Make Jesus Visible

Five Days with Jesus and Zacchaeus

This week's message followed Zacchaeus from the tree to the table and then into a transformed life. Jesus saw the man beneath the label, called him by name, moved toward him first, and changed the way he lived. The same grace that reached Zacchaeus still reaches us, and it still becomes visible in the way we treat people and use what God has placed in our hands.

Each day returns to that story and then takes one part of it deeper through another passage. Read slowly. Be honest about your own life. Then take one clear step that makes the love of Jesus visible to someone around you.

Bible quotations are from the New Living Translation unless otherwise noted.

Pastor Daniel

DAY 1

Can People See Jesus Through Me

READ SLOWLY

Luke 19:1–4 and Colossians 4:5–6

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but the people closest to Jesus were blocking his view. That is one of the most uncomfortable details in the story. The crowd probably believed they were there for the right reasons. They wanted to hear Jesus. They wanted to be near him. But their closeness to Jesus did not automatically make them attentive to the person trying to reach him.

The same thing can happen now. We can know the songs, understand the language, attend church, and still make it harder for someone else to see Jesus. A careless comment can do it. A political argument presented as though Jesus belongs to our side can do it. So can judgment, hypocrisy, or the way we speak about people whose lives are different from ours.

Paul tells believers to live wisely among those who do not share their faith and to let their conversations be gracious. He assumes people are watching. They are not only listening to what we say about Jesus. They are noticing what knowing Jesus has done to the way we speak, disagree, forgive, and treat people.

The church should be a window through which people can see Jesus. But sometimes we become a closed door. People cannot see him because they cannot see past us.

This does not mean hiding what we believe or avoiding truth. Jesus was full of both grace and truth. It means our lives should make his character clearer. If people only remember our anger, opinions, or superiority, we have allowed ourselves to become the center of the picture.

Before asking how you can convince anyone to believe, ask a more personal question: What view of Jesus does my life give the people around me? Your family sees how your faith sounds when you are frustrated. Your coworkers see whether it makes you honest and kind. Your neighbors see whether

you notice them. The person who disagrees with you sees whether your love disappears when agreement does.

You do not have to be perfect to make Jesus visible. You do need enough humility to recognize when you are standing in the way and enough courage to move.

ASK YOURSELF

- Who may be trying to see Jesus but struggling to see past Christians or church experiences?
- When people watch my life, what part of Jesus becomes clearer to them?
- Where might my words, reactions, or assumptions be blocking the view?
- What would grace and wisdom look like in one conversation today?

YOUR NEXT STEP

Think of one person who is skeptical, wounded, or distant from faith. Do not begin by correcting them. Ask one sincere question about their experience and listen without defending the church. Let your attention become a window instead of another wall.

PRAY

Jesus, forgive me for the times people have seen more of my pride, anger, or opinions than they have seen of you. Teach me to live with truth and grace. Make my words and actions a clear window through which someone can see your heart. Amen.

DAY 2

He Calls You by Name

READ SLOWLY

Luke 19:5–7, Isaiah 43:1, and Romans 5:6–8

When Jesus reaches the tree, he stops, looks up, and calls Zacchaeus by name. The crowd knew Zacchaeus by his reputation. They knew what he had done, the system he represented, and the people he had harmed. Jesus knew all of that too. But Jesus did not call him thief, traitor, or sinner. He called him Zacchaeus.

Grace can see your sin and still call you by your name.

Some labels were given to us by other people. Failure. Addict. Difficult. Divorced. Too much. Not enough. Other labels came from things we did and now regret. We may believe the worst part of our story is the truest thing about us. Shame keeps repeating the accusation until it sounds like our identity.

Jesus does not deny the truth about Zacchaeus. He also refuses to reduce him to it. He sees the person beneath the layers of greed, isolation, and sin. Then Jesus says, ‘I must be a guest in your home today.’ Zacchaeus had climbed the tree looking for Jesus and discovered that Jesus had already come looking for him.

Romans says Christ died for us while we were still sinners. He did not wait for us to become impressive, cleaned up, or certain. He moved toward us first. That is the order of grace. Jesus comes near, and his presence begins changing us from the inside.

Maybe religion taught you to hide until you could behave better. Jesus tells Zacchaeus to come down. You do not have to climb high enough into a tree, a church, or a better version of yourself to reach him. He knows your name. He knows what happened to you. He knows what you have done. And he is not frightened away by the full truth.

Following Jesus begins by receiving what you could never earn. If you have been distant, skeptical, ashamed, or exhausted from trying to prove yourself, begin honestly. Let him into the actual house, not the cleaned up version you hope to show someday.

ASK YOURSELF

- Which label has been speaking louder than the name God calls me?
- What part of my life am I trying to clean up before letting Jesus near it?
- Do I believe Jesus knows the full truth about me and still moves toward me?
- What would an honest response to his grace look like today?

YOUR NEXT STEP

Write down the label that most often defines you in your own mind. Beneath it, write: 'Jesus knows all of it, and he still calls me by name.' Then tell him plainly what you have been hiding, fearing, or trying to fix alone.

PRAY

Jesus, you know my whole story and you still call me by name. Help me stop hiding behind shame, performance, or fear. I open the real rooms of my life to you. Let your grace reach the places I have kept closed. Amen.

DAY 3

When Grace Reaches Our Hands

READ SLOWLY

Luke 19:8–10, Ephesians 2:8–10, and 1 Timothy 6:17–19

Something happens to Zacchaeus after Jesus enters his home. The man who built his life taking from people begins giving back. He offers half of what he owns to the poor and promises to repay anyone he cheated four times over.

Zacchaeus is not purchasing forgiveness. Jesus called him and came into his home before Zacchaeus offered a dollar. Ephesians makes the order clear: we are saved by grace through faith, not by our good works. Then the same passage says we were created for a life of good works. Grace comes first. A changed life follows.

Generosity was not the price of Zacchaeus's salvation. It was evidence that salvation had reached his heart.

His response also shows that transformation is more than feeling sorry. Generosity asks, 'Who can I help?' A transformed life also asks, 'Whom have I harmed, and how can I make it right?' Zacchaeus does not use a spiritual moment to escape responsibility. Grace gives him the courage to face the damage he caused.

Money was one of the clearest places his old life had ruled him, so it became one of the clearest places his new life could be seen. The same principle reaches beyond money. If control has ruled us, grace teaches us to release it. If pride has ruled us, grace teaches us to apologize. If comfort has ruled us, grace teaches us to notice need. If resentment has ruled us, grace begins opening a path toward forgiveness.

Paul tells those with resources not to place their confidence in wealth, but to be rich in good works and generous to those in need. God is not trying to shame people for having something. He is freeing us from being owned by what we have.

Ask yourself where the grace of Jesus should become visible next. Not as payment. Not as an attempt to impress God. Because Jesus has already moved toward you, what can now change in the way you use your money, time, influence, and attention?

ASK YOURSELF

- Where has following Jesus produced a real change in how I live?
- What part of my life remains guarded from his influence?
- Is there someone I have harmed whom I need to repay, apologize to, or treat differently?
- What resource has God placed in my hands that could help someone else?

YOUR NEXT STEP

Choose one response that turns grace into action. Give something useful, make an overdue apology, repay what you owe, or correct a pattern that has harmed someone. Do it quietly and sincerely. Do not use the action to earn peace with God. Act because his grace has already reached you.

PRAY

Jesus, thank you that I cannot buy your grace and do not have to earn your love. Let what you are doing inside me become visible in how I live. Show me where I need to give, repair, apologize, or change, and give me courage to act. Amen.

DAY 4

Make the Invisible God Visible

READ SLOWLY

1 John 4:7–12 and John 13:34–35

John writes an astonishing sentence: ‘No one has ever seen God.’ Then he says that when we love one another, God lives in us and his love is brought to full expression in us. People cannot see God with their eyes, but they can see what his love does in a person who belongs to him.

The invisible God becomes visible through the love of his people.

Jesus said people would recognize his followers by their love for one another. He did not say they would identify us by our anger, influence, buildings, or ability to win an argument. Truth matters deeply, but truth without the character of Jesus can become another spotlight aimed at everybody else’s failure.

We are not here to patrol the valley and point out every sin from a safe distance. We are here to illuminate Jesus through truth, grace, generosity, and love.

This reaches further than being pleasant. Biblical love moves toward people. It protects dignity. It tells the truth without humiliation. It gives without demanding control. It stays present when life gets inconvenient. Love does not call darkness light, but it refuses to believe darkness is the only thing true about a person.

In the fourth century, the Roman emperor Julian opposed the Christian message. Still, he complained that Christians cared not only for their own poor but for the Roman poor as well. He disagreed with what they believed, but he could not deny how they loved.

Imagine that reputation in our valley. Someone may not agree with our beliefs. They may have questions about the Bible or deep wounds from another church. But what if they still had to say, 'Those people showed up. They listened. They helped my family. They treated me with dignity. They loved when they had nothing to gain.'

The goal is not to make ourselves look good. The goal is to make Jesus easier to see. Love becomes evidence when it leaves the room, crosses the street, enters the workplace, and reaches a person who expected judgment but encountered grace.

ASK YOURSELF

- What do the people closest to me learn about Jesus from the way I love?
- Would someone who disagrees with me still feel respected and cared for by me?
- Where have I used truth as a spotlight instead of a light pointing toward Jesus?
- Who needs love from me when I have nothing to gain in return?

YOUR NEXT STEP

Choose one person who may expect little from Christians. Offer a specific act of love with no argument attached and no demand for recognition. Send encouragement, meet a practical need, share a meal, or show up. Let love speak clearly.

PRAY

God, people cannot see you with their eyes, but they can see what your love does in me. Remove the pride and fear that distort the picture. Let my life illuminate Jesus, especially to people who expect judgment or indifference. Amen.

DAY 5

Give Someone a Preview of Heaven

READ SLOWLY

Revelation 21:1–5 and 2 Corinthians 9:8–12

Revelation shows us where God is taking the story. A day is coming when he will wipe every tear from our eyes. Death, sorrow, crying, and pain will be gone. Everything sin and disease have broken will finally be made right.

We cannot create heaven through generosity. We cannot repair everything that is broken or remove every grief. That belongs to God. But until he makes all things new, his people can give the world small previews of what is coming.

A grocery card is not heaven. To a mother staring at an empty refrigerator, it may mean somebody saw her. To a senior choosing between food and medication, it may mean they do not have to choose this week. To a family carrying a burden quietly, it may be the moment they realize they have not been forgotten.

Paul tells the church that God provides generously so they can be generous. He is not promising that giving will make us wealthy. He is teaching us to see what has been placed in our hands as more than private comfort. Some of it can become relief, dignity, and thanksgiving in somebody else's life.

The gift still has to remain a gift. A gift with strings attached becomes a transaction. The person does not owe us a picture, a story, a prayer, or a visit to church. We do not use someone's need as leverage. We give because Jesus gave himself to us, and his love does not stay locked inside the room.

When you offer the card or meet another need, see the person. Look them in the eye. Learn their name if you can. Speak with dignity, not pity. You are not the hero of their story. You are simply placing something God supplied into the hands of someone he already sees.

Then keep living this way after the card is gone. Generosity is larger than one Sunday and deeper than one financial gift. It is a life that remains interruptible. It is a heart willing to notice. It is a church determined to be known for what it gives, not what it takes.

The church becomes believable when the love of Jesus becomes visible. Go give someone a glimpse of the God who sees them and the future he has promised.

ASK YOURSELF

- What has God placed in my hands that could become help for someone else?
- Am I willing to give without controlling the response or receiving recognition?
- Who in my ordinary routine may feel unseen or forgotten?
- What practice of generosity will continue after this week?

YOUR NEXT STEP

If you still have the grocery card, ask God to bring one person to mind and give it away within the next forty-eight hours. Keep the words simple: 'Our church gave this to me to share, and I would love for you to have it.' If the card is gone, choose one continuing practice of generosity for the next month.

PRAY

Father, thank you for the day when you will make all things new. Until then, open my eyes and my hands. Help me give without pressure, love without leverage, and treat every person with dignity. Make Jesus visible through the way I live. Amen.