

## Little Man Meets Big God

Luke 19:1-10

### Preface

Illus: If we will listen, God is almost always teaching us something. Last week God taught me an important lesson about grace. I am a Baptist Preacher so I figure I know a thing or two about grace. God showed me I have forgotten some important things about grace. Last Saturday was the Mulligan Ministries golf tournament. We were expecting it to be really hot that day so we had numerous cases of water iced down and on carts to hand out as much as the golfers wanted. You would think with it being a church sponsored golf tournament, the golfers would refrain from drinking beer. Most did but a few did not. Even worse, the club house had a cart going around selling beer. A few of the men drank a lot of beer. A couple of the guys started the tournament with iced down beer and proceeded to purchase more as the day went on. As I drove around handing out water and visiting with the golfers, I watched as a couple of the men become more and more inebriated as the day progressed. By the time the tournament was over and it was time to hand out awards, these couple of guys were red faced and mildly drunk. This embarrassed me and angered me. It was clear this was a church sponsored tournament. We began the tournament with prayer. We talked about God and the purpose of the tournament and yet some people simply could not refrain from drinking. I personally feel sorry for anyone who thinks he cannot have a good time unless his brain is lit up by alcohol. So as successful as the tournament was, I was a bit steamed for a couple of days about the drinking and foolish behavior of a couple of the men golfers. Then God reminded me of the story we are about to read.

### Scripture

<sup>1</sup>Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup>A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and

8/25/10

Little Man Meets Big God.doc- 1

was wealthy. <sup>3</sup>He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. <sup>4</sup>So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

<sup>5</sup>When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." <sup>6</sup>So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

<sup>7</sup>All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'"

<sup>8</sup>But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

<sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup>For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost." Luke 19:1-10 NIV

### Introduction

Illus: I remember being on a mission trip in Honduras. As we would travel the roads, on occasion we would come upon a road block. The police officers would have us exit our van and they would proceed to inspect our vehicles. They would indicate they were going to go through our belongings for an inspection. They could tie you up for hours if they wanted. But they always offered an alternative – pay an inspection tax. They would start at \$50.00 per person but after some negotiating you could generally get them down to \$5 or \$10 per person. It quickly got to where we dreaded when we were travelling and would see a road block ahead. This was nothing more than corruption and the policemen would keep most of whatever they could collect. We despised being ripped off and delayed by these men.

Zacchaeus was that sort of man. He had wealth but was greatly disliked. As a tax collector, he worked for Rome and was considered a traitor by the Jewish people. The fact that he

8/25/10

Little Man Meets Big God.doc - 2

worked as a Roman tax collector indicated to others that he was more interested in money than anything else.

Zacchaeus was more than just a tax collector. He was a “chief” tax collector. He was in charge of all the agents and was able to take a “cut” from those who collected taxes for him. He stood on top of the collection pyramid, stuffing his pockets with shekels before he sent the required taxes to Rome.

The people despised tax collectors and especially the chief tax collectors. They were in the same category with adulterers, robbers and other sinners.

But all of that was about to change as this little man was about to meet a big God.

We all remember this story and the little song about it from our childhood. This week God used this story to remind me of some important things we should never forget.

### **1. Sinners are searching**

Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was and what He was all about. He wanted to figure out what it was that made Jesus different from everyone else. He was drawn to this man who had just given sight to the blind beggar on the outskirts of Jericho.

Zacchaeus may not have fully understood what was going on in his heart, but Zacchaeus had a desperate need to get to Jesus. He probably couldn't even explain what drew him to see Jesus.

The problem was that Zacchaeus was short and disliked. He could not see above the crowd and the crowd was not likely to accommodate.

But Zacchaeus was so desperate to see Jesus that he threw out his dignity and shimmied up a tree to get a view of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit reminded me that people need the Lord. People don't desire to be alcoholics just like people don't desire to be

drug addicts. People are simply searching for something in their life that brings peace and satisfaction. They don't find those things in drugs or alcohol but they find temporary relief from reality.

What their soul really longs for is the presence of the Holy Spirit in their life. Isaiah 59:2 says *“our iniquities have separated us from God.”* People are separated from God and their inner soul longs for what is missing, God's presence in their heart.

Until we meet Jesus Christ and fully accept Him as our Savior, we are all like Zacchaeus. We are searching for something but we don't really understand what.

As a church, we must see the lost as searchers desperate to find the peace they long to experience.

### **2. Jesus is seeking sinners**

In verse 5 we see that while Zacchaeus was searching, Jesus was seeking. It was really Jesus who was seeking him: *“When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.’”*

Jesus took note of Zacchaeus. He stopped, looked up, called him by name, and told him that He must come to His house. Again we see that while Jesus has set his face toward the Cross, he stops and ministers to a searching sinner. He knew right where Zacchaeus was because He knew all about him and He was filled with compassion for him.

Illus: Next weekend we will celebrate Labor Day. We celebrate a lot of holidays during the course of a year. But there is no day as great as the day we hear Jesus call our name.

When Christ seeks you and calls upon your name, that is a time to respond and there is no day in your life more glorious.

There's always a sense of urgency about following Christ. 2 Corinthians 6:2 says, "...Now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation."

Can you imagine what must have been going through the minds of those who were walking with Jesus that day? How did Jesus know his name? Why did Jesus stop under that particular tree? Why did Jesus want this sinner to come down right away?

While we are searching, Jesus is seeking. We would never be able to come to Jesus unless He came to us first and called our name.

Illus: I was talking with a man recently who was about to have surgery. He has not been in church in years. He told me that his illness had really turned his heart towards God. He expressed that he believed God was using the illness to get his attention and draw him to God. I said to him, "Can you imagine how special it is to know that the God of the universe loves you so much that He would do something to get your attention and say I want you to be my child?"

Our eyes are truly opened when we come to the realization that God loves us so much that He calls us unto salvation.

### 3. Salvation is spectacular

Zacchaeus didn't receive salvation because he became honest and returned people's money. Zacchaeus became honest and returned people's money because he received salvation.

The searcher found what he was searching for – Jesus Christ. The created met the creator and he rejoiced.

Jesus always knows our heart and he knows our sin. Real salvation will change your life. Real salvation will attack the heart of our sin and it will be forever changed.

One day before, Zacchaeus probably would have denied any wrong doing just as he had done for years. He probably had his

explanations and response to criticism perfectly memorized. No doubt he had said them many times in the past.

But on this day, things were different. Sin never stands a chance when exposed to the light of the Son.

Notice in verse 8 that Zacchaeus says to Jesus "Look, Lord." Immediately repentance begins as salvation does its work of cleansing his heart. True salvation will always involve repentance.

Suddenly the greedy tax collector was the generous one who not only wanted to right his wrongs but wanted to help the less fortunate.

Zacchaeus became sold out for Christ. Jesus had changed his heart and now he wanted to demonstrate that change through his actions. His decision was voluntary and flowed out of gratitude for what Christ had done for him. Whenever Jesus meets someone there is change. Conversion is a radical life-changing event.

We have a lot of folks who have been in and out of church all of their life but have never truly met with salvation. If you've never changed, it may be because you haven't truly been saved.

Illus: William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, understood the importance of asking God to change him. I came across one of his prayers: "Lord, I give you everything there is in this man, William Booth. Do with me what you will."

Salvation is truly spectacular and life-changing.

### Conclusion

Please reread verses 9 & 10. <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

This is where God spoke to me this week, "...this man, too is a son of Abraham." In other words, this man has a right to salvation.

Remember I said I was a bit angered and embarrassed by the behavior of a couple of people who were drinking at the tournament. God was saying to me that He loves them just as much as He loves me.

I am not saved because I am a Baptist Preacher. I am a Baptist Preacher because I have been saved and God has called me to be so. But without salvation I am no different from these guys. I was a searcher too.

Jesus said he came to seek and save what is lost. The mission of Jesus is clear: He is looking for lost sinners to be saved. I needed to be reminded of that.

So in our text, a little man met a big God and his life was forever changed.

In my life, a little man met a big God and He continues to change my life.