

It's baptism Sunday! This morning I want to look at a passage found in Luke 19 about a man who met Jesus, made a public decision to follow Him and to go all in with the Lord. He doesn't get baptized in water in the story, but he does make a similar decision to what those who are being baptized today have made. Baptism is a public declaration of a personal decision.

Instead of just reading the passage I thought it would help our kids who are joining us for Family Day to "see" our story so I've asked some students to help me with this.

Luke 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho (big wave) and was passing through

A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus (big wave); he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. (stuck up)

He wanted to see who Jesus was (crowd start blocking Zacchaeus while he tries to get around, jump up and down)

But being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. (crowd gives big wave)

So he ran ahead (go behind the crowd to the tree)

And climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him (climb and freeze in funny manner)

Since Jesus was coming that way (start walking to tree)

When Jesus reached the spot (stop at tree)

He looked up and said to him: (repeat words)

Zacchaeus

Come down immediately

I must stay at your house today

So he came down at once (fall from tree)

And welcomed him gladly (set down and act like serving tea – Zacchaeus ask Jesus if he needs more tea)

All the people saw this (crowd gather around like peering into windows and gasp)

And began to mutter (exaggerated muttering)

He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner' (repeat several times to each other one at a time)

But Zacchaeus stood up (both Jesus and Zachaeus stand up)

And said to the Lord (repeat words)

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

Jesus said to him (repeat words)

Today salvation has come to this house

Because this man too (Zacchaeus turn to audience and wave with cheesy grin)

Is a son of Abraham (look at audience)

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost. (take a bow)

The story takes place right after Jesus tells His disciples, 1st Service Only **“We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.” Luke 18:31-33** In essence Jesus is on His way to His death.

We’re basically a week out from the crucifixion so everything is about to change but on the journey nothing has changed. They get to the outskirts of Jericho and Jesus stops and heals a blind beggar and then when he enters Jericho, intending to just pass through, he has this encounter with Zacchaeus. Where we would have been completely pre-occupied with the future and what was about to happen Jesus is still taking his time to meet people. Acting as if He has all the time in the world to spend the night with strangers. The actual word here is I will lodge with you. That’s no mere stop for some tea!

The Bible says when Jesus reached the spot, but it’s hard to reach the spot when you’re just passing through unless your steps are being divinely orchestrated. Zacchaeus didn’t know it but he needed to meet with Jesus and have his life changed. Jesus needed to pass through to get to Jerusalem where a series of events were set to unfold that would bring about salvation for the whole world. But in the process there was one spot where the big picture of God’s plan for redemption met the little picture of God’s plan for Zacchaeus’

life. At this spot salvation for all intersected with salvation for this one sinner. This was the spot where Jesus stops and speaks Zacchaeus name.

The narrator of the story gave us his name, but how did Jesus know his name? Perhaps his notoriety had preceded him but Jesus didn't frequent Jericho often enough. Plus, he would have heard of him as a notorious tax collector not as a tree climber so he's meeting him out of context for that to be the case. Rather it seems to me that Jesus was divinely made aware of this man and when He speaks His name He speaks with authority and knowledge of who Zacchaeus was. I know your name and I know all about you. I know you're a tax collector and I know all that that implies. In the New Testament the tax collectors are typically referred to in the same breath as pagans, prostitutes, and general sinners. They were the quintessential bad guys of the day and were used to knock people down a peg. Oh, yeah, well even tax collectors do that – it means nothing. We read in the story that Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector. Most likely he supervised others and may have even gained further commission on what they collected from the people. Typically, tax collectors collected more money than was required which means they were pocketing the extra. Sort of a one for Rome and one for me mindset. Jesus knew all of this since Jesus knows what is in our hearts. Still, He stops, speaks His name and as He does He extends an invitation to change, an invitation to receive mercy and grace, an invitation to be a new creation in Christ.

What follows are the three things that happened to Zacchaeus that I want you to see from this story as we prepare for baptism:

1. Zacchaeus Met Jesus

Zacchaeus laid aside his pride – what will everyone think – I'm a very important person in this town – but then he took on the nature and qualities of a child. Here's the thing Middle Eastern men do not run. The list of people who run: athletes, soldiers, and children. It's interesting here that Luke has organized his stories in such a way that just before they enter Jericho the people were bringing their babies and children to Jesus and Jesus had used it to teach his disciples that **1st only** “**Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” Luke 18:17** Zacchaeus takes on childlike characteristics – curiosity is

killing him, imagination gone wild wondering what Jesus looks like, he's running, and climbing trees. Adults, even short adults, don't climb trees. None of that feels particularly grown up to us and it certainly wasn't the actions of a grown up in the Middle East 2,000 years ago. But, Jesus said, unless we become like children we will miss the kingdom. Zacchaeus lost all pride, became like a child, acted a fool, and met Jesus as a result.

I'm not sure Zacchaeus could have predicted this encounter – he really only wanted to see who Jesus was, no mention is made in the passage of him desiring to meet Jesus or having a need to bring to Him as so many others have done in the scripture. If I can just get to Jesus my child will be made whole. Zacchaeus has none of that. He's just a fascinated onlooker. Just wanting to get a good look. What is all this talk about Jesus? But something about the encounter made him hungry for repentance and true change. This led to the second thing that happened –

And experienced true life change in the process! This led to the second thing that happened -

2. Zacchaeus made a decision

The crowd saw what was happening – they weren't happy about it – but they saw it taking place. Something was going on here. Zacchaeus stands up and makes an even more public decision. **Right here, right now I'm making a choice to serve Jesus and it's going to affect every area of my life. I'm going to be a giver and not a taker, which will change everything about my job. This is going to change how I interact with my employees that I supervise and my clients. This decision to follow Jesus would affect the way he treated those around him – I'll give half my possessions to the poor – because the way we treat others says something about the way we love Jesus. I'm not going to cheat anymore – I'm going to clean up my behavior. This decision was going to make a difference in his actions. The decision to serve Jesus radiated through him and out to those around him. It was a personal decision that had public consequences.**

The crowd was waiting to see the difference meeting Jesus was going to have on this "sinner." They didn't believe it could happen but Zacchaeus made a firm decision to follow Jesus which meant allowing it to fully impact all the nooks and crannies of his

life. How we live matters when we say we're a follower of Jesus. People need to see outward expressions of our faith and our personal decision to serve the Lord. **This decision led to the third thing that happened to him:**

3. Zacchaeus went all in with Jesus

The law of Moses talks about restitution. Leviticus 6 tells us that if anyone sins and cheats his neighbors he must return what he has stolen or taken by extortion. He must make restitution in full, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the owner on the day he presents his guilt offering. Additionally, Exodus 22:1, talks about stealing something that cannot be restored – like an ox or a sheep that has already been slaughtered – in that case you'll need to give back 5 head of cattle for the 1 ox taken and 4 sheep to pay for the 1 sheep you stole. So, Zacchaeus is keeping with the law and yet also doing more than is truly required in this circumstance.

The law of Moses talks about restitution but Zacchaeus actually goes above and beyond. He's keeping the law and yet also doing more than is truly required.

Being all in with Jesus means not holding back anything in our lives. I'll go over and above not because it's required but because I want to please you, Jesus! **At the beginning of the day he climbed a tree to see Jesus, but now he addresses him as Lord. He's now the ultimate authority in Zacchaeus' life. He can't live for himself any longer, because Jesus is Lord of his life. You're all in when you hand over authority to someone else. I'm calling you Lord – you're in control so I'll make changes over and above what is required by law so that I can honor you in every way and be obedient to you.**

Zacchaeus met Jesus, then he made a decision to serve Him, and then he went all in and made Jesus the authority in His life.

This is what those being baptized today have had happen in their lives. Those that will stand in the water in just a minute are saying:

I Met Jesus – and it was life changing and life altering. Jesus extended us an invitation too. He seeks and saves what was once lost and makes them found. He gives us mercy and grace and makes us new creations in Him. At the exact spot where God knew you were at Jesus showed up and called your name. Or maybe this

is your spot and you showed up to see someone else get baptized and Jesus is calling your name. He's seeking you out this morning because He loves to save and find what has been lost.

I Have Decided – those who are getting baptized and those who have already been baptized have made a decision. I'm going to follow Jesus no matter what. No matter the cost, no matter the obstacles. **I've decided and there's no going back. This decision isn't a light one. Serving Jesus isn't a one time thing – it's a daily recommitment to a one-time decision. I've decided but then I daily choose again to honor that original decision. Jesus said to take up your cross daily. Every day we decide again to remain committed to our decision to serve Jesus. Baptism is part of that decision but tomorrow morning they'll still have to decide again to serve Jesus.**

And that decision affects every other area of our lives. Our lives aren't sectioned out – here's my church life, my work life, my home life, my personal life, and my relationship life is over here. No, you only have 1 life – you're one person and your life is not compartmentalized so that Jesus can only access certain portions. Jesus should affect every area of it. A decision to follow Jesus changes the way you work – you should be fair with those in your business. You shouldn't round up on the time card anymore, but be honest with your time and receive your earned wages – not cheating the system – cause you're a person who follows Jesus. If you're the employer then you should pay a fair and livable wage because living for Jesus impacts the area of our work. Making a decision for Jesus changes the way you think – take every thought captive, your thought life is now subject to Jesus, it changes the way you behave in every situation, the way you act and the places you frequent. A decision to live for Jesus changes the way you treat others around you – your spouse, your children, your friends, your co-workers, your boss, your clients. Following Jesus changes every relationship we have. We can't love Jesus and treat people around us like trash. It doesn't work that way. You can't love Jesus and then go home today, slam the door, tell your kid he's worthless and so stupid for not having his homework done, and then yell at your spouse for embarrassing you by talking to so and so this morning at church. Deciding to love

and serve Jesus means we show love in the other relationships of our lives too. A decision to live for Jesus impacts every single aspect of our lives. That's the decision Zacchaeus made – I'll stop cheating, I'll do right by my employees and my clients, I'll stop oppressing the poor, I'll change the way I treat others, I'll obey the law. This is the type of decision we all must make and this is the way it will impact our lives.

I have decided to let Jesus change me and I'm going public through baptism with that decision.

Finally, those getting baptized are saying I Am All In – they're going to be all wet in a minute too but it's a symbol of being all in. Lord, you are the authority in my life. I've met you and I've made a decision and now I'm going all in.

100%. No more living for myself or to please my own selfish desires – I'm totally surrendered to Jesus and His will for my life. I'm totally surrendered to what he desires to do in my life and through my life. That's what it means to be all in. Zacchaeus received Jesus into his heart, his physical home, allowed His presence to change the way he thought and felt about his line of work and his treatment of others, and then recognized Jesus' lordship over every area. That's all-in discipleship. Going all-in with Jesus means giving Him access to all those areas we already talked about and giving Him the authority to be Lord over those areas – to make all the needed changes and adjustments and to clean out what doesn't belong. All-in means total obedience – not to rules but to Jesus.

Zacchaeus met Jesus, made a decision about Him, and went all-in to serve Him and obey. Those getting baptized this morning have a similar story to tell – I met Jesus, I Have Decided, I'm going all-in this morning and will serve and obey Him.

This morning if you've not met Jesus – this can be your spot. He's calling your name. You can make a decision to serve Him and allow it to affect every area of your life and go all in with Him. Here's how, in a minute we're going to bow our heads for prayer and right where you're at it can become the spot where you meet Jesus. You can begin in your seat to tell Him – I need to make a change, and confess your sins and mistakes to Him, and ask Him to forgive you and become Lord over everything in your life. He's come looking for you this morning because He wants to save that which is lost.

Or maybe this morning you're here and have long ago made that decision but there's some areas of your life that haven't been completely surrendered – a few places where you haven't allowed the Lord to have access and you need to get that right. You know what to do as we pray – surrender those parts of your life to the Lord and then purpose in your heart to obey what He's saying.

Let's pray

Those being baptized can make their way to the stage up the ramp on the far side.