

Zaccheaus - Luke 19:1-10 North/Lake G - All-age service at North1

SLIDE - Title

Zaccheaus - Luke 19:1-10 North/Lake G - All-age service at North

Today like each and every day when we open the Bible, we're struck by wonder and glory of the Lord Jesus. He is simply so attractive - who wouldn't want to hang out with him?

SLIDE

I remember a song from my childhood.

Oh, How I love Jesus x 3

Because he first loved me

Except for the fact that he is the Lord of glory, the mighty creator of everything, worthy of all our praise. I think that we would know instinctively that we were unworthy of being close to him, for he glorious, holy and righteous, and we are sinful.

This is a great story - a beautiful story. When you hear it for the first time, you love it, don't you? A man's encounter with Jesus so unexpected - brimming with forgiveness, with repentance, with sheer wonder and gratitude and leading to an absolute transformation of this little man. Perhaps the story is a little too familiar. There are however some gems here that are easy to miss.

Prayer

Introduction

Earlier today Sarah took us through a bunch of short words, microscopic words - well, maybe not microscopic. Words however that punch way about their weight.

I'm calling them microscopic because in a way they align with Zachheus' short stature - the word in the original language is micros - from where we get the word microscope. Zaccheaus is pretty small. Kid's I'd love you to listen out for the words as they come up during the talk: seek, save, too, also, house.

Context

From Luke 9:51 - the whole sweep of Luke's Gospel is about Jesus on his way to Jerusalem. And that journey colours everything that happens while Jesus and his disciples are on the road.

SLIDE

51 When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. 52 And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him.

53 But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.

Just take a look at some examples. Luke keeps reminding us that Jesus is heading to Jerusalem:

SLIDE

13:22

22 He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem.

SLIDE

17:11

11 On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee.

SLIDE

18:31-34

31 And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.

32 For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon.

33 And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise."

And the Zaccheaus story is the last thing that takes place before he enters triumphantly in Jerusalem.

SLIDE - Blank

Yearning

Before we get into the text of the Zaccheaus story, I want us to think for a moment about deep in our hearts what we yearn for.

Do you find yourself yearning for a better and more perfect world? Well, Canberra is a pretty good place to live! How could you improve on Canberra?

But seriously, who would you want to have or not have in your perfect world? I reckon that most of us would want a world in which there is no place for a greedy, despicable and tiny little man like Zaccheaus?

While there are Zaccheaus in this world the world will never be ok. They're the problem with the world, aren't they? "I don't want to live in a world like that. I want a better world."

You can see the problem here. I'm the one deciding who should and shouldn't be in my world. However when I point the finger at someone else, I'm pointing 3 fingers right back at myself. I'm no better than Zaccheaus. In fact Zaccheaus is better off than me, for knows that he is lost. He's got no friends - except perhaps other tax collectors. When I point the finger at others I'm showing that I'm just as lost as he is. Only I don't realize that I'm lost.

It's not my world to chose who lives in it. It is God's world. And he decides who should live in his forever kingdom. And I'm just as much the problem in this world as the Zaccheaus' that I want to avoid. Jesus is king of this world. And he decides who gets to be a part of his kingdom.

And guess what? The world or the kingdom that Jesus brings, is so much better than even your or my dream world. And why is that? Because it doesn't exclude a man like Zaccheaus but includes him. Yes, a man like Zaccheaus. One who once was unpleasant, rapacious and despised. But Jesus changed him. His heart is totally changed. And that's a great world to live in! I want to live in a world like that with people like him. Forgiven sinners. And I'm one of them.

This wonderful story captures in a nutshell all that Jesus has come to do. Why wouldn't you want to live in a kingdom like this? With a king like king Jesus? One who has compassion on the lost?

When you come to Jesus in faith, trusting your life to him, you get so much more than you can ever imagine. Remember what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well.

SLIDE - Bible

"Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

That's Zaccheaus.

Zaccheaus is a chief tax collector and he's rich. That marks him out as a Jewish traitor. He's collecting taxes for the Romans. Remember the Romans are the invaders. They've come in from outside and now their soldiers are everywhere. They tax the people of the land and they use people like Zaccheaus from the people to collect taxes for them. And as well as collecting for the Romans these tax collectors took a big cut of the taxes for themselves. It would be like in today's terms you heard a war breaking out somewhere in the world and so you decided to go there to sell weapons to both sides to get rich by it. The more the war drags on the richer you become. No wonder Zaccheaus found himself isolated from the rest of the crowd.

But when he hears that Jesus is coming Zaccheaus doesn't care that he's alone. He doesn't care that it is undignified running ahead and climbing a tree. Isn't tree climbing something that only kids do? He just wants to see who Jesus is. He's heard about him and is curious to see what he looks like. And so, because he can't see through the crowds, he runs ahead and climbs a tree. Now, Zaccheaus isn't showing any particular trust in Jesus at this stage. He simply wants to see him and works out the best way to do that. But then Jesus comes to the place, under the very tree that Zaccheaus is perched in. Jesus stops and looks up. You can just imagine Zaccheaus up there in the tree, holding his breath. "Please don't let him see me!" I imagine that he's feeling pretty uncertain or just plain dumb. Saying to himself, "What's he stopping for? What does he want? I just wanted to see what he looks like!"

But then Jesus speaks, "Zaccheaus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." Isn't that simply amazing! Zaccheaus hasn't done anything special. He hasn't said anything or cried out or asked Jesus for anything. Jesus simply stops and singles him out and chooses to come and spend time with him in his home.

And what Zaccheaus' reaction?

He hurries and comes down and receives Jesus joyfully. Overjoyed, he's probably saying to himself, "Why me? What did I do to deserve this? Nothing. Jesus is coming to my home! Wow! Amazing. Quick. I better get home. I've got to get things ready for my honoured guest."

SLIDE - Bible

The crowds however are not all that happy. v.7

7 And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."

"Jesus, you must know who this man is and all that he has done to harm our people. He's a worm. We'd rather be seen dead than go to that man's house. He doesn't deserve a visit from anyone, let alone you, Jesus. Jesus, are you out of your mind?"

SLIDE - Bible

But just look at the effect that Jesus' visit has on Zaccheaus. He stand up and says it to the Lord, v8

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."

Notice that now Zaccheaus calls Jesus "Lord". He's no longer simply curious. He's come to put his trust in Jesus as his king.

And giving away half of all he owns and restoring 4fold anyone whom he has wronged. What's that about? It is simply the fruit of his new found faith in Jesus. He knows that Jesus has forgiven him, restored him, loved him. And now the only appropriate response to such grace is the repent and put his trust in Jesus as king.

Jesus goes on to comment on what has just taken place and it is one of those great summary statements throughout Luke's Gospel, where Jesus looks straight at the camera and tells us, the readers, what his ministry is all about. It's crystal clear. We're not left guessing about what Jesus is on about. vv9-10

SLIDE - Bible

*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."*

A wonderful, short statement - a key that fits perfectly unlocks the true meaning of all that Jesus is and has been doing right throughout the Gospel. Zaccheaus, this sinner, this little godless man, who before this only cared for himself, who was lost towards God, today by trusting in Jesus, is saved. This is what Jesus is all about. This is what he came to do. He came to seek and save the lost, to save sinners. Zaccheaus was lost - but Jesus sought him out and found him, and saved him. It's wonderful! Remember what Jesus said elsewhere in the Gospel. It's not the healthy who are in need of a doctor but the sick. The rich young ruler in the chapter just before this one. Those

who think that they are righteous, right with God because of their own good works are in great danger. Zaccheaus is safe as houses. He's saved by Jesus.

Remember our short punchy words: seek, save, lost, house

Here in Jesus' comment at the end of his encounter with Zaccheaus is a whole truckload of them:

Also - he also is a son of Abraham. The also here speaks volumes. Jesus doesn't say, "Today salvation has come to this house for he is a son of Abraham." He says that he also is a son of Abraham. Why the also? Of course he's a son of Abraham. He's a Jew isn't he? He's a son of Abraham by birth. But Jesus is highlighting something different. Today he has become a son of Abraham through faith. In fact that's how anyone becomes a son of Abraham - Romans

Remember, Zaccheaus is a Jew - so he is already a son of Abraham. Every Jew was a son of Abraham. So why does Jesus add the "also" here? I think that Jesus is looking ahead to the time when anyone who put their trust in Jesus, would become a son of Abraham. For whether they were Jew or Gentile it made no difference - in trusting in the Lord Jesus, they would be sharing the same faith that Abraham had

Jesus came

Came from where? From heaven of course.

Seek and save the lost - 2 or even 3 short words. Seek, save, lost.

Zaccheaus knew that he was lost. But now because of his encounter with Jesus he is found. Jesus sought him out and saved him - saved him ultimately at the cross. Where he took our sins and died in our place.

SLIDE

Will you take a leaf from Zaccheaus' book? That is, meet with the Lord Jesus. Respond to his call to you personally. No, it doesn't mean climbing trees and waiting for Jesus to turn up.

It involves recognizing that before God, you are lost. And turning and receiving from him forgiveness and eternal life. Like Zaccheaus you'll receive from him more than you can ever imagine. When you recognize your poverty before king Jesus, your wealth, your status or lack of those things means very little in God's eyes. Jesus came to seek and save you as you are. And that is truly good news. You don't need to do anything other than simply receive his forgiveness. And that will mean a life of repentance and faith. And as with Zaccheaus it will be accompanied by great joy. As you love out the new life having been joined to him.