

Luke 19A

- We leave Luke's chapter on faith, chapter 18, and we move into chapter 19
 - Before this chapter is over, Jesus will have arrived Jerusalem, riding in like a conquering king, arrived in the temple and thrown out the money collectors
 - So we're entering the climactic chapters within Luke's gospel account
 - But before we get there, Luke has another encounter with a needy sinner to relate to us
 - An intriguing story only recorded here in Luke of a man named Zaccheus

[Luke 19:1](#) ¶ He entered Jericho and was passing through.

[Luke 19:2](#) And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich.

[Luke 19:3](#) Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature.

[Luke 19:4](#) So 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.

- At the end of chapter 18, we were told that Jesus met the blind beggar as He was approaching Jericho
 - And now Luke records a scene that occurs in the city
 - Remember, Jesus is moving ever closer to Jerusalem and with each step the crowds will grow and so will the excitement surrounding Him
 - There is a real hope that Jesus might be successful in defeating the Roman occupation through some kind of a rebellion similar to the Maccabees revolt
 - And then Luke turns his attention to a tax collector called Zaccheus
 - A publican, a Jew who had become a traitor in the eyes of his brethren
 - Easily the most despised member of Jewish society

- And more than that, he was the chief tax collector
 - Which would explain his great wealth
- This man made immense wealth by taking advantage of the people, taxing them almost at will and with impunity
 - If you are one to get a little angry whenever you realize how much of your pay goes to taxes of various kinds, imagine your anger at a man who took your money on a whim and gave it to your oppressors
 - This man was no doubt despised by everyone
- And to make matters even worse, he was probably disliked even by other tax collectors, because he was the boss
 - He demanded payment from them too
 - This guy very well may have had absolutely no friends
- And to top it all off, his name would have been another source of ridicule
 - It's an abbreviated form of the name Zachariah, which means righteous one
 - Certainly, the irony would not have been lost on his neighbors
- Like the blind man in the earlier story, Zaccheus hears that Jesus is approaching the city
 - And apparently he's heard something about Jesus
 - At least enough to pique his curiosity
 - And Zaccheus is so short, it seems, that he has no hope to catch a glimpse of Jesus as He passes by
 - Imagine for a moment how big the crowds have become, that it's impossible to even see Jesus walking by
 - It's not hard to understand the crowd being too dense in a place here or there

- But this crowd is so dense for miles in either direction that Zaccheus can't solve the problem by going left or right
 - His only choice is to go up
 - So Zaccheus climbs a sycamore tree to catch a glimpse
- The scene here is so compelling as you begin to imagine it in your mind
 - Here's a man who's a pariah in his community, alone and isolated
 - And he's been trying to break through the crowd to see Jesus
 - But you know that crowd wasn't about to let him through
 - So he does the only thing he can think to do
 - He climbs a tree
 - As simple as this seems, this is something extraordinary
 - As a Jewish man, Zaccheus would have been expected to adhere to strict rules of decorum in public
 - Add the fact he was a prominent public official, hated though he was, and you would expect him to observe certain rules of behavior
 - And those rules most certainly didn't include climbing trees
 - Climbing the tree exposed him to even more ridicule in the moment
 - He was lowering himself, losing his dignity to climb a tree like a child
 - His legs and perhaps even backside in full view of those who looked upward – something no Jewish man would ever think to do
 - It's a remarkable scene, even more so if we understand the culture
 - And this moment when Zaccheus is sitting up in a tree by himself and away from the crowds was a fitting picture of his life overall
 - Separated and alone

- Disgraced and humiliated
 - And yet it also revealed his heart – filled with childlike excitement to see Jesus – like Jesus said, come to me like a child
- Even at this early point, this story seems remarkably similar to the theme of the previous chapter, where Luke described the nature of saving faith
 - It shares parallels with the blind begger's experience
 - A man without hope but attracted to Jesus
 - But in this case, Zaccheus does nothing overtly to call for Jesus
 - He is simply content to get a look at Him

[Luke 19:5](#) When 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."

[Luke 19:6](#) And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly.

[Luke 19:7](#) When they saw it, they all *began* to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."

[Luke 19:8](#) Zaccheus 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."

[Luke 19:9](#) And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham.

[Luke 19:10](#) "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

- As Jesus approached, Jesus must have looked up over the crowd and seen Zaccheus in the tree
 - So Jesus calls out to Zaccheus to come down quickly and hurry because Jesus will be staying at his house
 - What a astonishing thing to say
 - First, Jesus knew the man's name without ever having met him
 - A clear sign of His divinity to know the impossible
 - Can you imagine the expression on Zaccheus' face when he heard Jesus call him out in that way

- Can you imagine the reaction of the crowd, as they are all stunned to find that Jesus knows this man
- And then on top of it all, Jesus is planning to stay with the man tonight
- Why did Jesus say this to the man?
 - One commentator has said that verse 5 is a perfect representation of God's sovereignty in salvation
 - While verse 6 is a perfect representation of man's responsibility to respond to God
 - I would agree
 - But I would add that Jesus' statement to the man emphasizes that the outcome of this situation was never in doubt
 - Jesus calls the man by name
 - He tells him to hurry
 - He says He must stay at Zaccheus house that night
 - Jesus doesn't request it, but rather He states it as a matter of fact
- The famous 18th century preach George Whitefield said it this way:

With what different emotions of heart may we suppose Zaccheus received this invitation? Think you not that he was surprised to hear Jesus Christ call him by name, and not only so, but invite himself to his house? Surely, thinks Zaccheus, I dream: it cannot be; how should he know me? I never saw him before: besides, I shall undergo much contempt, if I receive him under my rood. Thus, I say, we may suppose Zaccheus thought within himself. But what saith the scripture? "I will make a willing people in the day of my power." With this outward call, there went an efficacious power from God, which sweetly over-ruled his natural will: and therefore, verse 6, "He made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully;" not only into his house, but also into his heart.

Thus it is the great God brings home his children. He calls them by name, by his word or providence; he speaks to them also by his spirit. Hereby they are enabled to open their hearts, and are made willing to receive the King of glory. For Zaccheus's sake, let us not entirely condemn people that come under the word, out of no better principle than

curiosity. Who knows but God may call them? It is good to be where the Lord is passing by.

- And as Whitefield says, Zaccheus received Jesus gladly
 - And as you might expect, it is Jesus who makes out poorly in the eyes of the crowd
 - They grumble, were told, because Jesus shows favor upon this man who was likely chief among sinners in that community
 - Isn't this such a common reaction among people?
 - When we have someone we despise, someone who is a shameless sinner, someone who does everything and anything to make us angry or to wound us
 - A despicable person, the kind of person who deserves our scorn
 - When that person gets their just desserts, we smile with a sense of satisfaction, don't we – they brought it upon themselves
 - But what happens if that person seems to win out in some way
 - They win the lottery
 - Or they marry the nicest girl in the class
 - They found a hugely successful company
 - Then we feel wronged and cheated – as if life isn't fair
 - What a circumstance when a truly evil person has tried, convicted and received their just sentence
 - The person is sitting in jail for some horrible crime, sentenced to life in prison or perhaps on death row even
 - But then the Governor pardons the person, let's them go free
 - We feel violated, angry
- Now imagine, the crowd faced with Jesus, the rock star, showering kindness on their worst enemy

- And the man has done nothing to deserve it
- He was simply sitting in the tree waiting for Jesus to pass by
 - And he received grace
 - And it made the crowd angry
- And before we might be tempted to join the crowd in declaring this to be unfair, we need remember we were that condemned criminal set free
 - We were the one who deserved punishment, rightly condemned before God
 - Yet we received mercy
 - Just as Zaccheus did
- Then look at this man's reaction to Jesus' mercy
 - Immediately, he addresses him as Lord
 - While this term can be nothing more than a term of respect, I think the context of all that happens here makes clear that he means it in its deepest sense
 - Zaccheus has come to believe Jesus was the Messiah
 - And it says that Zaccheus stops Jesus
 - I get the impression that Zaccheus took note of the crowd's reaction
 - And he feels the need to respond publicly
 - But while he might have been prone to responding in anger or malice before this encounter with Jesus
 - This time he reacts in a way completely contrary to his old nature
 - He says I give half of what I own to the poor
 - This is a substantial commitment – consider it yourself
 - And if I have defrauded anyone, I will repay back 4 times what I owe

- Under the law, a man who stole property was required to return it and give back double (Exod 22)
 - But if he was unable to restore the original property (like a goat), then he had to pay back fourfold
 - Zaccheus offer to repay fourfold indicates the degree of his repentance, going beyond what was required here
- Why did he stop Jesus to make these statements in public?
 - I believe Zaccheus desires to make this public confession for at least two reasons
 - First, I believe Zaccheus' heart is heavy with his sin and the wrong he has committed and he seeks a public confession
 - And a true encounter with the Lord will always prompt genuine, heartfelt repentance of sin
 - This man has been touched by grace and repentance is the natural result
 - Secondly, Zaccheus wants to make his changed heart a matter of public record
 - He desires to show witness to the change that's taken place because of his encounter with Christ
 - Remember the story of the blind beggar?
 - A changed heart will bring evidence
 - In this case, the evidence is the man's changed attitude toward his wealth and his treatment of others
 - George Whitefield says it this way:

I do affirm that we are saved by grace, and that we are justified by faith alone: but I do also affirm, that faith must be evidenced by good works, where there is an opportunity of performing them.

- And then Jesus confirms this result

- As Luke captures his statement, he says that salvation has come to this man's house
- And he is too a child of Abraham
 - This last statement is a bit puzzling when you consider that the man is already a decedent of Abraham
 - As a Jew, he could trace his ancestry all the way back to the patriarch
 - So why does Jesus declare him to only now be a son of Abraham
- The answer is found in Paul's letter to the Romans

[Rom. 2:28](#) For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

[Rom. 2:29](#) But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

[Rom. 9:6](#) ¶ But *it is* not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are *descended* from Israel;

[Rom. 9:7](#) nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED."

[Rom. 9:8](#) That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

- Paul's letter reveals the truth that God does not consider those who are physically born of Abraham to be the descendants of Israel and worthy of His promises
 - Rather only those who are spiritually descended from Abraham by faith
 - The promises of Israel were made to a people who would be brought into the family of God by faith
 - First the believing Jew who inherits the promises given to Abraham
 - And secondly the Gentiles who by faith are grafted into this family
 - So when Jesus says Zaccheus is now a son of Abraham, He means it in the spiritual sense, which is the only sense that matters

- Zaccheus can now expect to share in the promises made to Abraham and Abraham's heirs by faith
- And then Luke ends the story in verse 10 with a statement that many consider to be the key verse in Luke's gospel
 - John's gospel has 3:16

[John 3:16](#) ¶ "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

- This verse is Luke's touchstone verse
 - Because it concisely sums up point of Luke's account
 - In His first coming to earth, Jesus had but one mission
 - To seek the lost and save them
 - And Zaccheus' reaction expresses that mission perfectly
 - It's almost as if Zaccheus' conversion is such a perfect picture of that mission, that Luke feels that part of Jesus' ministry is best ended with this example
 - - And so from this point onward, Luke's Gospel moves away from Jesus ministry to seek and save and moves toward a rapid conclusion of His ministry in Jerusalem
- And so it's especially fitting that Luke introduces this next stage of his narrative with a parable describing what to expect

[Luke 19:11](#) ¶ While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.

[Luke 19:12](#) So He said, "A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and *then* return.

[Luke 19:13](#) "And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, 'Do business *with this* until I come *back*.'

[Luke 19:14](#) "But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'

- As we always do with parables, we need to carefully observe the pieces of the puzzle and identify the characters
 - This one is a little easier because Luke himself explains the purpose behind the parable
 - Jesus is telling this parable to set straight is purpose for traveling to Jerusalem
 - The crowd thinks he is traveling to become crowned king
 - But Jesus has other plans of course
 - And this parable explains those plans
 - And the audience is the disciples, both then and today
- First, there is a nobleman
 - He went to a distant kingdom to receive a kingdom and then return
 - Clearly the nobleman is Jesus
 - And His going away is His death and ascension, when Jesus temporarily leaves Earth to receive His kingdom
 - Even before we go farther, it's interesting to note that Jesus says He will receive His kingdom when He goes away
 - This is what the Bible teaches though

[1Pet. 3:22](#) who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

- And while he is away, he expects His subjects to serve His interests
 - And He grants to each some measure of provision for that purpose – about 3 months' wages
 - Just the fact that He is talking about leaving is meant to reinforce that the kingdom will be delayed – not going to come right now
- But in the meantime, a revolt takes place

- Interestingly, the revolt is among the citizens of the kingdom, and not the slaves
 - The slaves seems to be obedient and content to do the nobleman's bidding
 - But the citizens are demanding that this nobleman would not rule over them
- Of course, the slaves are the believers in the faith who have received Jesus as the Messiah, both Jew and Gentile
- While the citizens are the Jews in the nation who should have recognized and received their Messiah
 - For they were the ones who had been promised that a king would come to reign over them
 - But they rebelled at Christ's rule
 - Interestingly, they communicate their rebellion through a delegation
 - They have representatives who speak on their behalf – Pharisees and other leaders

[Luke 19:15](#) "When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he might know what business they had done.

[Luke 19:16](#) "The first appeared, saying, 'Master, your mina has made ten minas more.'

[Luke 19:17](#) "And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.'

[Luke 19:18](#) "The second came, saying, 'Your mina, master, has made five minas.'

[Luke 19:19](#) "And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.'

[Luke 19:20](#) "Another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief;

[Luke 19:21](#) for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.'

[Luke 19:22](#) "He *said to him, 'By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow?

[Luke 19:23](#) 'Then why did you not put my money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?'

[Luke 19:24](#) "Then he said to the bystanders, 'Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.'

[Luke 19:25](#) “And they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas *already*.’

[Luke 19:26](#) “I tell you that to everyone who has, more shall be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.

[Luke 19:27](#) “But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence.”

- For as long as these verse are, the picture being drawn in this parable is fairly easy to understand
 - As we keep straight our characters, we know it is Jesus returning having received His kingdom
 - This is the moment of Christ’s return to earth – His second coming
 - And we have a description of the Judgment Seat of Christ
 - This is the judgment moment for the believers – slaves in the parable
 - What do I mean by judgment?
 - A judgment of the works of believers for the purpose of receiving reward
 - It’s a real moment, and one we will each experience
 - Paul describes it in 1 Cor 3 and 2 Cor 5
 - And the parable reflects how judgment will be carried out in that moment
 - Similar to Matt’s parable about the talents
 - Each slave (believer) as a life to invest with various talents and gifts and a certain amount of time and opportunity
 - Depending on what we have been given and what we do with it will determine our reward
 - Not all rewards are equal
 - And reward always comes in terms of greater responsibility to serve
 - In a sense we are working now to audition for a bigger part in the next production

- Most interesting is the one slave at the end who does nothing but hide his mina
 - The slave uses as his excuse for inaction his fear of the master
 - He says you are someone who demands much
 - To gather where you do not sow is an expression that means that he had expectations of return even where others might have expected nothing
 - His standards and demands are so high that he looks for grain even in places where he hasn't sown seed
 - But this insight didn't stimulate the slave to greater efforts, but rather to hiding his mina
 - You can see this attitude in so many Christians today
 - They recognize that their Savior has high standards and is demanding, but rather than be stirred to action
 - They seem content to remain invisible in this world and rest on their justification
 - It's as if Christ's high standards give them excuse not to contribute anything meaningful to His kingdom mission
- What Jesus says in response is that He will judge these slaves by the very standard they mentioned
 - And by that high standard, He says they are found unworthy of even what they have
 - Meaning, the little responsibility they were given in this age will be taken away in the next so that they have no opportunity to serve
 - We're not sure what that looks like, of course, but we know we don't want any part of it
 - This is not our salvation, but it's no less important
- Finally, the concluding statement in verse 27
 - To those who reject his rule over them there is no option but eternal death

- This is described in Rev 19 when Jesus returns with the saints to set up the kingdom promised in scripture
- As Luke moves into the final part of his Gospel, he has set up the reader for what to expect
 - Jesus is the king and he will rule in his kingdom
 - But it's wont be set up at this point
 - It will be left to others to build by the power of the Holy Spirit
 - And those who are called into this mission are to be held accountable for their work
 - And those who reject the King will suffer his wrath