

“Jesus With Us: Jesus With The Lonely” | Rev Jordan Griesbeck | September 27, 2020

Old Testament Readings [Gen 2:7-9, 15-18](#)

2⁷ then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature. ⁸ And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there He put the man whom He had formed. ⁹ And out of the ground the LORD God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ...

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

¹⁸ Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”

Epistle Reading [Rev 21:1-4](#)

21 ¹ Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. ² And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. ⁴ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Gospel Reading [Luke 19:1-10](#)

19 ¹ He entered Jericho and was passing through. ² And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³ And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. ⁴ So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” ⁶ So he hurried and came down and received Him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” ⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” ⁹ And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Introduction

Humans are almost always lonely, especially now during the Covid-19 pandemic (masked and quarantined). Let’s look how Jesus deals with our loneliness; three points: the loneliness of Adam, the loneliness of Zacchaeus and the intimacy of Christ.

Background

1. The loneliness of Adam.

- a. Loneliness is the first thing God condemns (Gen 2:18) ... it is not good.
- b. Tim Keller says Adam was not lonely because he was imperfect, he was lonely because he was perfect, made in God’s image: he needed someone to love. Loneliness doesn’t mean something is wrong with us, it means something is right with us.
- c. Some of us are lonely because we don’t have partners; some of us are lonely even if we have partners. [Sherry Turkle](#) calls this being “alone together.” Some marriages turn into arrangements, with no real intimacy or companionship.
- d. To be lonely is to be human; Adam is a picture of the loneliness of humanity.

2. The loneliness of Zacchaeus.

- a. Zacchaeus is one of the loneliest people in the Bible: a short, rich, tax collector; he has no friends and people grumble about him being a sinner (Luke 19:7). Zacchaeus is a picture of the loneliness that comes from sin.
- b. Sin leads to loneliness, it isolates us. [Mary Karr](#) wrote of her 4’x4’ back porch, where she drank and smoked; the only place which she controlled; sin shrank her world and it shrinks our worlds; sin promises us pleasure but we end up isolated.
- c. Some of us know the loneliness of addiction, cut off from everyone; or the loneliness of fear, trusting only in oneself; or the loneliness of shame, feeling unworthy.
- d. A paradigm of shame can involve wounds, lies and vows. Someone might use one of our vulnerabilities against us (wound); so we tell ourselves it is never safe to be vulnerable again (lie); so we commit to never being vulnerable again (vow).
- e. We will do anything to avoid shame; the end result is that no one knows us and we end up lonelier than we previously were. We start as Adam and end as Zacchaeus. The hope for all this loneliness, shame, fear and sin is intimacy. Real intimacy requires real vulnerability, for us to come out of our shadows to be touched.

3. The intimacy of Christ.

- a. He pursues us. Jesus pursues us in our loneliness; e.g., He was determined to be with Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was a lonely, lost sinner and Jesus looked at him. To be seen is the thing we most fear but, also, most crave.
 - b. He sees us. If we feel lonely this morning, we should know Jesus sees us; He looks at us with eyes of compassion because He knows loneliness: 40 days in the wilderness; before His crucifixion; on the cross. He looks at us and says “I know.”
 - c. He makes a home for us. Nothing is more personal than our homes; but our homes can feel lonely. Jesus asking to stay at Zacchaeus’ home is a beautiful illustration of the Gospel, as [John 14:23](#) records Jesus saying: If anyone loves Me, My Father will love him and We will come to him and make Our home with him (inside our bodies; and, at the end of all things, God will make the entire world His home (Rev 21)).
- The Bible begins in a garden with man alone and ends in a garden with no one alone. The whole trajectory of the Bible is God moving closer and closer to us. As [St Augustine](#) said: God is closer to us than we are to ourselves – that’s intimacy.

Discuss

1. To be lonely is to be human; Adam is a picture of the loneliness of humanity. (1d)
2. Zacchaeus is a picture of the loneliness that comes from sin. (2a)
3. The loneliness that results from addiction, fear, shame. (2c)
4. We will do anything to avoid shame; the end result is that no one knows us. (2e)
5. The intimacy of Christ: He pursues us, sees us and makes a home for us. (3a-c)
6. The Gospel is the intimacy of Christ, pursuing, touching and gazing upon us (Conc).

Conclusion/Application

•When we think about Jesus we tend to think about what He does for us: He forgives us, He saves us, He redeems us. But, He came into the world also just to be with us. [Mark 3:13-14](#) relates how Jesus wanted to be with those He desired and we should know He wants to be with us. The Gospel isn’t just this transaction where we believe in Him in exchange for Him doing certain things for us, but the Gospel is actually this intimate relationship: Jesus pursuing us in love, touching us in love and gazing upon us in love.