

Zacchaeus

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[0 : 00] And we continue then this morning with the next of our little sort of series, where we began looking at last Lord's Day morning, and that is to focus upon those who are addressed by our Lord by name in the New Testament account.

So we looked last Lord's Day morning at the first of those, Mary Magdalene. And today, as you all have gathered, we are looking at the subject of Zacchaeus, who is addressed by our Lord at verse 5 here.

When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide at thy house. Now, the name Zacchaeus, it's a Jewish name, it's the Greek version, with the U-S at the end, it's the sort of Greek applying of it, but it would be the Jewish name Zacchaeus, which means clean, pure.

Now, obviously Zacchaeus in his life as a tax collector would not be considered clean or pure by the population in general. He would be considered a collaborator, one who dealt with the heathen Gentiles, the pagans, and who, as a result, enriched himself by not only collecting the taxes for the Romans, but also collecting, a lot of the time, no doubt, more than was required so that he could become enriched.

And perhaps because he was the chief of the tax directors, the publicans, he would have other lesser publicans under him, and they no doubt would pay fees or percentages up the line to him as well.

[1 : 33] So he would be an extremely wealthy man. We read in verse 2, he was rich. So in terms of monetary wealth, he's pretty much got it all.

But, of course, he would be an extremely unpopular man with the population in general, and also regarded, as we see later on, verse 7 there, he was going to be a guest with a man that is a sinner. He would be considered virtually an outcast by the ordinary, you can call him decent Jewish population, one who worked for the Romans, one who was rich at their expense.

Now, Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now, some commentators take it that this means he was beyond Jordan before. He's now across the Jordan. He's now coming through Jericho, which is in the Jordan Valley, on his way to Jerusalem, or, as some would say, on his way to Bethany in order to raise Lazarus from the dead.

And you could cross-reference, yes, the different gospel accounts, and say, oh, yeah, possibly that's about just where he would be going, and when, and so on. And that is entirely possible.

[2 : 41] We don't know if the trip to Bethany was exactly at this time, or if this is part of this sort of different kind of final journey into Jerusalem. But it's not beyond the bounds of possibility that this is the journey he is on.

He's heading to Bethany. And this would also suggest, if that were the case, that he is perhaps, you know, taking his time. You know, we see in John 11 how when he gets the word about Lazarus being sick, you know, he stays a couple more days before he is, and then he says, well, now let's go to Lazarus.

And they say, you can't go back into Judea. He says, there's plenty of time. As long as you walk in the daylight, you'll have the light of the world, and so on. But he takes his time. So much that Martha may say, Lord, if you've been here, my brother had not died.

You've been in the grave for four days. And this stopping off in Jericho and abiding with Zacchaeus, and that the implication of that is that he stays the night, that he lodges there, abides at his house that night.

That also is, you know, we don't know what time of day it is, but, you know, you could press on, you know, to Jerusalem from Jericho. You could make a go of it if you were in a hurry, if you were

determined to try and get there or to Bethany in good time.

[3 : 57] But he's taking his own time to do this. And perhaps part of it is, whilst he knows he intends to do one good work in raising Lazarus from the dead, he has time and takes time to do another, in calling another of his own sheep by name.

Because this, remember, as we looked at last Lord's Day, is, of course, part of what this is all about. Verse 3 of John chapter 10, To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice.

He calleth his own sheep by name, and readeth them out. And most of those whom the Lord addresses by name either are his people or become his people as a direct result of it.

Not in every case, but most cases. And this is certainly such a case. Where he comes into Jericho, he enters through Jericho. Behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. Clean, pure, is what his name means.

Chief among the publicans, he was rich. He sought to see Jesus who he was, and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. Nobody is going to be letting this guy through to the front of the crowd.

[5 : 04] He is little, he's sitting at the back, trying to see over, but he can't see Jesus at all. But he wants to see, perhaps out of curiosity, he's heard so much about him, all the good that he does, all the healings that he does.

Jesus is, if we can say it reverently, a celebrity in that day and time and culture. Everybody would be talking about him, the length and breadth of Galilee and Judea and so on.

And here he was, now coming to Jerusalem, and he attracts crowds. So everybody wants to see him, and he wants to see him too, but he can't. But he knows that he is passing through Jericho.

Now presumably there would just have been one main thoroughfare through which he must pass, and this prominent tree there on the route. So he runs ahead, knowing which way Jesus must be coming, and climbs up into it.

Not something that will add to the dignity of one in his position. But he climbs up there, and he hides up in the tree, hoping to be able to look down and see Jesus.

[6 : 02] And hopefully, of course, nobody sees him. Because, you know, when we look, oh, look, there's the keys up there. How are you doing up there? That's not going to look good for his reputation or his dignity or anything.

So hiding away, hoping nobody saw him get up into the tree. Nobody will look up. And most people don't. You know, if you're going along the road, you don't tend to look up into trees as you're going along.

So he's probably safe enough. But he ran before, climbed there so he could see Jesus, for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste.

No accident, no sort of coincidence. Jesus, as far as we know, has never met Zacchaeus in his life. And if Zacchaeus had met Jesus before, then he wouldn't be so curious to see him.

The clear implication of the context is he has never set eyes on Jesus before. Therefore, in a physical sense, Jesus has never set eyes upon him. And yet, he knows him by name.

[7 : 10] And he stops where he is. Well, I suppose the Bible doesn't technically say that he stopped, but we must take it when he stops. Looks up into the tree. You know, he's exactly where he's hiding. And of course, everybody will look up with him.

And they'll say, oh, what's he doing up there? Why is Zacchaeus up? It's Zacchaeus. Make haste and come down. Quickly come down. For today, I must abide at thy house. I'm going to stay.

I'm going to stay the night with you, no doubt, all my disciples too as well. And, you know, in our culture and time, we think, oh, that's a bit of a cheek. Who invites themselves to other people's houses?

You don't do that. But rather you have to think of it in terms of, if, say, the queen or somebody was making a wee progress through Scalpy and going through all the different, and she stops at your house or at your doorway and says, well, I think, actually, you know, the entourage and myself, we're going to stay here.

That's all right tonight. Now, what do you say? Well, actually, your majesty, it's not really convenient because, you know, I'm expecting a test for delivery any time now. So if you could just start to keep going, nobody's going to say that. They're going to say, well, of course, yes, come on, we'll do it in the best room and we'll move everything quickly.

[8 : 15] And yes, sit here, please. And we'll get out the best china and so on. And we'll make this room. And ever afterwards, we'll have a wee note in this room or perhaps a wee photograph saying, my majesty, the queen slept in this room, in this bed.

Because nobody is going to say no when somebody who is such a celebrity, such a big deal and a big noise that everybody would give their right arm to have staying in their house.

There's godly people in Jericho. There's faithful followers of the Lord. There's devout souls of godly praying women. Jesus could have gone to any of their homes and honoured their homes with his presence.

Why, oh why, is he going to this man's house who is, you know, quizzling, enriching on himself at everybody's expense, practically a thief, a collaborator, a traitor.

Why would he be going to this man's house? But the fact is Jesus invites himself himself, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide at thy house.

[9 : 21] Now, the fact that he addresses him by name, and this is the point of our series that we're looking at, the fact of addressing him by name indicates that Jesus, who has never, humanly speaking, said as before, knows exactly who he is, knows exactly where he is, knows exactly what he does, knows that he has abundant space to put up him and all his disciples.

He can well afford it, and more to the point, he must know that this is a heart that for all its wealth and enmity against his own people, and bears against him, longs to be right with God, has discovered by experience that all the money in the world does not satisfy, does not complete his soul, does not fulfill all that he is yearning for.

Something causes him to want to see Jesus. He is not just sitting up in his counting house, counting out his money. He wants to see who this is. He wants to cast his eyes upon the one who has changed so many lives.

And Jesus knows this. He knows everything about him. And he doesn't just say, hey you, up in the tree, come on down here. I've heard you're rich. I've heard you've got a big house.

You can put us up tonight. No, he addresses him by name. It is personal. It is individual. Zacchaeus. His name means clean, pure.

[11 : 00] Make haste. Come down. Today I must abide at thy house. And we find the literal fulfillment of this command. He made haste and came down and received him joyfully.

Now what happens when Zacchaeus comes down from the tree? Nobody tends to like to have emphasized to other people how comparatively small or insignificant they are.

If Zacchaeus' dignity was not enhanced by being up in the tree, then when he comes down and finally jumps down in front of Jesus, everybody can see, oh look how little he is.

Look how small he is. Doesn't he look ridiculous? Isn't he made to look foolish having to climb down from the tree in front of everybody? But he's not concerned about his dignity here.

He is made small again. But he is content to be made small because he has already been ennobled. He has already been given this privilege, this place of special approval by Jesus.

[12 : 06] Jesus is coming to his house. Not all the devout, not all the godly, not all the faithful, not all the crowds that are coming after him, but him, the little Zacchaeus, he's coming to his house.

And so he is, if you like, momentarily, a centre of attention. He came down and received him joyfully. Now, you see, if he had been perhaps a Sadducee or one of the more hypocritical amongst the Pharisees, he might have said, well actually, you know, I say who comes to my house.

You don't say. You know, you don't invite yourself. I decide. And that's okay. Fair enough. You can come to my house. But, you know, next time, I'm the one that asks first. No. He received him joyfully.

Right away, he came down and he allows himself to be made smaller. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, he's gone to be a guest with a man that is a sinner.

Now, already they despise Zacchaeus. But this is causing them to despise Jesus. Temporarily, but superficially, how can he go and spend time with this man who's a traitor, who's a sinner, who's a tax collector?

[13 : 14] You know, how can he do this? Now, this is something which we have to recognize that the sheer pressure of what you might call peer pressure or society or popularity, if Jesus had been an ordinary person, if he'd been an ordinary person, crowds flocking to him, everybody say, oh, the famous rabbi and he heals people and he teaches people and he's wonderful and then he does something they don't like and all the else start murmuring against him.

Ordinary human nature would desperately try to ingratiate again with the crowd, to keep the popularity, to kind of appease their grumblings.

Oh, it's okay, I'm not really going to be with them. You know, I'm just saying hello, I'm just talking to him. I want to talk to everybody. You can't think bad of me for that. You know, desperate to appease the crowd. Jesus is not bothered about appeasing the crowd.

He's on his way from Jericho up to Jerusalem. He is going about his father's business. If the crowd wants to come too, that's up to them. If they want to surround him and give him their approval and adulation, well, that's their problem.

He's not seeking it. He's not courting it. And when he speaks to this man, when he asks him to come down, when he invites himself to his house, he's not asking their permission. God, whether God the Father or God the Son or God the Spirit for that matter, does not need our approval for what he does and what he decides.

[14:37] you know, sometimes people go through the word of God and they say, well, I don't like this bit about what it says about God and I can't agree with that bit. I really don't think that could be the real God or the Bible.

That can't be the Father of Jesus. I mean, Jesus can't be like that. Oh, no, no, I couldn't think that about. But he doesn't need your permission. He doesn't need your approval for what he decides. He is God and the judge of all the earth will do justly. And when he addresses this lost sheep of the house of Israel, for he also is a son of Abraham.

He knows exactly what he is doing. But here, through this man, is the means not only of bringing in one who longs to be received and whose heart the Lord knows is ready to receive such a Savior. He made haste and came down and received him joyfully, but who, through the accumulation of some of it ill-gotten gains, he has the capacity now to be a blessing to a great many people in Jericho.

[15:45] And he is about to become so. Zacchaeus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.

That's present tense. It's not, well, Lord, after you've gone, I'll sit down, I'll make a plan, I'll decide how I'm going to distribute my wealth. No, he says it right then and there in front of all the witnesses.

I give half of my goods to the poor. Now, this is huge generosity because it doesn't matter how vast your estate is or how huge the accumulation of your wealth, to give away 50% of it is going to hurt. That's a lot. You know, I don't know how many billions Bill Gates may have, for example, but if he was going to say, I'm giving away half of my fortune, whatever many millions or billions that amounts to, most people say, he's mad, he's insane, why is he giving away half?

And he might turn around and say, well, I've still got 50% left, which is about 100 times or a million times more than most other people have got, what's your problem? People would still advise him and say, no, no, don't give away that much, that's just mad.

[16:51] But Zacchaeus is giving away to the poor half of his fortune. Can you imagine the impact that is going to make in the community of Jericho when the chief of the tax collectors gives half his wealth out to the poor?

How many clean bandages might the lepers be able to buy? How much food for a day, a week, a month might the poor be able to have? How many might be able to afford then a roof over their heads?

How many might be able to afford doctors for their diseases or whatever that they might have? The difference it's going to make is going to be huge. Now, Jesus, of course, could heal people and he could heal this person or that person or whatever, but we can say it in all reverence, the impact of that amount of wealth being distributed throughout the poor in Jericho is going to transform not only the town but its economy because Zacchaeus has been converted.

That's just one of the symptoms that are the difference it's going to make here. Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. Say it there out loud in front of everything.

And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. Now, this is obviously pretty much an acknowledgement that yes, I have somewhere along the way.

[18:21] You know, Luke chapter 3 before we turn back a couple of, a few pages, you'll see that when the publicans, the tax collectors come to John the Baptist at the beginning of his ministry, they say, verse 12 of chapter 3, and Luke, then came also publicans to be baptised and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?

He says, exact no more than that which is appointed you. So, clearly, this was known to be a tactic of the publicans, the tax collectors. How they enriched themselves was, if the Romans wanted 40 pounds, they would charge 45, and they'd keep the 5.

If the Romans want 70 pounds, they'd charge 80 and keep the extra 10. The Romans are not bothered. And they also know that if anybody gives them a hard time, all they have to do is whistle up the Romans and say, this guy's refusing to pay his tax.

And it won't do any good to say, no, no, it's not what we're refusing to pay, it's just we don't like the tax collector. Get us another tax collector and we might pay him. But they're not going to argue. The Romans will just drag him off to the cells, maybe crucify him or some of his family, and everybody will get the message.

So the tax collector would have a huge amount of power. And he would not be a popular person, but he would be able to charge what he liked. And who is going to argue with him?

[19 : 41] Because all the Romans are concerned with is that they get the amount of money they want, and whatever the tax collector gets from these other Jews, they're not bothered. As long as they get what they need.

So it's a huge amount of power that he has. And clearly, the tax collector's creamed extra off the top. If I have taken anything from any man, verse 8, by false accusation, I will store him fourfold. Now, fourfold was the requirement for if you stole a sheep. For example, Exodus 22, verse 1, if any man shall steal an ox or a sheep and kill it or sell it, he shall restore five oxen for an ox and four sheep for a sheep.

So that was the price of a sheep that had been taken. But if it had been money, it was just cash or some other kind of wrong that had been endured, then, you know, restoring fourfold was, some have said, the Roman law required a fourfold restoration.

But the law of God did not. Numbers chapter 5, verse 7, we read, you know, when a man or woman has committed any sin that men commit to do a trespass against the Lord, that person be guilty.

[20 : 50] Then they shall confess their sin which they have done and he shall recompense his trespass with the principle thereof and add unto it the fifth part thereof and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed.

So let's say he'd taken an extra ten pounds from someone. Then he was to add an extra twenty percent. So an extra sort of two pounds to add on. So if you've taken ten pounds then you would restore twelve pounds.

That's what it's to add a fifth part there to. That's what numbers require. Chapter 5, verse 7. So when Zacchaeus says, you know, I'll restore everything and according to the law of God I'll add twenty percent.

He's not saying I'll add twenty percent. He's saying I'm going to repay four hundred percent. Now this is this is massive. This is huge. He is going to be considerably poorer as a result of this kind of generosity.

But you see the difference with his heart. It's said there in verse 2 he was the chief among the publicans and he was rich. Now contrast then that with what we see in chapter 18 at verse 23 about the rich young man who came to Jesus and asked what he must do to inherit eternal life.

[22 : 07] And Jesus told him yet lackest thou one thing sell all thou hast distribute to the poor there shall have treasure in heaven and come follow me. When he heard this he was very sorrowful for he was very rich.

Now that is a rich young ruler almost certainly ruler of the synagogue a man of outstanding reputation for godliness and faithfulness and diligence.

He would be one at the opposite end of the social spectrum from Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus would be the dirt beneath people's feet. He just happened to be rich. This man also rich would be like wow looked up to us a real example of godly sanctity and faithful holiness a real pillar of the community and the synagogue and everything but he cannot bring himself to part with his money.

He went away sorrowful for he was very rich. That's in chapter 18 verse 23. Chapter 19 verse 2 we read of Zacchaeus he was rich but here we say Lord half of my goods I give to the poor and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation I restore him fourfold.

He is going to be impoverished by this particular generosity but he's not bothered because he has been restored he has been made one with the Lord he has been received by Christ and Jesus said unto him this day is salvation come to this house for so much as he also is a son of Abraham now he's not just saying to the crowds around him look he's a Jew let's just like you fellow Jews he's one

of yours you should receive him look he's repented but rather what we are taught remember in the New Testament is that to be a son of Abraham is not just a question of racial dissent John the Baptist remember said that to the Pharisees and the Sadducees to the pillars of the Jewish establishment don't think to yourselves we have Abraham to our father God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham he said but rather what we read here in Galatians as Paul writes to Galatians in chapter 3 verse 6 even as Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness know ye therefore that they which are of faith the same are the children of Abraham and in verse 9 in Galatians 3 so then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham what Jesus means is not just this man is racially Jewish just as you people round about me in the crowd are but rather this day is salvation saving power has come to this house for so much as he also is a son of Abraham a son of Abraham by faith not just by racial dissent for the son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost you see it's not for nothing

[25 : 08] Jesus addresses him by his name Zacchaeus clean pure Christ has come to make pure that which was impure Christ has come to save that which was lost to seek and to save that which was lost because he did come seeking Zacchaeus he didn't just happen to be passed oh look up there's a man in the tree oh yes look at Zacchaeus no he came seeking him out to seek and to save that which was lost and certainly indeed he was lost and if we were to turn back even just a page or two remember how he's been described as a son of Abraham well think of the parable of the prodigal son we read in chapter 15 verse 24 this my son was dead and is alive again he is lost and is found and they began to be merry again in verse 32 it was meet that we should make many and be glad for this thy brother was dead and is alive again he was lost and is found Jesus said

I have come to seek and to save that which was lost and Zacchaeus was lost he had been lost but now he has been okay you could say he has been the spotlight's been turning as he comes down the tree he is singled out he had hidden himself away hoping that Jesus would just sort of pass by and he'd get a wee view oh that's Jesus of Nazareth alright well now I've seen the big man what an amazing thing it must be to be able to speak to him I haven't talked to you and he stops and he addresses him he is single at the spotlight he's turning and you might think it's embarrassing but because he has this faith this faith which is so ready to be unleashed it's almost like again he's a worldly example as if they if you had like a can of coke and you shake it up and then you pull the ring pull off it explodes everywhere it's like that faith in Zacchaeus that he so longed to have released and Jesus releases it by addressing him by name

Zacchaeus clean pure make haste come down for today I must abide that thy house now when Jesus does this with people and when they are able to respond in that faith that which might have seemed as though it were an embarrassment to them which might have been at the purely human level taken as being you know it's almost making a fool of me come down to the tree look everybody can see you everybody can look oh look you're hiding up the tree look how small you are what a silly man if you would have a mind to make a fool of someone that would be how to humiliate them just as the woman who touched the hem of his garment in Mark 5 there we read of her and you could think Jesus who touched me who touched me and the disciples said come on everybody's pressing in on you you can't say who touched me they're all touching he said no no somebody touched me because virtue has gone out of me he felt the healing power drain out of him and the woman came forward and trembling fell down before him and told him all the truth and he said unto her daughter thy faith hath made thee all go in peace and behold thy plague now when is it where the spotlight turns on her does she become humiliated do people say that horrible disease she had oh that is your blood oh we don't want to touch her no she's healed

Jesus is speaking to her Jesus has healed her her faith has been praised up because she sought to touch the hem of his garment and clearly the example of her faith spreads because just a chapter or so further on at the very end of Mark's account chapter 6 of Mark's account we read in verse 56 whithersoever he entered into villages or cities or country they laid the sick in the streets and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment and as many as touched him were made whole now why suddenly has this become something that people desire to do because they have heard of the faith of a woman who touched the hem of his garment and because she had faith and she was healed her faith her spotlight being turned in her which might have been thought humanly speaking to be embarrassing humiliating she was just trying to do it quietly and sneak off in the crowd but no he made her own up to it why did he do that because instead of being humiliated she becomes rather exalted she becomes rather an example of faith and integrity that

then people want to do what she did people want to touch the hem of his garment because she who was forced into the spotlight was seen to be such an example of faith and integrity that Jesus praises up and so here we have Zacchaeus then put into the spotlight we have him brought down from the safety and anonymity of his tree where no doubt he would have stayed till all the crowds had gone perhaps till night began to fall then quickly sneak down and go back to his house thinking well at least

I saw him today but instead when night falls what is he doing he is entertaining Jesus and his disciples in his home he is having to eat his food and drink his drink and recline in his cushions and enjoy his hospitality his home now we'll have had that visit of the saviour who only a week or two later was going to be crucified and then rise from the dead and as the reputation of Jesus risen and ascended spread throughout Judea how much more would Zacchaeus then think this is the man who was sitting in my house this is the man that ate my food he spoke to me by name he took time with me he made me feel special it's not that he made him feel different from what he should have been it's just that he restored him to what he was always meant to be clean pure in the sight of God and this is what Jesus does when he calls individuals by name he gives them that cleansing he cleanses them by his very presence by his very touch just as the lepers that came and fell at his feet

[31 : 37] Lord if thou wilt thou make me clean and he touched and said I will be thou clean and the leprosy goes to them because whatsoever sin whatsoever uncleanness whatsoever disease whatsoever infection where does it go it comes to Jesus he takes it upon himself Matthew says himself bear out infirmities he doesn't thereby become a sinner or become a leper or become infected but rather he takes it he absorbs it and the person themselves is drenched as it were gently with that cleansing power of Christ's words Zacchaeus stood and said unto the Lord behold Lord the half of my goods I give to the poor if I have taken anything from any man by false acquisition I restore him fourfold this isn't just a faith for pie in the sky when you die this is a costly faith that's being put into action because Christ has called him by name Jesus seeks such servants to follow him they're all called to be his servants not just to be those who sign our names and take a box but rather to be active in the service of

Christ and if there is a sort of solemn point to the parable that follows and it's quite a solemn parable then it is that there are those who are at enmity with Christ who ought not to be his citizens those he has come to rule over ought to be faithful to him instead they're at enmity with him but amongst his servants there are those who are eager to serve him and those who just want to paddle along and do nothing because they allegedly fear to put a foot wrong God is God is not going to judge any for making mistakes when they are seeking to serve him he's not judging Zacchaeus for saying well actually you know you should have done this ages ago but rather he is blessed because he is called by name he follows Christ he is cleansed he is purified he is restored to what he was always meant intended and designed to be man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever that is what you and I were created for it is the humanity we were intended to fulfill Jesus is the ultimate human being he is man as he was meant to be in perfect communion with God but you and I we cannot get back to that we cannot restore that and no amount of trying to fill the gap with all the things or the money of this world is ever going to do it for us rather like coins in front of your eyes it's just going to blind you to all what God has done in the world and desires to do the only one who can cleanse purify and restore you and me is Jesus we cannot simply view him from afar and try to stay hidden because he will come seeking a sight if you hide he will find you if you run he will catch you if you seek to deny him he will confront you sooner or later we need must answer the question what think he of

Christ sooner or later we must come down out of our little hiding place and stand before him small as it makes us look we must decide what is our response going to be to the Savior who calls us by name well to the WAR eh know or who or do you for man