
FIVE SERMON SUNDAY

I love to study the Bible, and not because I'm a pastor.

- The Bible is so incredibly rich with material to help our lives:
 - the unconditional love and grace of GOD that frees us to live;
 - GOD'S universal acceptance of all people;
 - GOD'S transforming power in the lives of people;
 - GOD'S purpose for our lives to change the world and bring in the Kingdom of GOD.
 - Even in one short passage there is a wealth of lessons that GOD wants to share with us.

The narrative about Zacchaeus in Luke 19 is a great example of this.

- Ten verses that seem to tell a simply story, but instead are filled with truths for our lives.
- I can actually see at least eight ways to approach this text from a preaching standpoint.

Here's a list of five of those sermon perspectives, and tell me which of these would you most like to hear as a full sermon?

- Narrative: "The Need to See JESUS" – Luke 19:3-4
- Invitation: "When Life Drives You Up a Tree" – Luke 19:4-6
- Challenge: "The Risk of Letting JESUS In" – Luke 19:5, 8
- Comfort: "Why Him? – Luke 19:7, 9-10
- Stewardship: "From Poor to Rich" Luke 10:2, 8-9
 - (Why am I not surprised that Stewardship is the least favorite?)

Well, today, I am, in fact, going to share all five, but as mini-sermons because, well, I think we can benefit from all of these reflections,

- and because I want you to see just how rich the Bible truly is.

1) A Narrative Sermon: "The Need to See JESUS" – Luke 19:3-4

Here we have Zacchaeus with this passionate desire to see JESUS. Why?

- He's a man who has everything: a big house, three-piece suits, all the comforts one could want.
- He is the chief tax collector of Jericho.
 - So, why does he feel this need to see JESUS?
 - The previous story from Luke may give us a clue.

Here's Zacchaeus out making his collections one day.

- He comes to a house: run-down and shabby.
- A woman sits on the porch, so he says, "I need your tax money."
 - She says that her husband is blind and that she doesn't have the money. "Could you come back in thirty days?"
 - Though he could have taken possession of her house right then, this time he agrees.

Thirty days later, he checks his day-planner, gets the address, and returns for a collection that must be made.

- Here's the house, but now it is well-cared for with fresh paint.
- A couple sits in front of the home, watching people go by.
 - "Where's the woman who lived here before?" Zacchaeus asks.
 - "That's me," the woman says. "This is my husband," and he extends his hand.
 - "I was told you were blind," Zacchaeus says with suspicion.
 - "I was blind," the man says. "I had to beg to get any money."
 - "Then JESUS came by and asked me what I wanted.

- “What did I want? My sight, my vision. To see my wife.”

- “He gave me my sight and so much more. Here’s the tax money you came for.”

Zacchaeus is amazed, puzzled.

- Who could have caused such a change? Who is this JESUS?
 - This is someone I need to see.
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2) A Sermon of Invitation: “When Life Drives You Up a Tree” – Luke 19:4-6.

When was the last time you saw a man wearing Armani standing in a tree?

- You’d be surprised how often the choices we make can send us to places we never intended to go.

Zacchaeus didn’t choose to be short, but the teasing he received throughout his life led him to choose a path that would give him power:

- power over those who had bullied him.
- Today, he had the power to take wealth from those who had lorded it over him.
 - In truth, he would take more than they had to pay and keep it for himself.
 - Zacchaeus was able to exert his revenge.

Yet revenge wasn’t as sweet as he had hoped.

- He was not admired; in fact, he was despised.
- His punishing of others only made him more isolated, lonely.

But now, the ONE called the SAVIOR, the CHRIST, was coming.

- Surely, HE wouldn’t have anything to do a man like Zacchaeus, but he still had to see JESUS. “Turnabout is fair play,” they say and the crowds did their best to remind Zacchaeus of how small he really was.

- He couldn’t get past them and he couldn’t see.
- So, he found himself up a tree.
 - This was no place for a man seeking respect and dignity.
 - Ultimately, Zacchaeus was humiliated.

Yet it was under this tree that JESUS stopped, and the ONE who they all had come to see offered Zacchaeus the acceptance he wanted so much.

- From the limb unto which he had cornered himself, Zacchaeus heard the words, “It’s time to come down. I will come into your house and spend the day with you.”
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3) A Sermon that Challenges: “The Risk of Letting JESUS In”

– Luke 19:5, 8

It is important to know what you’re getting yourself into if you genuinely let JESUS into your life.

- “Zacchaeus, I must stay at your house today.”
 - Wouldn’t all of us love to have JESUS come to our house for real?
 - Or would we?

An encounter with JESUS changes people, changes their lives.

- The fishermen let JESUS in and they went from catching fish to catching people.
- Stephen’s desire to follow JESUS led him to preach a sermon that cost him his life.
- Paul let JESUS in and he was moved to travel the world sharing the gospel until he was beheaded.
- Zacchaeus let JESUS in and he was moved to give up half his wealth—joyfully.

An encounter with JESUS will change you in ways that you now might not want.

- But those who let JESUS in find themselves doing things they never might have imagined,
 - and they also find a life from which they would never turn.

- We can be changed into the people GOD wants and needs us to be, and discover the joy and fulfillment of following HIM,
 - but only if we are willing to let JESUS in.
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4) A Sermon that Comforts – “Why Him?” – Luke 19: 7, 9-10.

The trouble with JESUS is that HE always chooses to hang out with the wrong people.

- When JESUS went to the home of Zacchaeus, the crowd was right to grumble.
 - Zacchaeus was a sinner. He cheated people out of their hard earned money. He took more than he deserved.
 - He worked for the Romans, the foreign enemy who had occupied our lands.
 - He dealt with Gentiles and that made him unclean, unfit to enter GOD’S house.
 - And JESUS chose to go there?
 - “Why him? Why Zacchaeus? What about us?”

JESUS is always hanging out with the wrong people.

- People who make bad choices.
- People who hurt others with their words and their actions...
 - people like...us.

While they may be those who whisper, “Why her?” “Why him?” JESUS doesn’t care.

- *“Today, salvation has come to this house...For the SON OF MAN came to seek out and save the lost.”*
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5) A Stewardship Sermon – “From Poor to Rich” – Luke 19: 2, 8-9

Zacchaeus was the wealthiest man in town.

- Not just a tax collector, but the chief tax collector.
- Big house, fine clothes, comfortable living—the best things in life.

But it wasn’t until Zacchaeus met JESUS that he realized just how poor he really was.

- Or maybe it was because he knew that there was something missing in his life—a major hole in his existence—that he went looking for the LORD.

In any case, the time he spent with JESUS changed him.

- We aren’t told what was said between the two when JESUS went to the home of Zacchaeus.
- But we know that, at the end of the visit, Zacchaeus committed himself to giving half his wealth to the poor,
 - and to pay back four times whatever he had cheated.
- Something changed in Zacchaeus: suddenly, material things in life became less important: he had found something greater in JESUS.

Zacchaeus may have been wealthy in things, but he was poor in spirit.

- Now he had found something that made his spirit soar.
- And the joy of that newfound life moved him to cast off his former self,
 - and to recognize that people were more important than things,
 - and that giving was more important than getting.

Zacchaeus had gone from being poor in the LORD to being rich.

- “Today,” JESUS said, “salvation has come to this house.”
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The Bible is so full of valuable teachings and truths and promises, if only we take the time to look for them.

- Digging deeper into the scriptures can open our lives to the wealth of the Kingdom of GOD.
- All you have to do is make the commitment to look for it.