

Luke 18:31-43

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Date: 17 September 2017

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[0 : 00] I want to take a moment to the city of Jericho, where this Bible, the Bible reading is set. It's a city that is quite unique in many ways, sitting some 230 metres below sea level, 15 miles east of Jerusalem, and at its lowest, and it's supposed to be the oldest city in the world.

I remember the first time I went there, 20 years ago or so, and I was amazed at the setting in the desert. I was amazed at the bloom around there. Jericho is like, in a way, it's obviously built on rich soil, but the rich soil doesn't come to life because it didn't have much water in the past, surrounded by the Julian desert.

Jericho is called the city of palms, from at least the time of Moses. It was called the city of palms back there.

And deep palms still dominate the age, and if you've ever been there, if you've ever tasted them, the major dates there are the most delicious dates you will ever taste. So sweet.

They're calorie-free, of course. They're all delicious. But really, the amount of stuff is bananas, bananas, oranges, oranges, zucchini, jigs, eggplants, aubergine, and a huge amount of food and vegetables.

[1 : 30] What I was struck by was the colour. There was the different fruits, different citrus fruits, from the lemon to the lime to the orange. It was just incredible. And we have come down to Jericho from Jerusalem through what is called the Wadi Kelt.

And the Wadi Kelt is related, is slightly related to the Sam's Valley of the Shadow of Death. It is, I would quite be on the edge of the guide when we come back here, in case you fall down, because it is a dangerous valley.

Below us we could see the Old and the New Jericho. That's the Old Wood and the New City of Jericho. And across the Jordan, and the Jordan Valley, we could see into Jordan.

There before is the mountain to Moab. And you've heard of Moab in the scriptures in Jordan. From there you could see Mount Neho, where Moses died and was buried or taken to heaven.

He saw the promised land there, but failed to enter. From there, as I said, he was taken to heaven. And it's an unseen vicinity from which Elijah crossed the Jordan with Elisha, and he was taken off on the track of fire.

[2 : 49] Looking down at the sea, about eight miles away, is Qumran, the city where John the Baptist may have grown up in.

The mountain behind is the mountain of temptation where Jesus was tempted in Matthew's gospel. Jordan, it's also close to where Jesus was baptized by John.

And where John the Baptist was baptized. Six miles away is Bethany, beyond the Jordan. So this area, this part of the world, was well known to Jesus himself.

And here he is. He's, as we read, he's come down from Jerusalem into the Jordan Valley. And here he meets Zacchaeus.

And before that, we saw a reading in the previous chapter where he healed, where he gave sight to blind Quaternus. Here in the reading in the reading, we have that well known story of a tax collector.

[3 : 56] Smaller stature, but you would say he was big in determination, especially to see this passing visitor, this Jesus.

And this little man, this Zacchaeus, met that day with a great, big and merciful God.

Zacchaeus was one of our band of men. He was not flavor of the day, I don't know if he was kind of people. He was still flavor of the day, and our day, he was a tax collector.

Generally, tax collectors are the most popular of people. Don't we love to pay our taxes and our time? Well, most people pay them, but often grudgingly.

So, Zacchaeus and I took a holiday at Catechus last year, and there was an American cruise ship, and there was a lot of Americans there.

[5 : 00] And a lot of the federal passengers were complaining. They were causing a bit of astucey, as we say in the Northeast, because they had to pay 23% VAT on all that they bought on board the ship, whatever it was in European waters.

Of course, they wouldn't have had to pay that in America. You may have heard about the length of that tax office once received, a number of years ago, from a guy who had underpaid his tax. And he said, enclosed you will find a cheque of 150 pounds. I cheated on my income tax return last year, but have not been able to get much sleep since then.

If I still trouble sleeping, I will send you the rest. Tonight, we're investigating this high-warning tax officer, who cheated not just the time, but on everyone else's, it seems.

He had found a way of still a little tax money. He was a chief, he had under-tax collectors, and he would have got a percentage of their money as well. And so, he was able to keep quite a bit to himself.

[6 : 16] Squeeze, you might say, the last cheque from people's wallets. So, as we saw in the reading, Jesus was coming down from the north.

He was passing through the Jordan Valley. He was approaching Jericho when he encountered blind, where he is. The poor man at that time was a blind man. He was probably one of the lowest in society, because he could walk near the bay.

Now, here, we see Jesus entering the city, the old city of Jericho. Passing through on his final trip to Jericho.

He was coming down from the north. His death was not far away. away and he comes into contact with Zacchaeus who believed he was a wealthy tax official, probably from one of the highest social classes at the time. And there in Jericho there's a tree that tourists are taking, as opposed to the tree that Zacchaeus climbed, but I could the other one because I hardly think it's the same tree, but it could be the same family as opposed. But the Bible says Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through.

Jericho is one of the famous cities in the Bible. But if I'm to ask you about another couple of cities like the Italian city of Milan or maybe Nottingham in England and indeed Jericho, one of the most famous that we have, because I don't know about all these locations, and then it's probably too quick to make a guess. Well it's the third areas where great spiritual conversions recorded in the first place. St. Augustine of the book came to faith in the city of Milan, when in Bootham Salvation Army came to faith in nothing and not push. We see here in Route 19 that the tax collector Zacchaeus came to faith in the city of Jericho.

[8 : 31] Jericho. And the geologists believe that this city is 9000 years old or so. One of the world's oldest.

And so we could say it was well established again by this time, after the time was destructed in Joshua's time.

And Jericho was of course the famous, one of the most famous banks in the Bible, when Joshua and the Israelites were coming into the promised land.

Many of us remember seeing as little children, the need was to go to Joshua at the back of Jericho. And so on. And the walls came tumbling down.

It's said that Jericho in Jesus' time was a private city, a prosperous city. And Jesus would have been well acquainted with this because this was the way to go up north.

[9 : 35] Because he would have come to Jerusalem for the feast as we read in scripture. So he would have come through this way. Only one time we were told that he was a Marian and that was for a specific purpose as we know.

And so this is a place that Jesus would have known as a place that he would have been passing through. And this was to be as I said, the last trip to Jerusalem. And behind him here passing through this well known city.

And this story reminds us of the tremendous power and the possibility of a surprising conversion. Almost like we say at Damascus Road, a conversion that we see in the Acts of the Apostles later on in scripture. And that happened here tonight. Somebody would have come to the Lord for the very first time here tonight.

The Lord may have been working in your life for a long time. And tonight may be the night where you will open your eyes and see off your block ears for him to see you.

[10:51] For him to see that you are brought into his kingdom. So there is always something amazing about a live testimony.

And when you see a testimony like Zacchaeus, this group who came to faith in God. Who would have expected that? Who would have expected the man of Zacchaeus to have come into a relationship with the Lord God Almighty?

What would they say in the next morning? What? Him? Him? The follower of Jesus? Can't be. He must be mistaken. It must be somebody else. He was at the group. If you are here tonight and you have the effort to trust in the Lord Jesus.

And you do tonight. What do people across these villages see as they hear the news this morning? That so and so was touched by the Lord last night or yesterday.

Touched by the main services this morning. What would they say? If Jesus is speaking to you tonight. If his blood is working in your heart.

[12:18] Ask Jesus to forgive your sins. Ask Jesus to make you whole. And whatever it will be said in the town and the village of tomorrow.

It doesn't matter. There will be rejoicing by some of course. But there will be greater rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repents.

In his book Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire. Jim Zimballa writes this. People pay attention when they see that God actually changes persons and sets them free.

When a new Christian stands up and tells her God has revolutionized his or her life. No one goes off. You might see some people nodding off here tonight or aren't speaking.

But when somebody is speaking about what Jesus has done in their lives. No one goes off. When someone is healed or released from a life-mortgaging bondage. Everyone takes notice.

[13:22] That could be you tonight. You might be released from a life-controlling bondage.

Tomorrow you are sharing with others the wonders of the marvelous, wonderful, amazing grace of God.

The miracle of you coming to faith in him. I believe that there are some here tonight that you are searching.

You will be here if you will. You are searching for an answer. For life. Just like I was. Just like everybody here who has already accepted Christ.

We are searching. We are on a search. What is this man that is a case of searching the space world? What else would they climb up a tree to see this man who has passed through?

To see this man who has changed so many lives. To see this man who has touched people and healed them and saved them of course. So here we have a sinner. Here we have a sinner who is searching.

[14:36] He is searching for a meaning to his life. The man who was there by the name of Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was wealthy.

He wanted to see who Jesus was and being a short man who could not be caused by the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a second world victory to see him since Jesus was coming that way.

His name in evil means righteous and pure. But he just gave that impression by what he was doing in his life.

He was also righteous and pure apropos this time. He was anything else. He was a tax collector.

He worked for the Roman authorities and by the Jewish people who was considered a traitor.

Only in it for himself. He had a present day politicians. Dodgy claims made against him.

[15:37] Payments to family members. He refused to have empathism and other things. But gee, if it is the case here, he was more than a tax collector.

He was the chief tax collector. He had other collectors under him. He would have cleaned off some of what they had as well.

From those that they collected taxes from. He was able to pocket stuff for himself. And this was a bribe. 4% taxes to him.

A percentage of all the slaves. Now let me say this. There is nothing wrong with any of the fairy money. There is nothing wrong with people wanting to pay for a commission.

There is nothing wrong with that. And many people do. The problem begins when they start taking some of that commission that they are not in tax. In verse 2. As 2 tells us. He is wealthy.

[16 : 36] And that this tax collector were wealthy. And thus he had all this wealth. There is something missing in his life. His life was not complete.

He knew there was more for life than money and possessions.

And he wanted to see this Jesus. He wanted to see who Jesus was. He wanted to discover what it was Jesus had made him become well known.

Why had people flocking to this man all over the country? This man had just given sight to a blind beggar. Did he know that by this time? Impossible.

Just from the earth to the church. And now the healer was in his town. He had come into his town. He was curious. He was curious about Jesus.

[17 : 40] Are you curious about Jesus tonight? Are you wondering if I did more about this Jesus? Well there are plenty of people here who are able to tell you what Jesus is like.

And his love for them. You see God was still in the heart of this man. God was still.

And Zacchaeus was unaware of what was going on in his heart. And many of us have been in the same condition. We were disturbed.

And we didn't know why we were disturbed. Because God was doing a work of grace in our hearts. Taking us to himself step by step. And he was drawn to find out about Jesus.

And really did he know why? That he was wrong. His stature, his height, with the wee little man. He made him climb a tree. He needed to see. He had to see. Not only that, but his spiritual stature at that time was minuscule.

[18 : 39] There was time, in fact, in his sinfulness. His law of money had kept him apart. And his sinfulness, his love of money, had kept him apart. Nothing, not height, not sin, was no more the keeper from seeing this man, Jesus.

He had desired to see Jesus that day. We could say that this was the case beginning to care for a soul.

He wanted to find meaning. Do you care about the condition of your own soul tonight? If the Lord were to take you from this scene at time tonight, would you be with him in glory?

That is a very serious question. Do you care about the condition of your soul enough to pay the price and get right with God?

Whatever costs you, get right with God. Are you willing to leave that sin behind that thing, whatever it is that is keeping you away from having this relationship with Christ?

[20 : 12] Did you know him? He was eager to see Jesus. Very eager. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man, he could not be lost in the cloud.

So, when I had to find a Sigma 50 to see him, Jesus was coming that way. Do you think that Jesus accidentally came through Jericho that day? Well, it was all in the plan.

it was all in the plan Zacchaeus wasn't there by chance Jesus wasn't passing through there by chance there was a plan meeting from the beginning of eternity and there may be a plan meeting with you and Jesus here right here tonight you know this saviour had come all the way down to Galilee and he was passing through Jericho at the very moment that he would see this man Zacchaeus Zacchaeus wasn't there by chance and there was Jesus when Jesus was passing through Jesus had come to seek and to save a sinful tax collector and given freedom from all of his sins this is what you might call a seeking saviour a seeking saviour and a seeking saviour because the Holy Spirit is going through this place tonight going into your soul when Jesus reached the spot he looked up and said

Zacchaeus come down immediately I must sing at your house the Spirit had been working in the heart of Zacchaeus the Spirit working in his heart had been curious about who Jesus was possibly through the fact that they heard that Jesus had performed many healing to many miracles and Jesus had never come to visit to seek him out it is God listen to this it is God who always makes the first move it is God who makes the first move through different means he draws us to himself Andrew Bannister some of you may have heard his name he used to work with Rabbi and he is now working with

Solace in Dundee and he was debating he was debating with a atheist I think it was an university setting a second meeting was set up for the two of them and this time the one who had been built as an atheist in the first meeting didn't want to be built as an atheist a second time he wanted to call an agnostic because of what Andy had said in the first meeting he was having doubts a bit really astute about the fact that there was no wrong what he thought you see it is worth debating with

people and telling them what do you know about Jesus not what you know maybe from who's left but you know from your own heart and how Jesus has dealt with you and that's the greatest testimony of all so cares come down immediately you see there's a sense of urgency when Jesus calls us he doesn't want to go away tomorrow or next week or next year for today not tomorrow is the day of salvation according to your current means

[24 : 14] I must stay at your house today he said I don't want to come tomorrow I won't be here tomorrow I'll have passed by I will be able to speak to you tomorrow imagine this healer this good man telling a sinner he must come to his house a sinner entertaining this holy man this wasn't done this wasn't done on the people on that day and to stay at someone's house to share a name with him this was impossible it wasn't possible how well would you make Jesus tonight would you take him into your home into your heart or would you want to clear away some of the rubble some of the mess before you invited Jesus in when Jesus doesn't work correctly he comes to you just as you are just as you are whatever whatever you are whatever you sin whatever you are he comes to you as you are and he takes you from that place and makes you whole and changes you and makes you a new creation

Jesus had to stay at this man's house that day it shows what his ministry is all about he had come to save sinners from their sins so he came down once and well and all the people saw this and began to wonder he is gone to be the guest of a sinner Zacchaeus was now ready to hear the invitation of Jesus I wonder if in the words of the old when we see the garden which I have there for years have you heard the voice of Jesus softly pleading with your heart have you felt his blessings glorious as he calls your soul apart have you heard the saviour calling all to leave and follow him have you felt his passion drawing with compulsion you to win have you heard his invitation to the music of God's grace let the peace of God's salvation fill your soul with love and grace have you heard the voice of Jesus calling you why remember the day

I had why remember the day that is sweet and I'm going to use to go now to remember the day now in verses in Luke 19 verses 7 and 8 between the verses 7 and 8 we assume that a meal has been had we don't know as soon as it's saved but whatever happened in these moments together we see that a change has happened in the life of Zacchaeus he had come as a sinner to Jesus he had come as a sinner to Jesus and was so powerfully impacted by what Jesus said to him over that over that dinner time that the invitation to come and have a life of Christ was received with gladness and with joy so that Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord

Luke Lord here and out I give half of my possession to the poor and if I have cheated anyone out of anything I will pay back four times the amount this is a dramatic change this is a conversion in this life there was no Brexit negotiations here no waiting no delay no debating at all no waiting to see which way would go he had to make a decision an instant decision and here and now he says I will make the necessary reparations Jesus had come into his heart Jesus had changed his daughter and father not only did he come and do his house that day Jesus came right into his very heart was this decision pressurized was he under pressure to change no of course he wasn't he had and now flowed out of the heart of the church was the love that he had for what

Christ had done of him but is this not what Jesus does he changes of all but heart whenever Jesus meets with someone there has to be a change there must be a change and if you have never truly changed if you say you're a Christian tonight and there's nothing changed in your life it may be that you haven't actually been truly saved make your calling in your election sure Zacchaeus he has surely been changed because in the words of Romans it is with your heart to believe and are justified and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved if the

[30 : 53] Lord Jesus has touched you here tonight tell someone tell your best friend tell your neighbour that Jesus has done a work of grace in your life tonight this was this was a case he was showing a real sincerity of repentance no turning back no turning back no turning back to my own lifestyle I've left behind I'm now following Jesus he was willing to put right around the past whatever the cost before he met with Jesus that day what was his security money this is everything after he met with Jesus he was willing to give it all away because he cheated so many people just to have a clean and a clear content before the Lord if you own something that you can't give away then you don't own it it owns you

Jesus turns to Zacchaeus and says today salvation has come to the south because this man too is the son of Abraham so the man came to see to deceive that would be lost if you've never been saved from your sins oh my dear friends realise that tonight Jesus is looking out for you as he was

looking out as Zacchaeus on that day two thousand years ago even when you are not looking for him he is looking for you he is wooing you seeing you win you into a relationship with himself and right now he's maybe knocking at the door of your heart that you might come into a relationship with him if anyone hears my voice and opens the door

I will come in and eat with them and he would be trusted invited in right now for today salvation has come to your house Jesus knows everything about me he knows our plans he knows our plans and maybe he's here tonight he's been speaking to you for a long time and he wants to hear your response tonight Lord Jesus forgive me for my sins Lord he knows all about you there's nothing that you can hide from just give your life to him he's seeking your attention you may be hearing his voice right in these moments just as he called him to his he's calling him to you
I have come to seek and to save that which was lost Amen and Lord him to