abilities and ministries from God. To whom much is given much is required. In this parable each of the ten servants are given equal opportunity to serve God. It's not about ministries and gifts but about each of us having an equal opportunity to give increase to His kingdom.

Zacchaeus' conversion shows us what coming to faith looks like but this parable stresses to us the importance of serving God faithfully as we await the second coming of Jesus.

Now keep in mind as we read this account that Jesus is the prince that is sent from a far off land, heaven to

a hostile world where he would be rejected and yet one day return.

Luke 19:11-26 (CEV)

A Story about Ten Servants

11The crowd was still listening to Jesus as he was getting close to Jerusalem. Many of them thought that God's kingdom would soon appear, **12**and Jesus told them this story:

A prince once went to a foreign country to be crowned king and then to return. 13But before leaving, he called in ten servants and gave each of them some money. He told them, "Use this to earn more money until I get back."

14But the people of his country hated him, and they sent messengers to the foreign country to say, "We don't want this man to be our king."

15After the prince had been made king, he returned and called in his servants. He asked them how much they had earned with the money they had been given.

16The first servant came and said, "Sir, with the money you gave me I have earned ten times as much."

17"That's fine, my good servant!" the king said. "Since you have shown that you can be trusted with a small amount, you will be given ten cities to rule."

18The second one came and said, "Sir, with the money you gave me, I have earned five times as much."

19The king said, "You will be given five cities."

20Another servant came and said, "Sir, here is your money. I kept it safe in a handkerchief. **21**You are a hard man, and I was afraid of you. You take what isn't yours, and you harvest crops you didn't plant."

22"You worthless servant!" the king told him. "You have condemned yourself by what you have just said. You knew that I am a hard man, taking what isn't mine and harvesting what I've not planted. **23**Why didn't you put my money in the bank? On my return, I could have had the money together with interest."

24Then he said to some other servants standing there, "Take the money away from him and give it to the servant who earned ten times as much."

25But they said, "Sir, he already has ten times as much!"

26The king replied, "Those who have something will be given more. But everything will be taken away from those who don't have anything."

Jesus, the prince gives to each person the same amount of money and says I need you servants of mine to get busy to gain increase, work hard for me in this hostile land until I return again. He didn't say sit on your hands and wait for my return. He said take what I have given to each of you; you have a job to do. He was effectively saying to believers that when I have gone back to heaven be faithful, serve me faithfully, until I return.

One of the ten servants increased what he/ she was given 10 fold and to that servant Jesus gave ten cities to look after.

Another servant did a pretty good job and was given 5 cities to look after.

One of the ten had an attitude and did nothing with what he/ she was given and didn't even earn interest on the money. So Jesus had his money taken off him and given to the one who had been most faithful. I have often been asked the question about heaven. Pastor, if we have been there for a million or so years won't we start to get a little bored. My answer to that is this, that the more faithful you are down here the better, the more rewarding it is going to be in heaven. Somehow biblically your work here prepares you for exciting work in heaven.

There used to be a bumper sticker years ago "I work for the Lord, the pay isn't great but the retirement plan is excellent"

If you serve God here you will find fulfilment here and fulfilment in heaven. Of that I am sure.

So if we all have equal opportunity to serve God in this parable, how does that work, what do we all have equally at our disposal?

I would suggest to you three things:

1. Equality of time

The average person sleeps and eats for 12 hrs a day and has 12 hrs a day to do things.

We are all given the same 24 hr day to live in. We all have an equal opportunity, and equal resource in serving God through the use of our time.

I remember growing up my dad would ask me to do so many jobs and his requests were pretty fair and reasonable and sometimes I would say dad, I haven't got time to do that job. He would come back to me and say I understand what you are saying you are saying that it isn't your priority. If it was a priority you would make time. And he was right there was always time for friends or fishing or my bird aviary or TV. How we use our time is our choice.

Benjamin Franklin said this "The difference between a man of success or a man who fails is five words. The man who fails says "I don't have time."

Oh I haven't got time to read the Word or pray with my family but I have got time to watch the news and to go to the gym.

We all have equality of time.

We choose how we use that for the kingdom or not.

Secondly

2. Equality of tithe

Obviously we tithe different amounts based on our income but we all have the same opportunity to tithe the same proportion. To choose to give the Lords money back to him.

There was a study done in America about ten years ago by one of these outfits that research into and work out statistics.

They concluded that if every Christian in America gave God back His 10% that every church would be debt free and fully staffed and world hunger would be wiped out within two years. And that is just the American Christians tithing. What would happen or could happen if all Christians gave God back that proportion of their income? Imagine what can happen.

3. Equality of message

The good news that you have to share is not more complicated or technical than the good news that I have to share. Our message to a lost and dying world is the same.

We all have the same gospel to share its all equal.

This is not a time, this is not an age to sit on our hands and wait for the prince to return. Jesus who is about to return back to that far off country says; you all have been given equal opportunity, its hostile in this land, people won't all like you and make your life easy but it's really important to be a faithful servant with what you have as the rewards in heaven for billions of years will be worth it.

I believe that if you have been really faithful here then heaven is going to be an exciting, fulfilling, challenging, stretching, growing place for you.

If you live for heaven you will find satisfaction on earth.

If you live for earth, you will miss it here and you will miss it there!

Serve Him wisely and faithfully while you still can and you won't regret it.

The rest of this chapter looks at Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. Interesting in Matthew

26 we are told that the Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus after the Passover. By Jesus coming into Jerusalem in this fashion and accepting the praise of the people the Pharisees hands were being forced. They had to crown him king or crucify him a blasphemer. And so as a result Jesus is crucified at the time the Passover lambs were to be killed and in so doing fulfilled the prophecies and imagery of the OT Lamb who was slain. There are four words in Vs 31 I would like you to underline in your bibles.

We have been talking about Zacchaeus' conversion experience and how it was so like ours.

We have talked about the importance of serving the prince faithfully until He returns again at the second coming.

Finally in vs 31 of the chapter Jesus says to the disciples

Luke 19:31 (CEV)

31If anyone asks why you are doing that, just say, 'The Lord needs it.' "

Really? The Lord needs a donkey? He is God the son. Does he need anything? I mean he could just speak it into existence.

I know I am but a speck of dust in this universe, sadly you are too but ... God almighty chooses not to do anything except in partnership with believers. He makes himself need us, inviting us to be on His supernatural team.

Once Jesus needed a boat to preach from so he borrowed Peter's.

On another occasion he needed some loaves and fishes to feed the multitude and so he borrowed a small boy's play lunch.

He needed a tomb just for a couple of days and so he borrowed Joseph's.

This week, just be available to him to follow His lead to grow His kingdom.

This week he may need your hands to fix something for some one. He may need your arms to comfort the hurting person. He may need your kitchen to produce a meal for someone. He may need your prayers to release people into ministry. He may need your testimony to bring someone else into this practical family of faith as a new descendant of Abraham.

Maybe you are here this morning, seeking answers, seeking God. Then keep seeking but let him find you and allow us to support and encourage you.

Maybe you are here this morning and serving the Lord is not paying great dividends right now, it's hard work, hang in their faithful servant, the retirement plan is the best you could ever get.

Please consider the equal opportunity that you have of time, of the tithe and of the message – Jesus wants you to be faithful in this brief life. You and I get to work with him to extend the kingdom.

Maybe you are here this morning wondering what you can do for the Lord.

I believe that the greatest act of worship is obedience and obedience springs from a heart and a life that is available. Lord do you want my loaves and fishes? Lord do you need these hands today. Do you want these feet to go somewhere? Do you want these

eyes to notice someone? Do you need this mouth to say something?

For thousands of years God has moved miraculously in the world through and with available, faithful people. This is our generation, our time to serve him.