



ZACCHAEUS: Lost and Found
Lee Coate
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The Crossing Church
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OPENING

This week we are continuing our study called **79 Miles With Jesus**. Our study is about grace extended in a story and a parable as our journey to Jerusalem continues. What better time to talk about grace than this Easter season when we see it abounding in Jesus' sacrifice for our sins on the Cross of Calvary – **God's favor not based on anything we did and in spite of everything we've done.**

SCRIPTURE¹

Luke 19:1-10 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus got to the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be a guest of a sinner." Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Matthew 20:1-15 For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning (6 a.m.) to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard. Then about the third hour he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing. He told them, "You also go and work in my vineyard and I will pay you whatever is right." So they went. He went out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour and did the same thing. About the eleventh hour he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, "Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?" "Because no one has hired us," they answered. He said to them, "You also go and work in my vineyard." When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, "Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first." The workers who were hired about the eleventh hour came and each of them received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. "These who were hired last worked only one hour," they said, "and you made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day." But he answered one of them, "I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money or are you resentful because I am generous?"

OBSERVATION

"People who were nothing like Jesus liked Him. And Jesus liked people who were nothing like Him." (Andy Stanley). Zacchaeus was a tax collector disliked by virtually everyone, yet he was eager to climb a tree to be close to Jesus. Actually, in the first century, all kinds of people, Jews and Gentiles, religious and non-religious, found Jesus compelling. Whether they believed everything he was saying or believed in everything He was doing, there was something enigmatic

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture referenced here is NIV

and charismatic about Him. The reason for this attraction was this singular word – **GRACE. Undeserved, unearned, unqualified favor.** And it was extended to Zacchaeus. He was wealthy because he was a scoundrel. He had made a deal with Rome to collect taxes and, as long as Rome got its money, it didn't care how much the tax men collected and kept for themselves. So, when the people saw Jesus interacting with him, they thought Zacchaeus was going to get his comeuppance -- what he so richly deserved! So, the crowd was clearly unhappy about their meeting. They grumbled that "this guy doesn't even know Jesus at all and has ripped us off as he gets to not only meet Him, but now they are sitting down for a meal together. This is not right. So unexpected. So undeserved! So unfair." Yet we should see Zacchaeus as a lost, broken, miserable man – not that he thought so because, by the world's standards, he was doing alright. Zacchaeus didn't know he needed grace and wasn't even looking for it – what he saw was opportunity to meet an important man. And Jesus turned it into an invitation.

QUESTION: When have you thought God was unfair to you? How do you feel about that situation now?

APPLICATION

Most of us would probably side with the crowd as we continue to wrestle with fully understanding how the Kingdom of God works: How God's economy works; how God sees the world; how God sees us and those around us. **MODGNIK** strikes again! These are challenging concepts for the crowd and for us, right? So, Jesus pivots to a parable for clarification and to help us better understand the concept of grace. It is about a landowner who hires workers throughout the day, from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. and, regardless of how many hours they labored, paid them the same amount.

QUESTION: Think about your own work situation. If you came in at 6 a.m. and worked through to 6 p.m., and another worker who came in a 5 p.m. and worked to 6 p.m. received the same pay as you did, what would your reaction have been? What would you have done or said?

One of the things that often happens in the parables, is that Jesus takes events to an extreme in order to not only shine a light on the Kingdom of God, but also x-rays our hearts. In many stories in the Bible, people muttered just like this crowd, i.e., when Jesus touched a leper or when He went to Matthew's house. Jesus illuminates the absurdity of our resistance to grace and our resistance to receive it. He shines the light on our hypocrisy! The landowner asked, "Isn't it my money to spend as I wish? Haven't I earned it?" How can we be resentful of generosity? That's childish. It's immature. "But we worked harder – aren't we more deserving?" **Uh oh!** Easter isn't about deserving. It is about receiving what we don't deserve! Why would we wish God to withhold His grace from others because we have decided they don't deserve it? The Kingdom of God is characterized by crazy generosity, mercy, forgiveness and grace. Jesus x-rays our hearts and outs us because we see the world the way the 12-hour laborers saw the world. Yet through His Word, Jesus invites us to see it differently and see the people around us differently.

QUESTION: What is the difference between mercy and grace?

QUESTION: Jesus is asking you, "Can you handle the requirements of His kingdom?" What is your response?

QUESTION: What is your answer when Jesus asks if you will step into a system where those who are undeserving get what they don't deserve?

QUESTION: When have you received grace from someone you have wronged?

QUESTION: When have you extended grace to someone who didn't deserve it?

When we begin to understand the Kingdom of God and embrace it every day of our lives, it will feel strange, but also feel awesome. Everyone is invited to this Kingdom and all get in the same way – through Jesus: The ones who are first in line and those who came later, the do-gooders and the do-nothings; the broken and the successful; the confident and the uncertain; the ones with a past and all of us arrogant people who tend to judge others who have a past. We are all invited.

Eugene Peterson wrote: "I began to understand my congregation as a gathering of people that requires a context as large as the Bible itself if we are all to deal with the ambiguities of life in the actual circumstances in which people live them. For me, my congregation would become a work-in-progress – a novel in which everyone and everything is connected in a salvation story in which Jesus has the last word. No reductions to stereotype." Yes, no stereotypes. We are all unique. Something clicked within Zacchaeus when He answered Jesus' invitation to change his life. He got a restart and a reset. Many of us have answered His invitation to accept Him as Savior – to change and walk a journey with Him – not 79 miles, but the journeys of a lifetime.

QUESTION: When did you answer Jesus' call to receive Him as Savior? Tell us about your journey with Him since then.

QUESTION: What do you imagine your future journey will look like?

QUESTION: If you haven't answered Jesus' call on your life, what is holding you back? With whom are you sharing His message?

Both the story and the parable are about grace. A sinner was called by Jesus and was extended grace. A landowner (Jesus) extended grace to those who didn't deserve it (us). When we understand the enormity of the grace we individually have received from God, how can we not extend it to everyone we meet. Grace is not stingy – it is meant to be generously applied.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we are humbled by the awareness that we deserve nothing and yet You extend grace to us every day. You forgive our sinfulness, not only from the past, but our daily falling short of Your glory. Help us to do the same for others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

QUESTIONS

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