



This Week in the Word

Forever, O LORD, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens. Ps 119:89.



Calling to Salvation **Study Scripture: Luke 19:1-10**

Lesson 4, March 23, 2019

Key Verse

For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Luke 19: 10.

INTRODUCTION

Our Study Scripture is intended to remind us that the Kingdom of God covers, is concerned with, and determines all areas of life. Nothing of daily life is outside of its purview. What persons do, how they treat each other, how they regard each other, the biases that they develop, the mistakes that they make when assessing others and judging others, what they eat, where they visit, how they work, what they study, what kinds of stewards of the world that they are in matters of taxes and investments, as well as all the other issues of life, are encompassed by God's Kingdom.

The rules, regulations, outlook and way of life of the Kingdom in most cases contradict the rules, regulations, outlook, way of life, and styles of the world, which we know is at enmity with God.

The Study Scripture reminds us of the concerns of God's Kingdom by introducing us to an encounter Jesus has with an extremely wealthy but despised and hated man.

Does the encounter teach us that the accepted ways of life that we consider normal as well as "industry standard practice" should be carefully examined by believers to see whether or not they are based on biases, deceit, intimidation, and corruption?

How are we to react in our initial and in our daily encounters with Jesus after the Holy Spirit had brought us to faith in Jesus?

Should the ways of the world be still considered as normal and acceptable after we come to Christ?

How are we to show that we are changed persons, born again by the Spirit?

How are we to become sensitive to changes in “sinners” which are happening before our very eyes or are we to just keep on condemning them and writing them off because of what they are doing?

Are there persons longing to come to an encounter to Jesus whom for some “good” reason we are overlooking?

Is compensation for past sins which we are able to do good enough for God to show our repentance as true?

We have been told by Jesus previously that the possession of wealth can be a significant hindrance which will make it virtually “impossible” for the rich to enter the kingdom. It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, however needle is interpreted, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

In Mark 10:23-27 we are told that the disciples were astonished at this doctrine.

The disciples, given the accepted cultural and religious teaching that the possession of wealth should be interpreted as a blessing from God, were horrified at this clear teaching of Jesus, and could only say to Jesus, “Who then can be saved”.

This was incredulous for them.

But in answer to their astonishment we are told of Jesus’ response:

“But Jesus looked at them and said, With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible”.

It is noteworthy therefore that we should be able to meditate on and never forget that this portion of Scripture teaches that it is “impossible” for a rich man to be saved. This warning stands. For many this is an incredible and unacceptable position. We like to underestimate the distortion that the pursuit of and possession of wealth bring to the Christian life.

But we should at the same time never forget that it is impossible for anyone to be saved if the power and grace of God is not operating for that is the only thing that can save. God is the only one who can effectually call, change the heart, save, enlighten, regenerate, and secure the soul.

So do not underestimate the power and the grace of God. He can save the rich, and He can save the poor who are also in danger of being lost, and are not getting a free pass into the Kingdom just because they are poor.

We have also been told that the love of money is the root of all evil. Instead of making any of the several logical, apparently commonsensical, high sounding rationalizations in

whatever is to be done without any decision by the Holy Spirit, we should exercise much caution.

The subject of wealth, and the subject of the treatment of the poor was clearly of great concern to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Note the context which leads up to the final events before the Cross. The events which are highlighted by Luke are all most significant for Jesus cements in our mind what He is about. He told the disciples:

Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, Behold we are going up to Jerusalem and all things that are written in the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again”.

The ministry of Jesus before the Cross was in its final stages. In carrying out His ministry Jesus, the Suffering Servant of Jehovah had set His face like a flint (Isaiah 40:6-7) and headed toward Jerusalem and the suffering of the Cross.

As a closing summary of what Messiah should do, He healed the lepers (chapter 17:11-17), for remember the Lord came to heal, gave sight to the blind man (18:35-42), for the restoration of sight is critical for Messiah’s ministry, and now He stops and calls a sinner who did not expect to be called and invited to fellowship with Messiah.

The invitation to this despised “sinner” and Jesus’ declaration that this was the essence of His work is highlighted.

So what is really of greatest concern to God? Do we share the same concern? We pray that this Study Scripture will redirect our focus. Remember that we have the mind of Christ. This must show.

This study passage calls on you to make a decision about how you interpret Scripture and what Jesus is doing. This concern exactly what repentance is, the process of the way to repentance and how it comes about, and what one should do to display or confirm repentance. So think carefully as you started this Lesson. One scholar summarizes this division among scholars and translators as follows:

“Is Zacchaeus’ declaration of his financial dealings in verse 8 a promise of future action in response to Jesus’ visit or is it a report on his present behavior? If the former, then this is a classic repentance story; if the latter, it is something else entirely...”

So, what do we make of all of this in relation to our central question? Are the present tense verbs in verse 8 to be understood, in fact, as present tense, thereby describing the current and ongoing behavior of Zacchaeus (as in the RSV and KJV)? Or shall we give them a future cast, describing Zacchaeus’ penitent pledge of future behavior (as in the NRSV , New Revised Standard Version, and NIV)?

Scholars, as well as translators, are divided, so we will have to explore the narrative evidence and interpretive outcomes before deciding. The cleaner choice is to translate the

verses as describing future behavior. This not only creates a nice flow of action- Jesus honors Zacchaeus, which prompts his changed behavior, which Jesus then acknowledges- it also accords well with a tacit theological logic most of us hold: repentance precedes forgiveness. From this line of thought, we might therefore conclude-- and preach-- that in the presence of Jesus all manner of heretofore unimagined things can happen such that even a wealthy tax collector Mike gave away half his wealth. Or we might deduce-- and proclaim-- that our repentance must include matters of the wallet as well as of the heart”.

So was Zacchaeus already disturbed spiritually and on the way to repentance even before he actually met Jesus so that he would do everything possible and take greater risks to come face-to-face with Jesus, so that when this meeting actually took place he did not need to make a confession of his sins and repent in the traditional way ?

So now we will have to examine that issue and make up our minds as to whether or not Zacchaeus serves as further evidence of the manifold possibilities that are present in the presence of Jesus so that in Jesus' presence things that seem impossible become possible.

So maybe then we should start thinking that we should be careful when we meet people that are quiet, as well as people who are so desperate that they humiliate themselves and will not be deterred from even glimpsing Jesus and seen Jesus. So are you prepared to look for anyone who might have the desire or the need to see Jesus as well so that their joy would be made complete? Are you prepared to live up to that responsibility? You might be called on to bring them into the presence of Jesus.

Note therefore the elements of the importance of “sight”. People must be brought to see Jesus. There is also a second element of “wealth”. When God does the seemingly impossible and confront those with wealth this brings tremendous joy to them for “salvation ask him to this house”. Persons will come to Jesus individually but that person very likely will bring his or her entire house.

A third element has also been pointed out, namely that this man was short not just in physical stature but in terms of his moral standing among his neighbors who despised him. How are we to treat those people? The answer is also given in our Study Text in the Parable which we will look at.

THE TEXT

Verse 1: This particular portion of Scripture chronicles the conversion of a sinner named Zacchaeus. Whenever, the Bible names a person in a story of their conversion it is always very important to pay attention to the details of that encounter, but also to see what we as sinners can learn and apply to our lives, both as sinner and witnesses for the gospel.

The second part to pay attention to in this story is that it takes place in the city of Jericho, a town under a curse. However, one person is capable of rescinding or suspending that curse and that person is Christ, even if it is all for the purpose for finding Zacchaeus.

These are the lengths that Christ will go to in order to pull a sinner back from sin and iniquity.

This city was built under a curse, yet Christ honoured it with His presence, for the gospel takes away the curse, and brings forth life. One writer describes this city for us:

“Jericho was an ancient and important city, and as Jesus passed through the city on His way to Jerusalem, it seems the reason was to meet with this man named Zacchaeus. Jericho was a prosperous city. It had a great palm forest and world-famous balsam groves which perfumed the air for miles around. Its garden of roses were known far and wide. Men called it The City of Palms. Josephus called it a divine region, the fattest in Palestine. The Romans carried its dates and balsam to world-wide trade and fame. (Barclay)’

Note therefore what this meant for it is important to our context and explains the importance of this man Zacchaeus. We are told:

“All this combined to make Jericho one of the greatest taxation centers in Palestine. We have already looked at the taxes which the tax collectors collected and the wealth they rapaciously acquired (Luke 5: 27-32). Zacchaeus was a man who had reached the top of his profession; and he was the most hated man in the district”.

So this is not as simple a story as one might think. Jesus was reaching to the very top of the society to show us what God can do even to the wealthy and powerful.

So first we should note that we must tell our children who probably know the story very well, that God chooses to associate with and to save a man whom He knew and everyone felt they knew was an unworthy sinner. Children especially need to see from this story that Jesus came to save those who are unworthy those who are sinners. So do not hesitate to tell your children about the story of the Gospel, for that is what this story is all.

Christ was going from the other side of Jordan to Bethany near Jerusalem. Christ found the time to do good works as He moved to do a particular work.

Verse 2: What made Zacchaeus so special that Christ the Lord would come to Jericho to eat at this man’s house? This man was a Jew. Zacchaeus was a common name among the Jews, and this one name popular at that time, for it means “pure one”.

Zacchaeus was a very rich man. He was the chief and at the top of the game. Even though some publicans were well off, he appears to be even better than others when it came to wealth.

To answer the question of who and what this man Zaccheus is, we look at what he did. His calling and the post he was in was that of a publican, but in truth, he was the chief publican the local Receiver-General. This man was what we would call a tax-farmer. The tax system then is explained:

“At public auctions, wealthy individual purchased the right to collect taxes on imports, exports, and goods that merchants transported through a particular region. This meant that

the highest bidders received the authorization to collect taxes in a particular territory. They then arranged for subcontractors to collect the taxes in various parts of their region, profiting from the tax receipts that exceeded their bids. The subcontractors would commonly inflate the tax rate and thereby make dishonest gain for themselves. Thus the tax system in the Roman Empire gave rise to many abuses... The designation "chief tax collector may mean that he had other tax collectors working under him or that he was the principal tax collector in Jericho and the vicinity. In his position, he had amassed great wealth through dishonest means".

This profession was despised among the Jews. This was not only due to man's natural hatred of taxes, but to the fact that the tax collector were against of the hated pagan Roman overlords and oppressors and made profit on whatever extra they could get away with charging the taxpayers. We know that the Romans hated the tax collectors but did not care what they did as long as they brought in the revenue required, and so these people were hated by both sides, the Romans, and their countrymen.

Most likely all tax collectors knew of John the Baptist and what he said concerning collecting taxes, that being, collect no more than what is appointed for you. I am sure that many tax collectors thought that this gospel wasn't for them after hearing this. In his position, Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, with all other publicans under him.

Many different kinds of sinner interacted with Christ, Fornicators, thieves, brutes, prostitutes, and tax collectors. But note that the tax collectors were so hated they often we read the phrase 'publicans and sinners', with the tax collectors being separated and put into a special class of sinners.

Note the disciple and later called Apostle Levi was a tax collector. Many publicans came across the path of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but in either case, it just proves that Christ has His remnant among all sorts of individuals.

Previously dealing with the rich young ruler, Jesus had proved that it is hard for someone who is wealthy to enter into the kingdom of God because their desires lie somewhere else other than heaven and with God. Zacchaeus separates himself from this ruler in the sense that despite being rich, he knew that he was a sinner in need of rescuing from Jesus and would do anything to get into a position to be saved.

Verse 3. Zacchaeus knew that Jesus was making his way through Jericho and had a strong desire to see Him. Perhaps he was curious at first was to see what kind of man this Jesus was after hearing all the talk of Him. The mystique that surround Jesus was probably similar to that which we have with our television, movie, music and sports stars. We don't really know them personally, but we are part of their lives or follow their lives as though we were, perhaps seeking some connection with them, maybe because we are apt to imagine that there is something extraordinary in their countenance.

Either way, Zaccheus had that overwhelming urge and affinity to see Jesus.

Note though that children of God or perspective children of God, are not satisfied with seeing Jesus. We seek Jesus with an eye of faith, to see who He is. We should address ourselves in holy ordinances with this in our eye.

Zacchaeus could not gratify his curiosity by looking at him a little bit, especially since his stature was small and as he was so short and probably would not want to expose himself in a crowd of people who hated him intensely and would love to have the opportunity to bruise him a bit by jostling him hard, he had some trepidation and trouble seeing Christ, given the crowds. This rich man was small in stature physically, but more important he was small in his moral standing among his neighbours.

Zacchaeus like others who seek Jesus may appear little in stature, physically and morally, but have large souls evident by their actions in seeking out God. Eventually when they become a believer, this confirms that they are lively in spirit. This attribute tells us that despite our apparent short comings we may see in ourselves, Christ knows who we are and what we are capable of. He who created us, understands He has created a good work, so then we must strive to prove Him correct because of who He is and what we know Him to be.

Verse 4. Not wishing to be disappointed, he ran further down the path that Jesus would travel and climbed a sycamore-tree growing alongside the road to gain a better vantage point to see Christ. This tree was likely a fig-mulberry tree, (*Ficus sycomorus*), an evergreen with branches close to the ground.

This was a somewhat strange sight for a wealthy man to run and climb a tree to see someone. It certainly was unusual but wealthy Zacchaeus was so focused he did not think about how it would look in the eyes of his neighbors.

Those that sincerely desire a sight of Christ will use the proper means for gaining sight of Him, and will break through a deal of difficulty and opposition, and be willing to take pains to see Him. Those that think themselves as little must take all the advantages they can get to raise themselves to where they can see Christ, and not be ashamed to own that they need Him. Let not those of small stature or with a past life of little morality despair; with good help from the Spirit, they can aim high to reach high.

Verse 5. God empowers us so that we might have the strength to hear and respond to His call. Zacchaeus' heart was in a position to welcome Jesus. When Christ came to the location of the sycamore-tree and where Zacchaeus was, Christ stopped, looked up, took notice of him even though Zacchaeus did not think that Christ would notice him. Jesus then started a conversation by calling Zacchaeus by name for He knew the importance of a name and has already told us that He calls His sheep by name and they hear His voice and follow Him.

Jesus told Zacchaeus to come down from off the tree for He Jesus, must stay at his house. Others might have rejected him as an outcast but note that Jesus never rejects outcasts. This outcast came down from the tree joyfully for this was an honour too great, and more

than what he thought he had deserved. He did not have any thought of receiving this great invitation, and he never rejected the invitation.. Christ presented him with the blessings of His goodness, and outdid Zacchaeus' expectations.

As Christ encouraged very weak beginnings in Zacchaeus, so does He in us, to help us all GO forward. He that has a mind to know Christ shall be known of him. This particular case is very encouraging to believers and sinners as it shows that those who still press to see Jesus despite their present state, will be blessed with an opportunity to speak with Christ, because His goal is to save all by delivering the gospel message to them. It is another example of those that are faithful in a little who shall be entrusted with more. Sometimes those that come to hear the word of Christ, only for curiosity, beyond what they thought of, have their consciences awakened, and their hearts changed.

This is key to Christian ministry as we should from this example appreciate that it is and will always be Christ that gives the increase. As Christians we are to get the word out so that Christ and the Holy Spirit can work on the hearts of men, to bring them into the right relationship with God. Christ called him by name, for He knows His chosen by name, they are written in His Book of Life.

If we understand anything about Jesus, the God-Man, we should appreciate that He is God. Knowing this, Jesus knew Zacchaeus, knew His purpose for him and would not be denied. To that end, He spoke to Zacchaeus telling him to make haste and come down to prepare to host Him. The invitation was sent out by Christ who invited Himself to Zacchaeus' home.

But it is the response of Zacchaeus that is very important. Humbly and quickly he reacted to prepare for Jesus. He knew he was a sinner and there was no righteousness he personally had that would allow him access to heaven.

When Jesus calls us delays are costly; we should make haste. Parables such as the Ten Virgins remind us of this need.

Veres 6. I do not know many people who are happy when people just invite themselves over to your house and expect to be fed. But this is what Jesus did, and this man was extremely happy to have Jesus come to dinner! We hope you will also be ready and willing to invite Jesus into your life and into your home so that He will dine with you.

Clearly as the story progresses it is evident that Christ's purpose for coming to Jericho involved Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was very pleased to have Jesus acknowledge him, even more so come to his home. This honour that Jesus bestowed on him, encouraged him to move with haste and joy as it is clearly that with each passing moment, a change was occurring in Zacchaeus and a new relationship was being established with the Father, as his soul was being redeemed by God.

After a while Christians in the faith might forget how it felt to hear the call of our Lord Jesus Christ. They may not remember the zeal with which they moved to do anything and everything so that they could sit with Jesus. Zacchaeus's forwardness to receive Christ will shame us, or should shame us. He risked embarrassment and it paid off handsomely for him.

This is definitely a delightful reminder of what knowing Jesus should mean to a Christian. For new believers, whenever the call is made, as was made to Zacchaeus, we should move with haste to answer the call. When He comes to us, we must receive Him joyfully. Take the time to do that which is beneficial to eternal life, because if we do not take the time, surely the cares of this world will muffle and silence a great call and we will miss the desire of our hearts.

Verse 7. Some of the people around Jesus and Zacchaeus took offense at Jesus' desire to eat at Zacchaeus's house. Remember he was a tax collector, and chief among tax collectors. These people were hated of the Jews and as chief Zacchaeus even more so than others.

The narrow-souled severely critical Jews murmured, saying that he was gone to be a guest with a man who was a sinful man, forgetting that they also were sinful men.

We must be careful when dealing with the judgments of God. Clearly, this was done to spiritually awaken those people, possibly to remind them of the mercies of God and how far reaching it extends. If Christ can extend an invitation to one such as Zacchaeus, then they should feel that there is truly hope for their own personal redemption. If the one they followed as Messiah would act to save such a sinner above all men that dwelt in Jericho, and as such not fit to be conversed with there was hope for them. Jesus would not turn away from saving anyone.

We should consider whether these naysayers were simply intending to blame Jesus ready to accuse Him of committing a sin and doing something that they did not like. They should have known better and we also should know better when it comes to witnessing to others. We should be led by God when we are given the opportunity to witness, and let Him do the miracle working, and just be the agents of His will. By letting God's will unfold, we may get a better understanding about God the Father and how He operates for the good of mankind.

Though Zacchaeus was a publican, and many of the publicans were bad men, it did not therefore follow that they were all so. We must take heed of condemning men in the lump, or by common fame, for at God's bar every man will be judged as he is.

Though he had been a sinner, it did not therefore follow that he was now as bad as he had been, though they thought they knew his past life to be bad. Christ knew his present frame to be good. God allows for room for repentance, and so must we.

Though he was a sinner, they ought not to blame Christ for going to him, because he was in no danger of getting hurt by a sinner, but there were great hopes Jesus would do good to a sinner, and inadvertently bring benefit to them through the change that would occur. Where should a physician go but to the sick? Yet see how that which is well done may be ill construed?

Verse 8. The proofs Zaccheus gave now publicly was that though he had been a sinner, he was now a penitent, and a true convert, was given in this verse. As a publican, he does not expect to be justified by turning over a new leaf, and offering kindness for the sins he has done. But he starts by doing a good work that every Christian strives to do, by the grace of God, which gives evidence of the sincerity of his faith and repentance.

Zacchaeus acted in such a way that those that were around would be witnesses, even to those murmuring around him. They might hear the repentance as well as faith that he is about to declare. He stood deliberately and with solemnity, in the nature of a vow to God. He addressed himself to Christ in it, not to the people (as they were not to be his judges), but to the Lord, and he stood as it were at his bar.

He sets the example of all repentant sinners, namely, that we do that which is good, and we must do our good works as unto Him; we must appeal to Him, and approve ourselves to Him, in our integrity, in all our good purposes and resolutions. He makes it appear that there is a change in his heart, for there is a change in his way.

Zaccheus had a good estate. He was wealthy and, he had hitherto been laying up treasure for himself, and doing hurt to himself. Now he resolves that in the future he will use his wealth for the purposes of God, and do good to others with it.

There are many comparisons to the rich young ruler in this passage of Scripture, however, the greatest difference between that passage and this is that Zacchaeus did not waver one bit in declaring his willingness to part with whatever wealth he had to win over Christ. Where he might have been in the past uncharitable to the poor, now he will relieve them, and give so much the more for having neglected the duty so long, even the half of my goods. This was a very large proportion to be set apart for works of piety and charity.

The Jews typically sought to give a fifth part of a man's income yearly to pious uses. The law required that someone who had stolen should restore what had been stolen plus 20%, but here Zacchaeus would go much further, and give more than was required by the law to the poor, which would oblige him to curtail any extravagant expenses. His curtailing these would enable him to relieve many of their problems.

If we were but more temperate and self-denying, we should be more charitable, and, were we content with less ourselves, we should have the more to give to them that need. This he mentions here as a fruit of his repentance. Note, it well becomes converts to God to be charitable to the poor.

Zacchaeus was probably conscious that he had not gotten all he had honestly and fairly, but some by indirect and unlawful means, and of what he had gotten by such means he promises to make restitution. In like manner he says if he has wronged any man in the way of his businesses as a publican, exacting more than was appointed, he promised to restore to that person four-fold.

If only thieves were to make such a restitution as required by the law! (Ex. 22:1). He seems plainly to own that he had done wrong in his office as a publican. Officers in those professions of power should not only consider themselves in general guilty before God, but should particularly reflect upon that which has been their own iniquity, and which, by reason of their business and employment in the world, has most easily beset them.

He knew he had done wrong by false accusation. This was the temptation of the publicans, which John Baptist had warned them of particularly. These men had the ear of the government, and everything would be stretched in favour of the revenue, which gave them an opportunity of gratifying their revenge if they bore a man an ill will. Hence the promise of four-fold return to any man wronged in this way.

I am sure he kept records and would go over them, or recall from memory, to do right for God's sake to those wronged. This he is willing to do voluntarily.

In no way does the Scripture imply that by him giving up half his estate to the poor this will atone for the wrong he has done. He justly, now repentant, wishes to do well, and so Zacchaeus, as should we, do justly and then love mercy.

It is no charity, but hypocrisy, to give that which is none of our own, and believe that what we have not come by honestly should be given to God so that He will reward us. Returning dishonest gain to those that have been wronged is something that we should do if we are able.

Verse 9. Zaccheus is declared to be now a happy man. Now he is turned from sin to God, now he has bidden Christ welcome to his house, and is become an honest, charitable, good man. Now that he is converted he is in effect saved, saved from his sins, from the guilt of them, from the power of them; all the benefits of salvation are his.

This is the purpose that Jesus intended when visiting Jericho, namely, the salvation of this man Zaccheus. Christ has come to his house, and, where Christ comes, He brings salvation along with Him.

He is, and will be, the Author of eternal salvation to all that own him as Zacchaeus did. Yet this is not all. Salvation came to Zacchaeus due to the desire of his heart, but that salvation now extends to his family.

This is another important miracle that should be stressed. When we witness and bring a soul to Christ it has the ability to reach and convict those around that sinner who repented, extending life to all around.

Zacchaeus as a convert will be more than he had been, before for now he will be a blessing to his house. He will bring the means of grace and salvation to his house, for he is a son of Abraham indeed now, and therefore, like Abraham, he will teach his household to keep the way of the Lord.

Believers whose family tree does not extend to Abraham, are grafted into that promise, this is the promise of Christ.

In addition, the benefits accruing to a soul which has been redeemed is great indeed. Ps. 112:3 says that those souls that let greed run their lives bring ruin to their houses, by bringing a curse to it. However, those that do charitable acts to the poor do a kindness to their own houses, bringing blessing upon it and salvation to it, temporal at least.

When Zacchaeus is brought to Christ, his family also became related to Christ, and his children are admitted members of his church, and so salvation comes to his house, for that he is a son of Abraham.

Sons of Abraham are interested in God's covenant with Abraham, for that history leads to blessings from God, is even able to cover publicans, or Gentiles, through faith, for that God of Abraham will be a God to them and to their children. Therefore, when Zaccheus believed, salvation came to his house. Acts 16:31.

Zacchaeus is by birth a son of Abraham, but, being a publican, he was deemed a heathen, for the society put publicans on the same level as heathens. As such the Jews were shy of conversing with him, and expected Christ should be so, but he shows that, being a true penitent, he is become upright in the court (*rectus in curia*), as good a son of Abraham as if he had never been an publican, which therefore ought not to be mentioned against him.

Verse 10. What Christ had done to make him, in particular, a happy man, was consonant to the great design and intention of Jesus when He came into the world.

With the same argument he had before to justify His conversing with publicans, He pleads that He came to call sinners to repentance, now that He came to seek and save that which was lost.

Man or the sons of men are in a deplorable state, they were lost, and here the whole race of mankind is spoken of as one body. The whole world of mankind by the Fall has become a lost world, lost as a city is lost when it has revolted to the rebels, as a traveler is lost when he has missed his way in a wilderness, as a sick man is lost when his disease is incurable, or as a prisoner is lost when sentence is passed upon him.

The gracious design of the Son of God, is that He came to seek and save, to seek in order to save. He came from heaven to earth to seek that which was lost and to bring it back, and to save that which was lost, which was perishing, and in a manner destroyed and cut off. Christ undertook the cause when it was given up for lost, undertook to bring those to themselves that were lost to God and all goodness. Christ came into this lost world to seek and save it. His design was to save, when there was not salvation in any other. In prosecution of that design, He sought, took all probable means to effect that salvation. He seeks those that to some were not worth seeking, He seeks those that sought Him not, and asked not for Him, as Zacchaeus here.

Verse 11. Consider carefully. Was the heart of Zacchaeus already being opened by the work of the Holy Spirit? Was there an immense desire to know God building up in his heart? Was the presence of Jesus necessary to show him the promises that God would bring to all those that came to believe in Him?

Do you know if someone you see everyday already had a heart that is turning toward Christ and his holy longing or someone like you to talk to them and show them exactly what Christ is and bring joy to their heart? Are you missing out on that opportunity?. Note that repentance precedes forgiveness. Are you prepared to encourage repentance so that sins will be forgiven and the burdens that people have carrying around with them will be lifted? Are you aware that you have a tremendous role to play? Are you playing that role?

Zacchaeus did not have to bow down, confess all of his sins openly and say he repented. God knows your heart and you should show Him your heart, for He seeks that. You do not always have to openly and verbally seek mercy as the other tax collector in 18:13. Sometime repentance is done in private and is accepted, but sometimes it is good if it is done openly.

The pledge of future behavior was sufficient for Jesus to bless this man, this son of Abraham who had come to accept that he should behave with propriety.

Just as Jesus accepted the words of the thief on the Cross and promised him paradise, Jesus saw fit to accept the pledge of Zacchaeus.

He will accept your pledge and will have His Holy Spirit keep and sustain you. He will shelter you under His wings. He knows we are all weak, but because of His grace, He does not consume the Sons of Jacob. So do not fear. Enjoy your faith, and make it joyous faith.

Now know therefore that Jesus acted to correct the misconceptions of His disciples and others around Him as He spoke on "these things" which are summarized and climaxed in the words

"for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost"
"These things" involved the fact that a person that came to Jesus became a true son of Abraham and that position was of eternal importance. The Messiah came to make His people like Zacchaeus want to invest their lives, resources, spiritual gifts, natural talents, and time in the things of the kingdom of God.

Jesus therefore is asking you how involved are you in the business of the gospel of Christ and the kingdom of God

Jesus would now tell a Parable which is partly based on an accurate historical event in order to teach His followers that there was no standing still in the Christian life and we will either get more or lose what we have, either advancing to greater heights or slipping back.

Jesus was now leaving Jericho to go the short distance to Jerusalem and it seems that the disciples and those following Jesus expected Jesus to take over control of the nation of Israel and to toss out the oppressive rulers of the nation, becoming the political Savior of Israel, wiping out the power of Rome. We are told that Passover was coming and more than 2 million pilgrims would come shortly into Jerusalem and so everyone would be infused with the idea that something big was about to happen. Now Jesus understood this and He spoke this Parable to teach His disciples and those that followed Him how to conduct themselves in the time before He would come as political ruler over the earth. And he did not force them or interfere with them or stand over them but left them to their own devices with all the help they needed to be successful. Of course by this parable they should understand that there would have to be some considerable time between His going to Jerusalem on this occasion and His coming back as the political ruler and Savior of Israel.

Verse 12. This parable told of a King that went far away to receive a kingdom and then to return. The unique nature of this Parable lay in the fact that this was based in part on an actual historical event which one writer tells us the people listening to Jesus would easily understand some of what Jesus meant. The event was as follows:

“When Herod the Great died in 4 B.C. he left his kingdom divided between Herod Antipas, Herod Philip and Archelaus. That division had to be ratified by the Romans, who were overlords of Palestine, before it became effective. Archelaus, to whom Judea had been left, went to Rome to persuade Augustus to allow him to enter into his inheritance, whereupon the Jews sent an embassy of 50 men to Rome to inform Augustus that they did not wish to have him as king. In point of fact, Augustus confirmed him in his inheritance, though without the actual title of King. Anyone in Judea, on hearing the parable, would immediately remember the historical circumstances on which it was based”.

It is to be noted that Archelaus was a particularly vicious person and he was blamed for the slaughter of many Jews in Israel. His coming back to Judea as ruler though not as a full sovereign and king was not a good sign for the Jews.

Verse 13. The King or nobleman called his servants and gave them 10 minas , instructing them to do the best business they could with the resources that he had left with them. One mina was worth about three months salary.

Now note carefully what one writer points out. It isn't that each servant received 10 minas, but that 10 minas were distributed to the group as a whole, one mina for each of the 10 servants.

It tells us that the King trusted his servants with his money and then went away and left them to use it as best as they thought possible. The King left them to do what they could, working at their own devices and he did not stand over them.

The King's trust was obviously a test to see whether or not they were faithful and reliable. The money left was clearly to him relatively small but it would show him whether he could justify giving them responsibility at a much higher level trusting them with big things.

It also tells us what he had in his mind for he did not expect that they would sit down and enjoy themselves and do nothing. They were supposed to work hard and produce.

Verse 14 Jesus said that the citizens of the King who lived in the area over which he ruled hated this king or nobleman and so they sent a delegation to the nobleman's ruler telling him that they did not want this nobleman to rule over them. Note that the citizens were not the servants who received the minas for investment purposes. The servants were a special bunch.

But the nobleman eventually returned having received the kingdom and then he called the servants who had received his funds for investment while he was away.

Verse 15. The first server reported that he had made an impressive 1000% increase with his masters "mina". The "mina" that he had received had now grown to 10 "minas".

Verse 17. The Master praised his servant for having done a beautiful job, for he had faithfully multiplied his master's resources. He now gave him authority over 10 cities in the kingdom the Master had just received. This servant had been faithful with the very little that he had been given and so now he would be given authority over a great deal.

Note however that the reward for this faithful service was not resting and fooling around, but more service and more responsibility. So if you think that when you get to the New Heaven and the New Earth and walking the streets of gold you will just be walking around doing nothing and lazing around, change your mind. You will have much work to do but this work will not involve feeling pain, frustration, inability, and tiredness. You will be enjoying yourself far more than you can dream of. You will be doing extraordinarily creative work under the guidance of your Lord Master and Savior Jesus Christ. You will be happy and joyful to be with Him, working with Him to make this universe an exceptionally amazing place.

Verses 18-19. The second servant also had a good report for he had earned five more "minas" showing a 500% increase. He was rewarded with authority over five cities.

CONCLUSION

Note therefore that when you are saved you are called on to spend your life, your time, your spiritual gifts, and all your energy and abilities sharing the good news of the Kingdom just as Jesus had shared with Zacchaeus.

Jesus is telling us that He has given each man and woman an equal amount of money and this means that we all start out with the same opportunity even if we think we have more talents and gifts than others. Remember that even though we might think we have been given more spiritual gifts by the Spirit than others, this does not make us better than others, and it does not mean that we will have more awards than those that we look down on in this world for their so-called limited amount of gifts. So do not boast too much about

what you have been given by the Holy Spirit. You might be shocked when you get to the New Heaven and the New Earth that the person that you thought had only a little tiny bit of abilities and did not seem to have achieved much would have more crowns than you are given. So shape up and realize that whatever you achieve is really your achievement but the achievement of Jesus Christ your Lord God and Saviour for He is living his life through you.

So redeem the time as Ephesians 5:16 tells us. Make the most of the time that you have. Involve yourself in the business of the Kingdom of Christ. Remember that when Jesus returns His faithful followers will rule with Him in a variety of ways. We will reign with Him as 1 Timothy 2:12 tells us. The Kingdom will be delayed so that it will be proven for all to see who the faithful servants are.

So remember that there must be no standing still for the Holy Spirit is right there beside you and in you to help you to succeed in amazing ways. To him who has, more will be given, and to him who has not what he has will be taken away. Remember the more you work the more efficient you will be and the more you will be blessed.