

## When Jesus Enters Our Lives

Series: Encountering Jesus (through the Gospel of Luke)  
Brad Bailey – January 12, 2020

Luke 19:1-10

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Series #53 / Text: Luke 19:1-10

### Intro

A belated welcome to the new year....and decade.

There is a certain type of grace... an **opportunity to for fresh starts.**

That leads to the slew of **resolutions**... some may be mere wishes...and some significant intent.

There are **various things we want to relate to differently**... our **health... money... substances.**

**So we bring our will to bear on the changes we want.**

Research conducted by Strava, the social network for athletes, analyzed more than 31.5 million online global activities last January, and was able to pinpoint the date when most people report failing their resolution.

Gareth Mills from Strava [told The Independent](#). "A key factor in success is motivation and analyzing millions of activity uploads, we've been able to pinpoint the day your motivation is most likely to waver."

January 12<sup>th</sup>... is the fateful day of New Year's resolutions. [1a]

But here is some good news. There are two types of change that can come into your life this year... those that come with a **relationship to a pattern** (which is good)...and those that come in **relationship to a person... which will then change patterns.**

**What creates the most significant change...is a new relationship.**

When people have someone new in their lives...someone significant...it actually leads to changes...often positive ones.

It's been found that what changes men with destructive behavior more than any program...is a relationship. When the love of a woman enters their life... or they have a child. It's the power of being loved...and of loving.

And there is **no relationship that can come into our lives and change us more than God.**

**Today**...as we **pick up in our series** Encountering Jesus in the Gospel of Luke... Jesus brings this reality to us.

### PRAY

### Luke 19:1-10 (NIV)

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Luke begins...

### **Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through**

Jericho... amongst the largest cities of ancient Israel... it was a **center of trade, commerce, business**, industry and agriculture.

It had been a very important city for many generations. In fact, well before the time of Christ, the Romans knew and valued the city of Jericho. **Marc Antony** once **gave the city of Jericho to Cleopatra as a gift.**

King Herod built a summer palace there... as well as a hippodrome which was a stadium for horse racing and chariot racing.

**It's a place that one could try to "make it"** in ways that no one across the mass of small towns and villages could ever do.

**But now one comes** who is **bigger than anything than any man could make of himself.**

His **influence had been growing and growing**...and as he came into the city...the **crowds were intense**. When the word begins to spread that this figure who is like no other... has come to Jericho again, people by the hundreds and perhaps by the thousands flocked down those narrow dirt streets to meet Jesus as he enters the city.

And there in their midst was ...

**2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy.**

If you have become familiar with the Gospels and culture of this time...you are familiar with the **notorious role that the tax collectors had**. For those less familiar... you likely have a sense that it's **not a popular role**. (Even today... if someone says that they work for the government but won't say what they do... they probably work for the CIA or the IRS.)

No one likes having someone demand their money...or those who are involved with it. But the tax collector in ancient Israel was FAR different.

A tax collector was **a fellow Israelite** who chose to **align with the invading occupying pagan oppressor**... the Roman Empire... in enforcing the oppressive taxation that Rome placed **upon the backs of the subjugated Jews**.

**Even worse...** they could **take more than was owed to Rome** as their own. They took more they should have in order to enrich themselves off the backs of others. Tax collectors were **greedy extortioners**. They were thugs who used pressure and intimidation to extort money from the common people of Israel. In fact, the ancient writers tell us that Israel was among the most taxed of all nations in the first century.

Luke is telling us that he was wealthy because he was the **chief tax collector**. In those days the Romans controlled the taxation of ancient Israel, and they set it up this way. They divided Israel into districts. There were three—one in Caesarea, one in Capernaum and one in Jericho. They **would hire a man** to be something **like a District Commissioner**. The man chosen was usually the person who had bid the most for the right to be the head tax collector. That was Zacchaeus, which means he **had a group of people working for him** who themselves would collect the taxes.

This is why Zacchaeus is **despised and hated...but wealthy and rich**.

**3 He wanted to see who Jesus was,**

That is the **most significant desire he will have ever known**. It will change his life.

We may wonder...why....**why would he want to know who Jesus was?**

He **had all that money could buy**—and still he wants to see Jesus.

**We tend to think** that those who have all the material wealth... are too satisfied with it to ever realize their deeper need.

That is certainly the danger that Jesus knew. Jesus had just been teaching about the how difficult it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God.

But there is **another dynamic** that can come into play. Those that have everything that money can buy... **can also be those who become most acutely aware of what money can't buy**.

You may recall that when Jesus described how hard it is for those who are rich to enter the kingdom... his disciples asked: Then how can anyone get in? They thought the rich were the blessed ones.

**Their entire evaluation of their existence is wrong**. The blessed and the cursed. But Jesus **reveals the world as it really is...** those lost in their autonomy... **becoming attached to what is fleeting**. Those trying to find themselves in the temporal material world... and those who realize that they can't.

The truth is that **Zacchaeus had sold himself in the worst way.**

A prostitute will sell the use of their body...but a tax collector has sold their entire self respect.

Zacchaeus likely knew that being attached to material... he had lost himself...his real worth.

There is an underlying despair of our temporal life apart from God. In this sense, we recognize that the **restlessness and emptiness in our souls ...does not need to be extinguished or escaped**, but rather incorporated into our discovery of God and the delight we find only in Him.

**Blaise Pascal**... the great French mathematician who developed probability theory ...the first digital calculator... and in the field of physics, contributed to the study of atmospheric pressure by discovering that vacuums are real and exist in the real world. [1b]

***"There once was in man a true happiness of which now remain to him only the mark and empty trace, which he in vain tries to fill from all his surroundings, seeking from things absent the help he does not obtain in things present. But these are all inadequate, because the infinite abyss can only be filled by an infinite and immutable object, that is to say only by God Himself." ... Pascal***

Zacchaeus knew a lot about material wealth ... about attaining it... being attached to it. He may well have felt the emptiness... the desire for the infinite and satisfying love of God.

**Perhaps he had heard about a fellow tax collector who had been called by Jesus... his name was Levi... also known as Matthew.**

**And so he wants to see who Jesus is.**

**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.**

He is short... he won't be able to see over the crowds. So he climbs a tree. ... a rather risky thing to do... because the crowds will see him...and they despise him.

Zacchaeus felt his need.... And wanted to see Jesus... even willing to risk what others thought.

And then something happens...

**5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."**

Imagine that moment... Zacchaeus thinks he found a good safe spot to see Jesus...and suddenly Jesus looks up at him...and calls him by name.

There comes a point in which **when you look at Jesus... you begin to realize that he sees you.** We loo

We may not always be conscious of it...but there is a point in which the safe way in which we want to look at Jesus... as the object we look upon...and evaluate... and then HE becomes the one looking... looking at us. We become the objects of his gaze.

We presume that we are the center of our existence... but when we come to Jesus... we can find ourselves realizing that the true center is looking at us. We may think we are searching for God...and then realize the real issue is where we are in relationship to him.

In this case...**Jesus calls him by name.** The Bible refers to this as **prophetic.** God enabling knowledge otherwise unknown.

You remember when Jesus is talking to Nathaniel in the early part of the gospel and He says, "You know, Nathaniel, I saw you when you were under that tree," and Nathaniel, as white as a sheet, says, "How do You know this?" [2b]

What does Jesus say at the end of this story? "**I have come to seek and save the lost.**" The **greatest seeker in this story** is not Zacchaeus... it's **Jesus.** [2]

C.S. LEWIS once wrote to a friend...

**"Continue seeking Him with seriousness. Unless he wanted you, you would not be wanting Him."** [3]

That call is the **essence of grace.**

God comes with grace. He comes with a desire for us that is not determined by what we deserve. When he calls Zacchaeus by name...and says he must come to his house...it is grace.

And **when Zacchaeus comes down and welcomes him... it is faith.**

**6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.**

"Zaccheus, come on down." That's the grace of God.

"Zaccheus came on down and he received him gladly." That's the human response to the grace of God.... called faith.

**7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'"**

There is something so significant here.  
The people saw someone they disdained.  
Jesus saw someone he loved.

**The people sneered ... they could only see someone they resented... Jesus once again saw someone who was up a tree in more ways than one.**

They labeled Zacchaeus **a sinner...** Jesus saw him as a **lost son.**

We might be kinder in our words...but if we are honest...we really aren't that different. There are people who we really disdain.  
And our disdain is greater than our compassion.  
And we easily presume that **such bad people** are **simply far from God.**

**Zacchaeus stands before us to challenge that idea.**

**Those who may seem the farthest from God...**are often much closer than we can understand.

**He has this whole crowd of very moral people who all look down their noses terribly at the tax collector, and Jesus says, "I want to spend time with you."**

**Challenge to each of us.**

Who do you tend to judge?

Who do you tend to have **contempt** that **dismisses compassion?**

Who if they showed up to see Jesus ...would you think: What are they doing here?

I want to ask you to **join me in joining Jesus... and join Jesus' perspective... to see the potential for anyone to come to God.**

**What we see here is not only his perspective...but his PRIORITY.**

In just a few verses we're into Jesus entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

In other words, Jesus is **about 10 days from the end of his life.**

With the impending suffering that would come... he goes through a crowd and singles out the tax collector. He says, "I'm going to stay with you."

He has 10 days to go. He's about to die and save the world. He has time for this man. Why? That's his job. He says, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

And it becomes clear just how limited the mind of the people was...when we see how change was set off in Zacchaeus.

**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."**

Zacchaeus says, “If I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” Now do you think that Zacchaeus was just pulling a number out of thin air and just saying, “Okay, I took some stuff that I shouldn't have taken so I'll just give four times back”? Where does that number come from? It comes right out of the Bible. **According to Exodus 22** if you stole somebody's sheep, you had to pay them back four times.

Zacchaeus wants to set things right...to be right with God and other people.

That's the nature of **making restitution**.

That's what the **AA 12 step program** has **understood... and integrated**.

Listen to step 4: Make a searching and fearless moral inventory of your own life. Take a look in the mirror and see yourself as you really are. Step number 8: Make a list of all the persons you have harmed and be willing to make amends to them all. Step Number 9: Make direct amends to such people whenever possible except when to do so would injure them or others.

Step 4: Take an inventory

Step 8: Make a list of the people you've hurt

Step 9: Make amends.

He may seem a little impulsive here. You **might think**: Zacchaeus...**slow down... don't go overboard here**.

We **may be struck** by such a **radical choice to give away so much** of his wealth.

**Jesus often speaks** of those **most wealthy giving to the poor**...and often finds great **joy when someone does so freely**.

Important to understand that **Jesus is never against the gifts of this material world**. As a man **he was a carpenter** who worked with wood or stone... to create that which others could enjoy. He **enjoyed feasts**...without criticism.

But **as he began his ministry**... it **brings the news of the eternal kingdom** to those who are **making this their kingdom**.

> The issue he is confronting is **not simply affluency...but attachment**.

**Zacchaeus knew what he was attached to. It had control of his life.**

**Some of us need to be honest**... in recognizing that it controls us as well.

The truth is that **we all have areas** of life that are **controlling us**...that we are **attached to**... that we are **serving**.

For some it may be **lust**... for some it may be **anger**... for some it may be **vanity**.

That is where the kingdom of God meets you. That is where we should focus on what Jesus brings.

And Zacchaeus is ready to change... it is freedom.

Such restitution was not what saved Zacchaeus. The grace of Jesus saved Zacchaeus.

But **being accepted by Jesus**... **Zacchaeus was changed**.

It is the **power** of a **new relationship**... a **new affection**. [4]

Conversion involves a new affection.

It's the power of something **being displaced**.

When a person is a converted you have a new affection.

Your heart is set on God. Your heart is set on Christ.

You don't love this world and use God; you use the world and you love God. And what we see in this story is the evidence of a new affection in Zacchaeus' heart.

Such change is how we work out the process of being restoration and recovery from our false identities and attachments.

The truth is that we define belief as more propositional... more something we simply agree with. But it's relational.

**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."**

He says, "Today salvation has come to this house ..." not just that salvation *will* come ...but that it *has come* to your house. Past ...perfect tense. Why? "Because I'm here."

Christian salvation is not a matter of following rules or pushing buttons. You have to know who Jesus is. Salvation is coming to rest in what he has done for you.

Invitation / Prayer

**Song of Response:** Living For Your Glory <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdGR0vmribI>

**Resources:** John Hamby ("Suddenly and Surprisingly Saved!"); Dr. J. Ligon Duncan III ("Today Salvation Has Come to This House"); Ray Pritchard (Zaccheus Anonymous); Tim Keller (WITH THE POWERFUL, The Real Jesus, Part 2)

**Notes:**

1a. <https://nypost.com/2018/12/21/new-years-resolutions-last-exactly-this-long/>

1b. Similarly, C.S. Lewis wrote: "Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for these desires exists. A baby feels hunger; well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim; well there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire; well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire for which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world." .... C.S. Lewis

2. There is an old hymn called, I Sought the Lord and Afterward I Knew. And the first stanza of that hymn captures this well, stating:

“I sought the Lord and afterward I knew, He moved my soul to seek Him seeking me. It was not I who found O Savior true; no, I was found of Thee.”

2b. Another example is the woman by the well in Samaria and they're in the midst of a fascinating theological discussion and Jesus says, “Look, I'll answer that question, I'll deal with that issue, but first go get your husband and bring him back and then we'll continue the conversation.” And she says, “Well Jesus, I don't have a husband.” And He says, “You know, that's a really, really well-put answer because you're correct. You don't have a husband. You're living with a guy right now and you've had five previous husbands!” And what is her response? “Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet.” And that's exactly what's going on here.<sup>3</sup> C.S. Lewis, Letters of C.S. Lewis, 13 June 1951, p. 233

4. Drew from this larger point from one of the sermons listed as source: Thomas Chalmers was a great, great Scottish writer, preacher, professor, and leader in the 19th century. He was the leader of what became the Free Church of Scotland formed in 1843. And he preached a famous sermon called “The Expulsive Power of a New Affection.” And the idea behind that wonderful sermon was simply this — you can't fight a sin that you love, you can't fight an idol of the heart, you can't fight a desire that is set on the wrong place by some sort of simple act of willing not to do that thing. You have to have a new affection of greater power that motivates you to love that thing, to focus your desires on that affection, rather than on the idol, the sin, the old desire. And Chalmers, in that message, talks about when a person is a converted you have a new affection. Your heart is set on God. Your heart is set on Christ. It's changed by the Gospel so that who you worship is different. You don't worship you; you worship God. You don't love this world and use God; you use the world and you love God. And what we see in this story is the evidence of a new affection in Zacchaeus' heart, whereas he had been a rich man and he had been made wealthy by unsavory and unscrupulous means, suddenly now he is on fire for Christ and he's giving away the stuff that was the object of his old affection.