

Luke 18:31-19:10

See Jesus!

Introduction

Mason and I recently went on a 3-day backpacking trip in Nantahala National Forest. We had pretty good weather the first two days, but on the last day it rained hard. My glasses got rained on, fogged up, and the protective coating on the lenses started to flake off. Although I could see, my vision was obscured to the point at which it was sometimes difficult to see where the trail led. I was constantly trying to clear my lenses to get a clear view of the trail and what was going on around me.

In this morning's passage, Luke offers us an opportunity to clear our lenses as we look at Jesus.

We will see Jesus

through the lens of God's fulfilled promises
through the lens of your weakness
through the lens of your sin debt

Here's the main idea: **See your own need and see that Jesus is who you truly need.**

See Jesus Through the Lens of Fulfilled Promises (18:31-34)¹

This passage begins as Jesus calls the Twelve disciples aside and tells them to pay attention because everything that has been written about the Son of Man, Jesus, is about to take place. This means centuries' worth of prophecies.

Jesus' Prediction

1. Delivered over to the Gentiles

This is spoken about by David:

“For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me;
they have pierced my hands and feet—”
(Psalm 22:16 ESV)

¹ Bock, Darrell L. 2008. *Luke. Vol. 2 9:51-24:53*. Grand Rapids, Mich. Baker Academic.

Gentiles were often called “dogs” because they were unclean like stray dogs.² Coinciding with the prophecies, Romans were the ones who drove the nails, even if the Jewish people delivered Jesus over to them.

2. Jesus Will Suffer

Jesus will be:

- Mocked (Lk 22:63-65; 23:11, 36; Mt 27:29, 39-44)
- Shamefully treated by being stripped of his clothes, spit upon (Mt 27:28, 31, 35; Mk 15:20; Lk 23:34)
- Flogged (Mt 27:26; Lk 18:33; Jn 19:1)
- Killed (Mt 27:50; Mk 15:37; Lk 23:46; Jn 19:30; Ac 3:15; 5:30)

Not only did Jesus predict how his death would take place, but the Old Testament predicts it:

“But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people.

All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;

“He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”

(Psalm 22:6-8 ESV)

We also see this in Isaiah:

“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”

(Isaiah 53:3 ESV)

3. Jesus Will Rise on the Third Day

“Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.”

(Isaiah 53:10 ESV)

The suffering servant will be crushed and put to grief, his soul will make an offering for guilt. That describes death.

² <https://www.gotquestions.org/power-of-the-dog.html>

The passage also says that Jesus will see His offspring (spiritual sons and daughters), and that His days will be prolonged. This means Jesus will live after his death.

QUESTION: A passage used by Jesus as a prophecy of His resurrection is Jonah 1:17. Read this passage and Luke 11:29-32. How is Jonah's being in the belly of the fish a forecast of what Jesus will do?

All of these things will happen just as Jesus has predicted them. My sons like to play Fantasy baseball with their friends. Fantasy baseball is based on the kind of predictions that are intelligent guesses.

Jesus makes another kind of prediction. He already knows what is going to happen because in His Godhood, He is not limited by the linear nature of time. He has already seen it happen.

The Disciples' Reaction

These are the men who Jesus uses to write the New Testament, to preach the Gospel to all nations, those who will proclaim the message of Jesus in spite of great persecution, yet they have no idea what Jesus is talking about. If they were tested on the material, they would get a solid 0% on the exam.

In the beginning of his Gospel, Luke states that he wrote his Gospel account from eyewitness testimony (Lk 1:1-4). The disciples told Luke and others, "we missed it. Not only were we spiritually dull, it was hidden from us. It took divine revelation to understand what Jesus was telling us."³ But this has not been hidden from us on the other side of the cross! Jesus fulfills the whole Old Testament. All of salvation history is fulfilled in one man. This is why we talk about Jesus so much. We are a Gospel-centered church and we always preach about Jesus because the message of Jesus is woven through the whole Bible.

It's also why we emphasize the substitutionary death of Jesus. Some people don't want to think about the death of Jesus. They don't like thinking about God the Father offering His only Son. They don't like thinking of Jesus, the innocent, taking on guilt that is not His. Yet proportionally more of each of the Gospels is spent recalling the last week of Jesus' life and His death than any other aspect of His ministry.

What is the content of the disciples' preaching throughout the book of Acts? They preach the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus, as predicted by the Old Testament.

QUESTION: How does the report of the disciples' cluelessness demonstrate the authenticity of the Gospels?

³ Recall Luke 10:21.

Sovereignty in Salvation

What we see here is that Jesus is sovereign and in control of history. What looks like a tragedy is a willing sacrifice. It was done on purpose and it's actually a great victory on our behalf.

Think about your own story. Do you struggle with the events of your own life? Do things seem out of control? Does it seem like someone is shaking a big Magic 8-ball full of senseless suffering and handing it to you?

Yet this is not the understanding of history that we get from this passage. God is sovereign and rules over all things. Not only are the events of our lives known by God, but He is capable of using even the most tragic events for His good purposes. Could there be an event that seems more senseless in history than the cross of Jesus? Man does everything right, serves God faithfully, loves sinful people perfectly, and gets the worst punishment imaginable for His efforts. It follows that if God can accomplish our salvation through Jesus, then isn't He able to use difficult events in our lives, which are of a much lesser magnitude, for His glory.

In this passage, Jesus invites us on the other side of the cross to "See." Look at Jesus again through the lens of promises fulfilled. See yourself as the beneficiary of that sacrifice.

QUESTION: How does the idea that God is sovereign over your suffering helpful? Are there ways in which this truth is difficult to take in?

See Jesus Through the Lens of Your Own Weakness (18:35-43)

The Setting

For the past ten chapters or so, we have seen Jesus travel from Galilee and Samaria down southward towards Jerusalem, but there have been relatively few geographic markers. Jericho is our first trail marker in a while.

Jericho is approximately 18 miles from Jerusalem. The Jericho described is likely the "new" Jericho, built a short distance from the old one. It represents a gateway to Jerusalem from the Jordan River Valley, so many people are traveling through this location.⁴

The Blind Man

We know little of his life except for the fact that he is blind and that he has been reduced to begging for a living. This is not much of a resume. His life is one of physical and economic weakness.

⁴ Morris, Leon, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 3 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. IVP/Accordance electronic ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

In our present day, so much advocacy has been done for people with disabilities in our country, and so much technology has been leveraged to help them do more. Allie's great-grandfather, Joseph Klunk was such an activist.⁵ That kind of help creates hope, but there is not much hope in this man's story. He finds himself stuck.

Encountering Jesus, the Son of David

When the crowd passes by and he is told that Jesus is passing by, he recognizes the name of Jesus, likely from tales circulating about His miracles. There was probably no opportunity for him to travel and see Jesus without help.

The blind man begins to cry out to Jesus, calling him the "Son of David." This is an interesting choice of words. He could have called him "Jesus of Nazareth" along with everyone else. "Son of David" is a Messianic title used only here in the Gospel of Luke (Matthew uses the title more than 6x in reference to Jesus).

Why did he use this particular title? When Israelites thought of a king, they thought of David, a man who worshipped God and wrote many psalms. They thought of David the warrior king who defeated God's enemies in battle. They thought of David, who was a shepherd of sheep as a boy and a shepherd-king of God's people when he became a man. Not only this but David was promised by God that a man from his lineage would always sit on the throne (2 Sam 7).

Yet David's lineage of kings became corrupt and led God's people to worship other gods, just as Israel's kings had done. Their reign ended during the Babylonian Captivity (Zedekiah last reigned in 586 BC). Did God's promise fail?

In spite of the failure of David's line, as the kingdom of Judah winds down in the 6th century, God begins to issue little promises about a David-figure, especially in the Prophetic books.

"And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them. I am the LORD; I have spoken."
(Ezekiel 34:23-24 ESV)

So there is a growing expectation that the Messiah will come from the line of David and restore Israel. This blind beggar is naming Jesus as the Messiah, the savior of Israel.

QUESTION: How do you see Jesus fulfilling Ezekiel 34's prophecy in this passage? See also Ps 132:10-12; Isa 9:7; Jer 23:5; 30:9; 33:15; Amos 9:11 and Zech 12:10 for more prophecies about David.

⁵ For more information on Joseph Klunk, see <https://sightcentertoledo.org/joseph-f-clunk/>

Weakness Meets Mercy

Why is this blind man able to see something about Jesus that many people in the crowd don't? Remember, to them Jesus is just "Jesus of Nazareth." Look at what he leads with, the cry "have mercy on me!" In this case, mercy means something like pity or compassion. This man sees Jesus through the lens of His own weakness because he recognized his own need for Jesus' mercy. He is placing his faith in Jesus.

We are all weak. Some of us are physically weak (allergies, eyesight, disability). Some of us are especially susceptible or vulnerable to anxiety or depression. Charles Spurgeon was strong in the Lord. He knew the Gospel, committed to holiness, but he struggled with depression through his whole ministry.⁶

"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair;"
(2 Corinthians 4:7-8 ESV)

Paul is describing the ordinary human condition. We are all weak and fragile like a flower pot. Paul says we are "afflicted in every way"—physically and emotionally. This is just a symptom of living in a fallen world.

What is remarkable about this account is that this blind beggar addresses Jesus as *the* solution to his problem, the Son of David. He is open to the idea of the Messiah being here and now because He needs the Messiah. He readily and insistently declares his weakness, his need for help, "have mercy on me!"

This is his one shot. If he is ever to recover his sight, he needs a miracle. So he begins crying out, "JESUS, SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME!" We can imagine him pushing his way towards Jesus. When people get in his way, perhaps he grabs hold of them and pushes his way forward, continuing his cry, "SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME!" People are likely annoyed with the man because he's being too loud. It can be annoying to have someone yelling in your ear. They tell the blind man to shut up, but he is insistent, because he knows he needs mercy. He rightly understands that only Jesus can help.

The Usefulness of Weakness

In our culture, we do not like to admit weakness and dependence. Rather, we value independence. But, there is dark side of independence: we can begin to think we

⁶ For a helpful short read on Spurgeon's depression, see Eswine, Zack. 2017. Spurgeon's Sorrows : Realistic Hope for Those Who Suffer from Depression. Fearn, Ross-Shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications Ltd.

have no need for God's grace. This is the fruit of pride. The more ability or abundance we have, the less we think we need God. This man's weakness helps him to understand his need for help.

The Apostle Paul was an incredibly smart man, possessing the learning equivalent of several PhD's, but as the Apostle Paul walked with Jesus, He recognized his own inherent weakness as a human being. The entire book of 2 Corinthians is an epistle of weakness. Paul talks about the fact that he's not a great speaker (2 Cor 11:6). He also talks about his thorn in the flesh:

“But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

(2 Corinthians 12:9 ESV)

Paul doesn't mind broadcasting his weaknesses. They only serve to display the strength of Jesus. This is faith, putting all your weight on the cane, placing the weight of your life on Jesus.

QUESTION: What weakness do you deal with on a regular basis? How can it be useful to you as you learn to see your need for Jesus?

What Stops the Savior

Jesus is on His way to the most important events of His life and ministry. He could have kept walking and let this man be lost in the crowd, but Jesus mercifully stops in answer to his faith. This is what attracts Jesus to this man. As He stops and listens compassionately, asking, “What do you want me to do for you?” he returns to the man a shred of his human dignity. Jesus heals him with a word, “recover your sight.”⁷ He shows the blind man the mercy he needs.

QUESTION: When else in the Gospels does a person's faith provoke a response from Jesus? How can you put this kind of faith into practice in your everyday life?

Application

Let me invite you to clean your lenses. Can you see your own weakness? Maybe your weakness is a physical ailment. Maybe you are emotionally susceptible to

⁷ In the Greek, this is one word, the imperative *anablepsen*. Bauer, W., F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, eds. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3d, Accordance electronic ed., version 2.8. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

something like anxiety or depression. Maybe you don't have a great memory, or you struggle to concentrate. Perhaps you find it hard to sleep through the night.

If you let it, that weakness, that need for mercy teaches you something wonderful. *You need God.* This man saw Jesus through the lens of his own weakness, his own need. It's what produced the desperation that He had for Jesus and His mercy. He knew he needed help, and that understanding led him to faith.

Look at Jesus through the lens of your own weakness. If you can see that you need Him, you have an accurate picture of Jesus. If you can see that relying on Jesus in your weakness, asking Him for mercy is actually strength, you are seeing properly. The blind man's faith was commended not because his faith was strong but because he came to the right person with his faith. Interestingly, when Jesus healed this man, He just helped his physical sight match his spiritual sight.

Now I See

Jesus showed Him mercy in more ways than one, because there is a spiritual transformation in this man's life as well. When the text says that he follows Jesus, the Greek *anakolutheo* is used. We also see this word used when Peter talks about how the disciples left everything to follow Jesus (Lk 18:28). It often describes situations in which people become followers of Jesus in terms of discipleship. So this man exhibits faith, not only for healing, but faith for salvation as well. The man believed in Jesus as the Son of David. Faith in Jesus transforms his life and he begins to worship God.

But the blind man is not the only one in Jericho in need of Jesus' mercy...

See Jesus Through the Lens of Your Own Sin Debt (19:1-10)

Introducing Zacchaeus

Luke tells us Zacchaeus is a "chief tax collector," who probably supervises several other tax collectors in the area. He is working the route between the east of Palestine and Jerusalem (Morris). Zacchaeus is one in a series of tax collectors in Luke:

- The humble tax collector in Jesus' story of the Pharisee and the tax collector in the Temple (18:9-14)
- The tax collectors who are drawing near to Jesus as Jesus begins to tell the parables about lost things (Lk 15:1)
- Levi the tax collector (Lk 5:27-32).

Zacchaeus is also one in a series of rich men in the Gospel of Luke:

- The rich man who built bigger barns (Lk 12:16-21)
- The Rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31)

- The Rich young ruler (Lk 18:18-30).

Recall that Jesus said it was hard for the rich to enter into the kingdom!

Interestingly Zacchaeus' name means "righteous" or "pure."⁸ Tax collectors notoriously lived impure lifestyles.

The Urgency to See Jesus

Just like the blind man, Zacchaeus wants to get closer to Jesus. At least he would like to see him. However, he is physically unable because he is vertically challenged and everyone else in the crowd is taller.

Why don't they move out of the way for him? A well-mannered crowd might do so, but there is a problem. They hate him. We sing cute-sounding songs about Zacchaeus, but he's not a nice man. He works for the Romans, and is a traitor to his own people. He also overcharges them "service fees" which line his own wallet. In short, he lives a life of comfort as a result of their misery.

As a result, he has been ostracized by people around him. The only people who socialize with him are people who are outcasts like him, or people who know he is rich and like him for his money. This is a picture of how sin isolates us from others, separating us not only from God but from our fellow man.

So he runs to this tree.⁹ An interesting thing about Zacchaeus is how much he runs around in the story. There is a sense of urgency in what he is doing. It's because just like the blind man, Zacchaeus sees Jesus as the one who can solve his problem. He knows he needs mercy.

Zacchaeus knows he has no right to be near a holy man like Jesus. He has too many bad things. He is hopelessly lost and unredeemable, so he must put himself out there in faith. Imagine: here's a little guy climbing up into a tree to see. That's going to attract some attention. Some people will laugh. Jesus could call him out for his sin, pointing at him and saying, "This is exactly what's wrong with this country." The whole crowd would turn around and look at him and laugh and clap.

Yet he is willing to look a little ridiculous so he can see Jesus, because his need is urgent. If someone offered you some free property, a free car but you had to get over there right away, wouldn't you move with urgency? The blind man didn't care how loud he was. He wanted to get to Jesus. Zacchaeus doesn't care how he looks. He wants to get to Jesus. Zacchaeus can't let Jesus pass by. He recognizes in Jesus an opportunity for redemption—if Jesus would give him the time of day and show him mercy, his life might change. This little tax collector from Jericho who is so unrighteous might become righteous.

⁸ Morris, Leon, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 3 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. IVP/Accordance electronic ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

⁹ In conversation, Rob mentioned the interesting connection to the cross here. We run to that "tree" for salvation.

So, with the flicker of faith that he has, Zacchaeus climbs up that tree.

QUESTION: Do you seek Jesus with the urgency of Zacchaeus? If so, what inspires that urgency? If not, what is keeping you from seeking Him in this way?

Jesus Stops Again (vv. 5-6)

Again, Jesus could have walked on by. There were many people in the crowd, but He sees this little tax collector and his mustard seed faith, up in a tree because no one would let him to the front of the crowd, ostracized by his own sin. Unlike the blind man Zacchaeus caused his own problem. Our world would say “Zacchaeus, you made your bed, now lie in it.”

But Jesus shows mercy to this outcast. By saying “I’m coming to your house” what is implied is that Jesus will be his houseguest, likely staying overnight to rest.¹⁰ He is drawing near to Zacchaeus, showing mercy by offering the fellowship he has been denied.

And, notice, Jesus makes the first move here. He stops and invites himself over, much like Jesus does to the Laodiceans in Revelation:

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.”

(Revelation 3:20 ESV)

Zacchaeus is Redeemed (vv. 7-10)

Notice people grumble in verse 7 as Jesus extends mercy. Just like the Pharisees, just like the older brother (Lk 15:28-30). There is nothing that provokes a legalist like God extending mercy to someone. They might say, “You have no right to be here next to Jesus. You came in the wrong door.”

QUESTION: Do you find yourself having this kind of reaction to God’s mercy being shown to people?

Notice also that Zacchaeus sincerely repents. Repentance means you turn from your sin. By contrast, you can be convicted without turning from your sin. You can know it is wrong and do nothing about it. Repentance, rather, involves a change of heart that is seen in actions. It’s not enough just to say “I’m sorry” and cry a few tears. That alone is not repentance. Zacchaeus actually becomes someone different: a giver instead of a taker, practicing generosity.

¹⁰ Bock, Darrell L. 2008. *Luke. Vol. 2 9:51-24:53*. Grand Rapids, Mich. Baker Academic.

Zacchaeus also repents by restoring what he took from others. In the Old Testament, we see two kinds of restitution: restitution for unintentional harm and restitution for intentional harm. Leviticus 5:15 states that for unintentional harm, restitution requires full price plus one-fifth. Exodus 22:1 says that in the case of intentional harm (in this case, sheep stealing), you repay four times the original worth.¹¹ In repaying fourfold, Zacchaeus shows he understands the intentionality of his sin and commits himself publicly to making things right for those he has wronged.

QUESTION: If we cannot “pay God back” for His salvation, then why is personal restitution an appropriate response of repentance?

Jesus then pronounces Zacchaeus publicly as a man who has been redeemed by faith. This is what is meant by “Son of Abraham” (19:9). Abraham is Old Testament picture of salvation through faith. Zacchaeus’ faith has been demonstrated by repentant actions (Jas 2:14-26; Luke 3:7-14).

Lastly, Jesus announces that He came to seek and save the lost. This is Jesus’ mission statement, reminding us why he is here. But who is “the lost” in this story? All of them. Every last person there. And who sees himself rightly? Who has cleared his lenses? Zacchaeus, the tax collector. Zacchaeus understands that he is a debtor. He owes God a sin debt. He owes others. Ironically, his job has been telling other people what they owe him, but Zacchaeus reckons that he is the debtor. He should be thrown into debtors’ prison by God for all eternity to work off his sin debt!

But God who is rich in mercy opened Zacchaeus’ eyes. Not only to see his own sin, but to see Jesus by faith as the solution to his sin problem!

Do you see your sin? It’s worse than what you and I can understand. Yet the good news of the Gospel is that Jesus came to save lost people like you and me. He still shows mercy today like He did to Zacchaeus.

Conclusion: See Jesus!

Clear your lenses this morning.

See Jesus through the lens of salvation history

It happened to Him just as He said, just as God promised He would. He was mocked for you. Spit on for you. He allowed Himself to be denigrated and destroyed on the cross for you. Yet, He was perfectly in control of how He brought about your salvation. And, He knows what He is doing with your life. Have you ever seen a bobbled catch in baseball? You don’t have to worry about that with Jesus. He knows exactly what He is doing with your life.

¹¹ Morris, Leon, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*. Vol. 3 of Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. IVP/Accordance electronic ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

See Jesus through the lens of your own weakness

Can you see your weakness, how dependent you are on the Lord? Can you see your own need for Him, just as the blind man had nowhere else to go?

Jesus met the need of the blind man, he restored his sight. Jesus may not take away your weakness. He may leave you with that weakness in this life, because it reminds you of your need for Him and reminds you to place your faith in Him instead of in your own strength. I am learning to rejoice in my weaknesses, because they remind me of what is true. *I need Jesus.*

See Jesus through the lens of your own sin debt

What a reminder Zacchaeus is. What a gift it is to understand the gravity of our sin, and how much we have been forgiven. About a sinful woman who repented and worshipped Jesus, He says:

“Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.”

(Luke 7:47 ESV)

If we remember the staggering cost that Jesus paid for us, we will love Jesus more. We will be faithful to Him when we might be tempted to stray.

We also see that nothing is impossible with God. Although Jesus said that it was difficult for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God, here Zacchaeus is, a son of Abraham. Rich people *can* come to Jesus. Hardened sinners *can* come to Jesus. *You* came to Jesus. Salvation is miraculous. Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost.

If you have never come to Christ like Zacchaeus, see what Jesus has done on your behalf. He has extended mercy to you—see your need! There is no way to earn His mercy. You must respond to Jesus in faith. You must leave your sin and follow His lead.

Here is the encouragement to us all: if we understand our need for Him, and by faith see Him as the one we need, then His power will be perfected in our weakness and He will get all the credit for the amazing things He does through our lives.

QUESTION: Which of these three “lenses” was most helpful in your own growth in Christ as you read the passage?