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Tillamook, Oregon

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The Words, Works, and Person of Christ

The Gospel of Luke

The Free Gift that Costs
Everything (Pt 8)

November 6, 2022

Sermon Text: Luke 19:1-10

Scripture Reading: Luke 18:18-
27; 19:1-10

The Cost

The state church of Scotland was wracked with contention in the first part of the 19th century. One of the primary issues of contention which the two parties drew battle lines upon was a practice called *patronage*. One group, the moderates (the liberals of the day) were pro-patronage, while a growing dissenting party, the

evangelicals, were decidedly against it. This battle came to be known as The Ten Years Conflict.”

Patronage was an unbiblical, wicked tradition of placing men in pastorates of churches by the decree of some wealthy “patron” *without any right of the congregation to have a say in the matter*. They were forced, by both civil and ecclesiastical law, to accept whomever was sent.

Attempts to reform this practice finally succeeded in 1834 when an evangelical majority passed the Veto Act which granted the right of church members to prevent an unacceptable minister from being settled in their pulpit and patrons could no longer force their choice upon a congregation.

But the battle was hardly over. No sooner was the Veto Act passed than in that same year the church

pulpit at Auchterarder became vacant and a wealthy patron selected a pastor for the church. That selection was rejected by the congregation, and, much as would be expected in our day, the case was brought to the civil courts by the patron. That court ruled in favor of the patron in 1838 and the church's General Assembly refused to accept that judgment (the evangelical majority prevailing). Again, much like we are seeing today with a spirit of tyranny in the state, the Scottish House of Lords sided with the state court's decree and issued an order than another candidate, selected by the congregation, must not be given the pastorate. The Presbytery members were ordered to appear in court after they proceeded to ordain the congregation's selection. These men narrowly escaped being sentenced to prison.

As the battle raged, the evangelicals ultimately realized that there would never be unity between them and the moderates. Listen to Iain Murray describe what happened next:

“It became sadly apparent by 1842 that reforms could never be truly carried out while the evangelicals remained within the bounds of a church whose authority was being unjustly limited by the civil power. Only one way was open to preserve the honour of Christ as sole Head of the Church, and that was taken on May 18th, 1843, when the evangelicals rose in the General Assembly and, bidding their farewell to the Moderates, severed their connection with the Established Church of Scotland.

It had been thought that not more than 60 or 70 would take such a final step, but when the whole party rose in a mass and began to move toward the door, there was profound astonishment, dismay, and even alarm. No less than 451 ministers seceded and immediately formed themselves into the Free Church of Scotland.

The cost involved was enormous. The buildings they had preached in for years were immediately closed against them; the manses they had grown to love had at once to be

vacated – places entwined with the precious memories of past years and in some cases where the mortal remains of wife or little ones lay buried. Great preachers like William Cunningham and James Bannerman’s voices would no longer be heard in such leading churches like Trinity College Church or Ormiston Parish.

It was a sorrowful day, yet a glorious one. Principle had triumphed over expediency, Scripture over human laws, and the whole of Scotland was confronted with the example of men who were prepared to suffer for Christ and His Word.”

[Historical Theology of William Cunningham, Vol 1, Introduction]

The cost of following Christ, you see. The free gift of salvation that costs everything. The history of the Christian church is filled with thousands and thousands of such example.

Last week, as we were just reminded from our reading of Luke

18, we met a rich man, the Rich Young Ruler, who refused to pay the price of following Christ. He chose the riches of this world and rejected the true treasure Christ gives. Forgiveness of sins, a new creation, eternal life in His eternal kingdom. All of these he rejected and now – where is he?

And then there is Zacchaeus. I do not think it is by chance that Luke placed this story immediately after than of the Rich Young Ruler. Here is a man who chose the better portion, or, we might properly say, *who was chosen for the better portion.*

Luk 19:1-10 He entered Jericho and was passing through. (2) And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich.

He was a chief tax collector, he was rich. What, based upon the preceding declaration of Jesus –

“For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom

of God.”what, then, are the odds or probability that this encounter is going to have any different outcome than the one before? Minimal. In fact, impossible. Except - *“What is impossible with man is possible with God.”*

Here is J.C. Ryle-

“These verses describe the conversion of a soul. Like the stories of Nicodemus, and the Samaritan woman, the story of Zacchaeus should be frequently studied by Christians. The Lord Jesus never changes. What he did for the man before us, he is able and willing to do for any one of ourselves.

We learn, firstly, from these verses, that *no one is too bad to be saved, or beyond the power of Christ’s grace.* We are told of a wealthy publican becoming a disciple of Christ. A more unlikely event we cannot well imagine! We see the ‘camel passing through the eye of a needle,’ and the ‘rich man entering the kingdom of God.’ We behold a

plain proof that ‘all things are possible with God.’ We see a covetous tax-collector transformed into a liberal Christian...We should never be afraid to maintain that Christ is ‘able to save to the uttermost,’ and that the vilest of sinners may be freely forgiven if they will only come to Him. We should offer the gospel boldly to the worst and the wickedest, and say, ‘There is hope. Only repent and believe.’ There are no incurable cases under the gospel...Any sinner may be healed, *if he will only come to Christ.*” [Gospel of Luke, Ryle]

Zacchaeus wasn’t just a tax-collector, he was a CHIEF tax-collector. He had subordinates working under him and he got a cut of all the proceeds. As you know, tax-collectors were hated by the Jews, especially those who were their own countrymen.

On the surface of it then, the Rich Young Ruler and Zacchaeus – except for their common condition of being very wealthy – were absolutely different. The one had

social standing, was admired, and had a zeal for keeping the Law. The other – a social outcast, corrupt, hated, a betrayer of his people to the Romans.

Now, think carefully – which one of these two men would you have expected to repent and come to faith in Christ? You can be sure that the crowds there in Jericho would never have guessed the outcome they are about to witness.

NOTE: In this regard we must be very cautious. We are prone to pronounce one person “savable” and reject another as an impossible case. But WE all are impossible cases!! Salvation is impossible from a human perspective.

1Co 1:26-29 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. (27) But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; (28) God chose what is low and

despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, (29) so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

Be very, very careful in these matters. What do you see when you look at yourself? Do you see yourself as someone who is quite good, respected by the world, and therefore accepted by God? If so, you are the rich young ruler and you are still dead in your sins. Beware of this trap that has taken millions and millions to hell.

A Man in a Tree

(3) And he **was seeking** to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. (4) So **he ran** on ahead and **climbed up** into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way.

What we are seeing is the beginnings of a miracle which actually had its beginnings in eternity past when the Lord knew Zacchaeus and elected him to

salvation. That very day, the divine decree was carried out.

Now, what was going on in Zacchaeus' mind? I do not think that he was just wanting to see some celebrity who he heard was coming to town. His behavior is rather similar to that of the Rich young ruler who ran up to Jesus and knelt before Him with apparent zeal and sincerity. But we know from the outcome that Zacchaeus' motives were genuine. The Rich young ruler thought himself quite righteous and I think he expected commendation from Jesus.

In contrast, let me suggest this about Zacchaeus – *I do not think Zacchaeus really knew what he was doing.* He just HAD to see Jesus. He did not realize that the only reason he was seeking to see Jesus *is because Jesus was seeking to see him!* And that in fact, *Zacchaeus was the very reason Jesus came to Jericho!*

Joh 6:44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up

on the last day.

If you are a Christian, let me also apply this to you. *There was a point in your life when you did not know what you were doing – you just knew that you had to see Jesus.* Isn't it true? Why did you have to read that book? Why did you keep reading it? Why did you have to hear that preacher? Why did you just have to go to that church? You didn't understand – you didn't even realize you were compelled to do so. All you knew is, *I must do this no matter what the cost.*

Ryle once more:

“We must never despise the day of small things (see Zech 4:10). We must never reckon anything little that concerns the soul. The ways by which the Holy Ghost leads men and women to Christ are wonderful and mysterious. He is often beginning in a heart a work which shall stand to eternity, when a looker-on observes nothing remarkable. In every work there must be a beginning, and in spiritual work that beginning is

often very small. Do we see a careless brother beginning to use the means of grace, which in time past he neglected? Do we see him coming to church and listening to the gospel after a long course of sabbath-breaking? When we see such things, let us remember Zacchaeus and be hopeful.”

Zacchaeus was *seeking*, he was *running*, he was *climbing*. I don't think it was a very normal thing for the people of Jericho to see a rich man climb up into a tree! And besides, what is this detestable tax-collector doing trying to see one of our rabbis? Surely Jesus would take no notice of such a person.

But what was happening? *Jesus was drawing Zacchaeus to Himself. Zacchaeus didn't know it. The crowds didn't know it.* But Jesus had come there that day to, as Luke's account records, *seek and to save that which was lost.* This account of Zacchaeus' salvation is oozing with the doctrine of God's election of sinners to salvation. And here we see it once more:

(5) And when Jesus came to **the place**, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.”

This is still another one of those events in Scripture that we would have loved to have been eyewitnesses to. Jesus did not know Zacchaeus. And yet He *did know Zacchaeus*. He called him by name and this was no ordinary invitation. It was the divine call of the Lord to one of His elect. It is an effectual calling. Here it is in the Westminster Confession:

All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, He is pleased, in His appointed and accepted time, effectually to call, by His Word and Spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ: enlightening their minds, spiritually and savingly, to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh; renewing their wills, and by

His almighty power determining them to that which is good; and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ; yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace.

This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

Do not miss the detail – *the place*. Jesus and Zacchaeus' paths intersected at precisely the time and place decreed by the Lord. And Jesus knew it. As soon as His foot hit that spot, He looks up, looks right into the eyes of this man, and commands him by name to come. And He tells Zacchaeus to *hurry!* I think this word "hurry" is very important.

- The angels of the Lord commanded Lot and his wife to hurry out of Sodom

- When people delay in obeying Jesus' call to come and follow Him, they are deemed unfit. They show themselves unwilling. The one plowing who looks back. The one eagerly claiming to follow *just as soon as he....take care of other things.*

This is what the Scripture means by this:

Mat 22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen."

Many people hear the *external call* of the gospel, but do not come. When, however, someone like Zacchaeus hears Jesus' call and it is accompanied by the *internal call of His Spirit*, that person IS going to come. This is what the "I" in TULIP stands for – *irresistible grace*.

And guess what? Zacchaeus DOES hurry – immediately!

(6) So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully.

The Joy of Salvation

Did Zacchaeus even then still not realize what was happening to him? Probably not. All he knew was that he must hurry and come down AND that he was filled with joy inexpressible toward Jesus. Did he understand why? I doubt it.

“Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for **I must stay at your house today.**”

Here is still another word of “divine decree” – *must*. I *must* stay at your house today. People dream of winning the lottery...but Zacchaeus that day was *chosen by God* out of all those people in Jericho. What he was chosen to receive was priceless – literally – and greater than any mega-prize someone might win today. That day was the greatest day in Zacchaeus’ life – and he would spend the rest of his earthly life telling others about it. The Lord, the LORD called Him and came to his house.

The closing verses here are

powerful as well:

(7) And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.”

(8) And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.”

Here we have the typical response of the world to a sinner saved and changed by Christ. They grumbled. They nit-picked. What a contrast to the joy of the sinner saved by grace. And not only the joy, but the fruit of real salvation.

Unlike the Rich young ruler, Zacchaeus IS ready with no prompting to give up his wealth. In that moment, in those seconds, his treasure was radically changed. What he had treasured, he now despised as Christ had become riches to him.

Do not miss this – *no one had to tell Zacchaeus what to do. No one had*

to argue with him or pressure him. Christ's call had come to him and down from that tree he came. He saw his past sin and no one had to tell him what to do about it. He brings forth fruit in keeping with repentance and he does so generously and gladly. What do you suppose the impact of his repentance had upon that town? What would it have been like to be at Zacchaeus house that evening? I bet Zacchaeus invited his friends over for a feast and I would not be surprised if others were saved there as well.

you know anything of this joy that Zacchaeus felt toward Jesus? Have you ever seen your lost condition, seen your sin, and gladly and joyfully repented of it? These are things that happen when salvation comes to the house of a sinner.

(9) And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.
(10) For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Next time we will plan to look further at these last two verses because they also contain some very important doctrines.

Has salvation come to your house?
Has Jesus ever come and called you out of your lost condition?
What has been your response? Do