

WHAT CHANGES WHEN JESUS ENTERS A PERSON'S LIFE? **Luke 19:1-10 – January 17, 2010**

Whenever I counsel with an engaged couple, I remind them that their life will change when they get married. They will give up autonomy in their schedule, in their finances, in their socializing, in multiple ways. They'll have to consult with their spouse on many decisions. That spouse will change their life. In a similar way, when Christ comes into our life, His presence will change things in our life. But, how will He change our life? What kinds of changes can we expect? This morning, as we focus on what happens when Christ enters our life, we're going to surface a major change. We're going to reveal one way in which Christ redirects our life. If you have a Bible please open it to Luke 19:1-10. We'll look at these verses and consider the question, "What happens when Jesus enters a person's life?"

Our story opens with Jesus passing through Jericho:

¹He entered Jericho and was passing through.

By this time in His ministry, Jesus was so popular that people flocked to see Him. In verse 2, we meet one member of that crowd:

²And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich.

In Jesus' day, tax collectors were despised. They worked for the Roman government. In collecting taxes, these tax collectors facilitated the transfer of wealth from the Jews to the Romans. No wonder the Jewish people hated their countrymen who worked as tax collectors. These tax collectors added to their wealth by overcharging people. Today we call that extortion. Usually, people who work for the IRS don't advertise that fact when they attend social or community events. But at least IRS employees aren't transferring our money to a foreign government. At least, IRS employees aren't stooping to extortion. Zaccheus is a chief tax collector. He's a district manager. Zaccheus is wealthy and hated.

So why is Zaccheus out in the crowd when people despise him? We find out in verses 3-4:

³Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. ⁴So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way.

Verse 3 says that Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was. This means Zaccheus wants to know who Jesus is. Verse 3 would be better translated Zaccheus was eager or desperate to see who Jesus was. Why is Zaccheus desperate? He's despised. He's the ultimate reject. No one has anything to do with him. How desperate is Zaccheus? He climbs a tree. We live in a culture in which wealth and image matter. In Jesus' culture honor and dignity mattered. Zaccheus throws away his honor and dignity when he climbs the tree. Respectable people didn't climb trees.

What happens when Zaccheus climbs the tree? Look at verse 5:

⁵When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.”

Pastor Tim Keller describes their interaction this way: Zaccheus didn't ask Jesus into his life. Jesus asked Zaccheus into His life. Jesus invites Zaccheus to relationship. In verse 6, we read that Zaccheus gladly accepts Jesus' invitation. Whenever Jesus ministered publically, the religious leadership showed up. So Jesus looked past a bunch of religious, respectable people to commune with a sinner, a turncoat, a reject. How does the respectable crowd respond to Jesus invitation to Zaccheus? Let's read verse 7:

⁷When they saw it, they all *began* to grumble, saying, “He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.”

The “in” crowd is indignant that Jesus would take notice of a person like Zaccheus, let alone enter his home.

What happens when Jesus enters Zaccheus home? We get one piece of their interaction. Let's read verse 8:

⁸Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.”

Zaccheus has had a change of heart. Before meeting Jesus, he sold his soul to the Romans to get rich. Before meeting Jesus, he ripped off his friends and neighbors to get rich. Now he's giving his money away. Let's get some perspective on Zaccheus' statements. He said he'd give half his money to the poor. The Mosaic law required people to give 10 percent of their income to the poor. Giving 20 percent to the poor was considered generous. Zaccheus pledges 50 percent. When you stole from another, the law required restitution plus 20 percent. Zaccheus pledges restitution plus 300 percent. Tim Keller sums up Zaccheus' change this way; Zaccheus has gone from accruing wealth at the expense of others to serving others at the expense of wealth. How do we explain this 180 degree turn? Jesus, Jesus is the reason for this change. Money is no longer Zaccheus' master. Jesus is Zaccheus' master. What happens when Jesus enters a person's life? When Jesus enters a person's life, Jesus becomes more important than money to that person. When Jesus enters a person's life, Jesus becomes more important than money to that person.

Jesus explains the shift in Zaccheus values this way:

⁹And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham.

Salvation has come to Zaccheus in the person of Jesus Christ. Money is no longer Zaccheus' savior and god, Jesus is Zaccheus' Savior and God. I told you that we would surface a major change. We live in a culture in which money is many people's functional savior. They believe if they can just get a little more money they will be happy. They will have all they need. So, people lose perspective on money. They work themselves to exhaustion trying to acquire more money. They lose sleep worrying about money. Sometimes, like Zaccheus, people compromise themselves to get more money.

As we grow in Christ, we realize that He is the One who ultimately meets our needs for food, shelter and clothing. So, though we work hard at our job and we might seek to improve our vocation, we don't look to our company or our boss as our ultimate provider. Christ is our ultimate provider. As we grow in Christ, we realize He meets our need for significance and affirmation. So we don't have to be consumed with getting more money to buy the car, clothes and house that will show we've arrived. My personal struggle with money is that I think if I have enough money in savings I'll secure my future. As I grow in Christ, I realize that my long term security is not in my savings account or my stock portfolio. That doesn't mean I don't have a savings plan. But it does mean I don't have to stress out when my accounts go down, because Christ is my ultimate provider of long-term security. I fear that I will run out of money some day. So money becomes my god. Money controls me. What do you fear about money? Like me, do you fear running out of money to meet your needs? Or do you fear not having enough money to buy what you want? So along with those things you want, money becomes your god. Without more money you can't buy the things that will make you happy and fulfilled. So money controls you. Let Jesus be your god. Let Jesus meet your need for fulfillment.

God is doing a great work through many different organizations. And they are worthy of our financial sacrifice. This morning, I'd like to talk with you about investing some of your money in God's work at North Pointe. If you are visiting for the first time, congratulations, your timing is impeccable. We don't talk about money that often, but you have timed your visit perfectly. But we're not afraid to talk about money. We believe what we do with our money is an indicator of our values and our heart. Our investment of money indicates how high of a priority Christ is in our lives.

As we see with Zaccheus when a person experiences Christ, that person freely gives to God's kingdom. Such a person is not limited by standards or customs. Last week, I shared our vision of offering a fresh experience with God to people in Lincoln and to people around the world. This experience is relational, applicable, and vibrant. This fresh experience with God gives a wellspring for life. Even in difficult circumstances, we know that God is doing a fresh work in our lives.

We believe that God will use a permanent home for our church body in a couple of ways to enable us to more effectively share this Fresh Experience with God. First, it would give us a place to share this experience. As you read through the Gospels, so much of Jesus' communication of this Fresh Experience with God was done in the context of unhurried relationship. A permanent home gives us a chance to gather and relate without having to worry about getting out at a certain time. Second, a permanent home gives us greater chance to make the fresh experience with God known. You've done a great job of letting your friends, family

members and co-workers know about the Fresh Experience of God at North Pointe. Yet, because we lack a permanent home, we are virtually invisible to someone who doesn't have contact with a North Pointe attendee. A permanent home makes us more visible in the community.

A year ago, we started the process of building a permanent home. And even though our nation was going through its worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, God gave us the grace to step out in faith. We more than met our goal of a \$50,000 down payment. And you committed an additional \$6100 per month over your giving to the general fund. If you were part of that faith step, thank you. What I'm asking you is that, as God provides, you continue fulfilling the commitment you made to God. You don't need to fill out anything.

As we talk about our permanent home, some of you weren't able to participate last year or have joined us since January of last year. I'd like to ask you to consider joining us in helping people have a fresh experience with God. We're going to be financially stretched when we move into the building. First, we'll need to buy some things that enhance people's experience with God and with each other like chairs for the sanctuary, cribs, sound equipment and office furniture to mention a few things. Would you consider giving a one-time gift to help with these costs? Second, moving into this new building will increase our "housing" costs. Right now, we're paying about \$5000 per month at North Star. When we move into the building our mortgage will be about \$10,000. We'll also have additional costs for utilities. We believe in time that we will grow to more than cover those costs; but, in the meantime, would you consider making a 2 year commitment to help cover those costs?

Would you take the next month to seek God and see if He would have you join us on this adventure? After you have taken time to seek the Lord, would you fill out your financial commitment card and drop it in the collection or in the "completed forms" box at the information table? We would like to have all the financial commitment cards by March 1. We are giving you a month to turn in those cards, because we would like you to truly seek the Lord. This is a commitment between you and God. You will notice that there is not a place for your name on the financial commitment card. We want everybody who gives to give willingly. We feel to put a spot for your name might cause some people to give under duress. We don't want that. Obviously since there is not a place for your name, this card will not be used to track you. You will not receive a call asking where your financial gift is. Your card will simply help us discern how to move forward. Again if you filled out a card last year, please don't fill out a card this year. Please continue with the commitment you made last year.

Many of you are giving regularly to our general fund which supports the ongoing mission of North Pointe. When you are filling out the financial commitment cards, we ask that whatever you give be over and above what you are already giving to the general fund. As of right now, we are about making expenses, so to take away from the general fund to give to the building fund would hurt our mission. For those of you who are not giving to the general fund, I ask you to consider doing that. Your giving would allow us to expand the mission and ministry at North Pointe. In the future, we would like to expand our investment in people, in children and youth by offering part-time compensation to ministry leaders in those areas. Your giving to the general fund would help us expand our influence in impacting people's lives with the Gospel. We desire

that everyone who gives at North Pointe do so willingly; none of us on staff know who gives. So no one will ever track you down to ask, “How come you’re not currently giving to the general fund?” But I do want to ask those of you who are not already giving to the general fund, would you consider starting to give that we might touch more people’s lives?

As we return to our passage, you’ll remember in verse 7 that people complained that Jesus entered the home of a sinner. In verse 10, Jesus answers this complaint:

¹⁰For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Jesus says my mission is to seek those who are lost. If you never trusted Christ, I invite you to do that right now. He’ll forgive you from your sin, your self-centered living and empower you to live the way God designed you to live. You remember in verse 8, Jesus calls Zaccheus a child of Abraham. That means before meeting Jesus, Zaccheus was outside the family of God. Now that he’s met Jesus, he’s in the family. We take Jesus’ mission of seeking the lost seriously. I’m asking you to consider investing your money, so we can reach people. And before making your decision, I’m asking you to seek Jesus. I think Jesus will give you a proper perspective on money and that perspective will empower you, like Zaccheus, to give liberally and sacrificially. We don’t want you to give because of some outside pressure such as a church tradition or a call from a pastor. We want you to give because you’ve met Christ and He’s freed your heart from the love of money in exchange for a heart that’s captured by Him, a heart that gives generously to advance His kingdom.

When I was a junior in college, my roommate got back together with his old girl friend. When she entered his life, everything changed. I never saw him anymore. He studied with her, ate with her, did everything with her. He had no time for playing football or going out with guys. Her presence changed his value system. What used to matter to him didn’t matter anymore. In the same way, when Christ comes into our lives, our value system changes. What once mattered, doesn’t matter anymore. What happens when Jesus enters a person’s life? When Jesus enters a person’s life, Jesus becomes more important than money to that person. When Jesus enters a person’s life, Jesus becomes more important than money to that person.