

A Completely Changed Life¹

Opening comments...before us today is the account of a man, a wealthy man, the CEO of one of Israel's most despised organisations, who has a divine encounter with the Lord Jesus. What we see in this encounter is the kinds of things that result from someone who was completely dissatisfied with the way he lived, and whose life has been genuinely changed in the Lord and by the Lord. Because we see that after Zacchaeus put his faith in Jesus, and he was right with God, he also put things right with those he had wronged. That's what happens when our lives are *completely changed* by Jesus. He changes our heart, he *and we* change our lives.

(READ)

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. ⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." ⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. ⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." ⁸ 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." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

This is the last *personal ministry encounter* Jesus has with anyone, as he heads toward the cross. So because Luke takes the time to give us the detail of this encounter, it makes it worth paying attention to.

I want to draw your attention first to v.10, "*the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost*" What Jesus claims in this statement and what he *does in this encounter*, defines the entirety of his mission and ministry, and what – from this point – he is about to accomplish through his death on the cross. That's where our focus will start today,

Jesus Seeks To Save *The Lost*

SON OF MAN

Notice Jesus refers to himself as "*the Son of man*", his favourite title for himself. Used 80 or so times in the gospels. He could have used Son of God or Messiah, which are true of him, but "*Son of Man*" captures both his deity as God the Son and that he was in every way human - fully God and fully man – and that as God the son he had come to earth to give his life for the sins of the world.

¹ Flow of thought inspired by <https://youtu.be/fPOORJy04q0>

SEEK

As "*the Son of Man*", he "...came to seek...". Meaning what? Jesus is the one who does the work of seeking. Seeking those who will be saved. And on this occasion it was Zacchaeus. It's important for us to be reminded that Jesus never did anything happenstance, nothing is ever coincidental. He passed through Jericho at the exact, planned moment, *seeking* and then to *save* Zacchaeus. Jesus, is the Son of Man, he came to seek, and, *save the lost*.

LOST

What does "*lost*" mean? We might think, lost my keys, my purse/wallet, or a watch, or something else of value. Lost, is not like earthly things that have been misplaced, or can be replaced. Lost here, needs to be thought of as what is lost without Christ. Thought of as what we don't have when we don't know Christ.

Matt. 16:26 help us: "*For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?*" Lost, is the forfeit of our soul. Spiritually dead. Lost is what we are without Christ.

Recall our messages in Luke 15: God goes to great lengths to find the lost. Lost sheep in 15:3-7, a lost coin in 15:8-10, and lost son in 15:11-32. And heaven rejoiced when they were found². God went to great lengths to seek and save you and I from our *lostness*.

For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found Luke 15:24

I want us to understand the enormity of what lost means. If we are lost – that is you've never called Jesus, your Lord and Saviour and left your old life behind you to follow him – it means we don't experience the hope and joy that Christ brings in this life. And, we are lost to an eternity separated from Christ. If you've never committed your life to Christ, know this day, that he is seeking you...

Now I did not plan it this way, but we've just concluded three weeks of RT, focussed on Jesus' GC in Matt. 28. When Jesus said he "*came to seek and to save the lost*" I want us to see, it is intrinsically connected to his GC.

The connection is belief, in the seeking and saving work of Jesus, is absolutely crucial to our engagement with Jesus GC. We *must believe* for ourselves that he came to *seek us* and to *save us*. And, we *must believe* for others that he came to *seek them* and to *save them*. Conversely, if we don't believe what Jesus did for us or others what *worth* does the GC have for us? Zero!³

Jesus didn't have a bunch of priorities and seeking and saving the lost was just in the mix. Seeking and saving people was his priority. And still is, that now, he carries out through the church. *You and me*.

Rom. 10:15 "*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!*"

² Tells us what about how much been found means to God?!

³ No mission impetus. No evangelistic zeal.

So what happens when you and I talk to people about Jesus, it's like 2 live wires connecting. *One*: the good news you give. *The other*: Jesus' seeking and saving work in the person's life. When we're engaged in the *seeking* and *saving* ministry of Jesus we're involved in the most important task given to the church, and one in which glorifies Christ. Have you ever really thought about this: God works *through you* to save people?

Yours, are the beautiful feet...who bring good news!"

I've spent a lot of time on that, to reinforce, that Jesus does the seeking, Jesus does the finding, Jesus does the saving. That said, I don't think any of us believe that when we come to faith in Christ, there's no effort before or after then on our part. Let's bring in Zacchaeus, who needed to do some things in response to Jesus in order for his life to be changed.

He needed – we need (P) to...respond with *commitment*; without delay; to *opposition*; to *set things right*; and, respond to *Jesus seeking and saving*

Respond with Commitment

The first thing we see in Vv.1-3 is Zacchaeus' *Commitment*. Come with me back to the beginning of the scene as Luke set it up.

v.1 tells us Jesus was passing through Jericho...his ministry began in Cana, Galilee in the North and would end, in Jerusalem, a day's walk from Jericho. Jericho was the last place Jesus would visit on his way to Jerusalem. Jericho was, in the entire region of the time, the centre of commerce and 'the place' to be.

If you were a visitor to Jericho, there would have been the amazing *sights, smells* and *spectacle* of the place, in Passover season there will have been people everywhere. And Jesus of Nazareth was in town. Even though there was no Facebook or YouTube Live stream, there is little doubt, word will have spread rapidly that the Messiah was in town.

His many other miracles notwithstanding, Jesus had just healed and saved Bartimaeus down the road, so there will have been massive anticipation and excitement. Much like you'd see at a Christmas parade, or when Team NZ won the Americas Cup, people will have lined the road and would have been trying to get the best vantage point, to see Jesus. And with all the crowd and the chaos going on, Luke in a rather low key way says...

² A man was there...

Luke gives us *several details* about that "man", that are important for what his response is to Jesus in a few moments.

- a. We're given his name; Zacchaeus. Means pure, innocent.
- b. V. 2 tells us he was a TC. We know all about how TCs were viewed in the community; despised. Except Zacchaeus was a "chief Tax Collector"

- c. As “chief” he would have run like a franchise operation for the Romans with people working for him doing the actual tax collecting, with Zacchaeus’ income, being a % of those taxes collected. The problem was, the whole system was prone to abuse (over-taxing), and Zacchaeus would also benefit from this.⁴
- d. 3rd detail we’re given is Zacchaeus was “wealthy”. Not necessarily by honest means, but because of notorious dishonesty. Why does Luke tell us all this? So we can see what Zacchaeus is saved from.
- e. Fourthly, Luke tells us in v.3, He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd.

This is where we get the first indication of Zacchaeus’ response to commit to Jesus. Luke tells us “he wanted to see”, not to be confused with an empty curiosity. “wanted to see”, actually means Zacchaeus was *seeking* Jesus. He wasn’t about to just smile and wave at Jesus. Even at this point he was committed to changing his ways. We know this because of what transpires in the story. Perhaps the immorality of his job and lifestyle had kept him awake most of the night after a business owner hit the one slightly compassionate nerve Zacchaeus had, when told they simply couldn’t pay the 25% tax being asked for.

Whatever the motivation of his heart was, he’d had enough of the old life and urgently wanted something new. And this was his chance, to meet the Lord Jesus. So he wasn’t about to let his physical stature, or his occupation, be an impediment to committing to seeing Jesus.

Respond Without Delay

So this small – and evidently very fit – man, runs ahead of the crowd to give himself the best possible chance of seeing Jesus and climbs a “sycamore-fig tree”. I’m no arborist but apparently these particular trees branches are close to the ground.

Understand, this would have been a very strange sight, seeing someone from the wealthy ‘upper-class’, run, and climb a tree, but it shows us how committed Zacchaeus was.

So in this massive crowd of people, many or most of whom I’m sure would be pining for Jesus to minister to them, desperate for him to stop and talk with them, what do we see Jesus do in v5? Stops and talks to this guy. The TC! You can imagine people in the crowd saying “he passed by all of us only to stop with, him? What’s the story Jesus?” “Well, I came for the one’s” Jesus says. “Not for the well but the sick, for the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost son. I came for the ones who know they’re empty without me, and want to know me. I came for the ones willing to take up their cross, daily, and leave everything behind, surrender everything, to follow me. I came to seek and save the lost.”⁵

“Oh and by the way, I’m coming to stay with you”

⁴ Luke 19:1-10 – Sermon Writer

⁵ Z represents those who break through self-sufficiency and truly surrender to the Lord

Did you notice Zacchaeus- - Zacchaeus never once asked, "why?"⁶ "Why would Jesus want to go to a home where God is not honoured? Answer, because that's where Jesus goes. Shocking isn't it. Jesus, in his seeking, gravitates toward the lost.

I expect Zacchaeus didn't have the faintest idea what was happening. But, he's not asking "why", because the Lord who can save him from his sins and turn his life around was coming to his home.

Look at v.6, I love this ..." *he came down at once and welcomed him gladly*" **He responded without delay**. He couldn't wait to get home and put the best doilies and fine china out, and kill the fatted calf. Folks what's happening right here is a *divine encounter* between a man and the Lord Jesus. The same kind of divine encounter that saw you 'up a tree', and saw Jesus come to you and your home.

Folks, are we seeing what Luke has given us here? We're not TC's, in a big crowd, or running and climbing trees. That doesn't matter. But like Zacchaeus, you've quite frankly had enough of the kind of lifestyle you've been living and you know the only way to move forward is to meet with the Lord. You know that when you look at your Bible, and you hear Gods word, your feet are far from moving in the direction of love for Jesus Christ...*what do you need to do?* Respond, without delay. Move toward Jesus. That's what Zacchaeus did...

Zacchaeus was *committed* to seeing Jesus, and he responded immediately, *without delay*, but in v. 7, there's a further response he needed to make...*to opposition*...

Respond to Opposition

Because as Zacchaeus and Jesus were making their way to Zacchaeus home⁷..

⁷*All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."*

3 years into Jesus' ministry and still the people had little clue about who Jesus came for. If Luke had popped another verse in between 7 & 8, do we think Jesus might have said to the mutterers *"well you've got a point maybe I won't go"* Or, Zacchaeus saying, *"I really think we should listen to them Jesus"* No!⁸ Why. Because what they were muttering was opposed to the very truth of Jesus and the truth of why he came!

Jesus was never going to put himself in a compromising position and never going to compromise, or equivocate the truth of God's word. He didn't care that was the perception.

The truth of Jesus is the truth of Jesus. And he, and his word is truth, that many outside the church *and inside*, oppose⁹....It's always going to happen.

⁶ or certainly Luke doesn't record this

⁷ will be thinking about the roast dinner that needs to be prepared when they get there...

⁸ They're not giving up. Just like we won't give up go-ing out to share the gospel

⁹ If you flying into Auckland air traffic control says to the pilot drop to 2000m for your approach, is the pilot going to say what do you mean by that? You want a pilot who knows what 2000m is! If you watch rugby the ball goes between the cross bars or not. A pie costs 4\$, you buy it or not. We have no trouble with black and white absolute decisions with mundane things, today though with what Jesus says "I am" "do this" "don't do that" people don't like...Jesus says this is marriage, this is a bloke this a girl, this is what healthy relationships look like...no can't be 2000m. This is the kind of opposition you will face, contend for the truth, with equivocation

We can tend to think Jesus is just in the clean and tidy places. But, where the least, lost, the hurting, the broken, the poor, and the desperate are, is where Jesus will be. Where there are people – bakery on Heaphy Tce, at Te Awa the Base, down at Westfield – yet to know him as Saviour and Lord, is where Jesus will be, despite the *muttering*. We want to win people to Christ? Gotta go where they are, despite any *muttering*.

Jesus nor Zacchaeus paid any attention to the opposition they faced, neither do we. Wherever there are lost people is where Jesus will be, and is where we need to be, ready and expecting opposition.

Respond To Set Things Right

Luke doesn't tell us how long Jesus had been at Zacchaeus' home, whether they'd had dinner or not, but my guess is Zacchaeus was busting at the seams to respond to Jesus. V.8 says *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."*

Now unlike the Rich Young Ruler back in Ch. 18 who Jesus asked to give away his possessions, Jesus doesn't do that here. Do you wonder why? He didn't need to. Zacchaeus already had it in his heart to respond to Jesus in this way. He didn't turn away like the Rich Young Ruler. He knew, that for his response to Jesus to be genuine, he needed to put things right with those he'd wronged.

In Zacchaeus' case putting things right was giving away half of his wealth, and 4 times what the law required him to do. That's the price he was willing to pay.¹⁰

James in 2:17 describes what we're seeing here: *faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead*.

This is the evidence of what faith in Christ looks like. Remember who Zacchaeus was, his lifestyle his work. Notice in v.8 his commitment was immediate, *"here and now..."*?

⁹ *Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.*

Now it's very important we understand Jesus saying this doesn't mean Zacchaeus was giving away stuff to win Jesus' approval, or to earn salvation. He's doing this as a voluntary response to being saved. He is doing this as a response of gratitude to Jesus. V.9 is Jesus simply saying *"yip, he gets it, he understands what being saved means"*

Zacchaeus understood what Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in his well-known book *The Cost of Discipleship*: *"When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."*¹¹

¹⁰ For further study see: Leviticus 6:5; Numbers 5:7 and Exodus 22:1-4.

¹¹ [The Cost of Nondiscipleship | Desiring God](#)

Zacchaeus was not saved because of a prayer he may have prayed. Not saved because Jesus was in his home. Not saved because he was desperate for a changed life. Saved because Jesus opened his blind eyes, where he could see his sin and indifference to Christ. And his life was completely changed. Zacchaeus would not have been saved if he'd said *"well this has been lovely having you over for dinner Jesus, I hope you enjoyed the fatted calf and roast potatoes, but, for me, I intend to keep doing what I've always done"* No, he said *"thank you that you came, for me. I give my life to you. I give what's been important to me, away!"*

Luke doesn't tell us what happened after this with Zacchaeus; church history helps us though. The Bishop of Alexandria, Clement, tells Zacchaeus continued to faithfully follow the Lord Jesus, served him to the end of his life with distinction¹², and was promoted to the role of bishop of Caesarea. So this man, who climbed the tree to see Jesus, left the lucrative tax-collecting business behind and became a spiritual leader in the church¹³.

"We are well IN THE SHELTER, the 33" is the message that set off a wave of euphoria in Chile and around the world. It had been written in red letters on a scrap of paper and taped to a drill bit that had reached 33 miners trapped 700m underground, 17 days earlier.

The Copiapó mining accident, became the most watched rescue mission in world history. There was every reason to believe the miners had not survived and if they had, would likely starve to death before any possible rescue. Rescuers on the surface had no idea where they were in the labyrinth of tunnels.

But as soon as they discovered the miners were alive, plans were put in place to rescue them. That plan included three international drilling rig teams, every ministry of the Chilean government, engineers and technicians from NASA, and more than a dozen multinational corporations. At the end of a 24-hour rescue effort, on October 13, 2010, fifty-two days after the miners were discovered – 69 days since the cave in – all 33 were brought to the surface alive.

Estimates are, that more than one billion people around the world watched some or all of the televised rescue of "the 33." A dramatic and amazing end to what could have been a terrible tragedy¹⁴.

But, not by a long-shot, is it the largest, most important, or critical search and rescue effort ever conducted. That effort was initiated and made possible by Jesus Christ.

"For the Son of Man come to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).¹⁵

¹² R. C. Sproul, *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1999), 347.

¹³ Perhaps that's what Jesus meant when he said *"Today salvation has come to this house"* as in many others would be saved, because he, Zacchaeus was saved....

¹⁴ *Chilean miners are rescued after 69 days underground* (history.com); *2010 Copiapó mining accident* - Wikipedia

¹⁵ *The Most Watched Rescue Mission In ...* - Shared by Sermon Central - Sermon Illustrations - SermonCentral.com

Respond to Jesus' seeking and be saved

Zacchaeus' responded with commitment, without delay, to opposition, setting things right, and to the seeking of Jesus. His life was completely changed! How do we have the kind of changed life that Zacchaeus did? **Respond** to the seeking and saving of Jesus. Maybe that's someone here this morning...

In the week August 3-10 I rolled up to Woolworths in Te Awamutu and said to Karyn this God stuff just isn't for me. A week later – 17th Aug 1988 – I was in the AOG church racing to the front to an altar call committing my life to Christ and a week after that – 24th Aug Baptism, I've either made life's biggest mistake, or it is the most important...

Jesus has sought you and saved you. ***What is your response?***

That Jesus came to seek and save the lost, means that we are, all, engaged in the most important task given to the church, and one in which glorifies Christ. *Christ, works through us to seek and save people.* Maybe that's someone in your circle of friends, the couple at Netherville, a friend at University, the young person sitting at McD's Te Awa on their own?

Zacchaeus' life was completely changed because he met with Jesus Christ, who, in only a few days from this point, would die a crushing death upon a cross, for our sin. Paying the price, we should have paid, but he did. *What a cost.* And there's a cost to us. You say *"I thought salvation is free"* Yes, it is. It costs us not by means of us buying our salvation. The cost to us is giving away our sin, it is allowing God to completely change us, for his service and his glory. The cost to us is saying *"as for me..."*