**WORK ON THE TEXT**

besides the text study

**Church Year and Other Readings:**

Sunday of Church Year: Pentecost Last (P-24 in pericope; P-20 on calendar)

Old Testament Reading: Exodus 34:5-9

Epistle Reading: Romans 5:6-11

Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

**Context:**

**Within Book:** Near the end of his ministry before Jerusalem.

**Message of context:** Jesus keeps on bringing people to salvation up to the end. That is his ministry. There is no perfection of mankind, no consummation of the kingdom in his first coming; but the reclamation, redemption of fallen man, to survive in faith to the end of life that they may receive the inheritance.

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| --- | --- |
| Importance | Passage |
|  | Jesus was going through Jericho |
|  | Behold a man named Zacchaeus |
|  | who was an arch tax collector |
|  | and wealthy |
|  | He was seeking to see Jesus |
|  | but was not able due to the crowd |
|  | because in stature he was short. |
|  | Running ahead to the front |
|  | he climbed up a fig-mulberry tree |
|  | so that he could see him |
|  | since he was about to pass by there. |
|  | As he came to that place |
|  | Jesus looked up and said |
|  | “Zacchaeus, hurrying, come down. |
|  | For today I must stay at your house. |
|  | Hurrying, he came down |
|  | and welcomed him joyfully. |
|  | Seeing, everyone complained saying, |
|  | “He has gone in to find lodging |
|  | beside a sinful man.” |
|  | Standing, Zacchaeus said to the Lord, |
|  | “Look, ½ of my belongings, Lord |
|  | I am giving to the poor. |
|  | If I have extorted anyone |
|  | I am returning four times. |
|  | Then Jesus said to him, |
|  | “Salvation today is to this house, |
|  | because he also is a son of Abraham. |
|  | For the Son of Man came |
|  | to seek and to save the lost one. |
|  |  |

BASIC OUTLINE

for sermons

MAIN THOUGHT OF THE TEXT:

**Malady:** That we are sinners.

**Remedy:** Jesus did the work, and now welcomes us into his family.

**Purpose:** To give Christians the joy that Zacchaeus felt in being in Christ’s family.

**Summary Sentence:**

Jesus desires each person’s salvation – and rejoices in it.

TELL THE STORY! (What are the main points of the text. Story flow for narrative; thought development for teaching text.)

1) Rich, lost man wants to see Jesus

2) Jesus invites himself to his house

3) Zacchaeus shows the fruits of his new faith

4) Jesus states this as his purpose for coming to earth

APPLY THE STORY (convict, console, encourage, instruct, guide, direct)

1) There is none worthy of the Savior

2) How encouraging it is to be accepted by our Savior, being respected by him

3) The fruits of faith just happen out of the joy of belonging to Jesus.

4) The joy you have in belonging to Jesus no matter what the circumstance of life is.

Craddock’s organizational principle for a sermon: (for examples, see *Preaching*, p.157)

*Text:* Luke 19:1-10

*Theme:*  Christ Jesus joys in making us his own, though we are unworthy

*Subject:* Accepting the unacceptable

*Title:* The Day Money Stopped Being His God

Accepting the Unacceptable

The Joy of the Redeemed

1. The Things that Are Accepted These Days!!!
   1. Lowered Standards
      1. In the Military
      2. On Standardized Tests
2. The Unacceptable
   1. His actions made him unacceptable
      1. Cog in the Roman Machine
      2. Blatant dishonesty
      3. Do anything for his wealth
   2. Treated as unacceptable
      1. Could not serve as judge or witness
      2. Perhaps even on this morning, part of the reason he couldn’t get into the crowd was their rejection
      3. They see a rabbi close and they grumble
   3. His actions made him unacceptable to God
   4. Perhaps this is what had him out there this day
      1. Realizing where he was in life with people
      2. Realizing where he was in life with God
      3. “to see who Jesus was”
         1. certainly the impression that it was more curiosity than faith
         2. yet God uses such impulses to draw us close
         3. we ought to capitalize on those
            1. for ourselves
            2. but especially others
3. Accepted
   1. Encountering Zacchaeus
      1. Respecting him
         1. to a man in a ridiculous situation – gracious
         2. looking at him
         3. *it is not* accepting his sins;
            1. that is not respect
            2. that is spiritual malpractice
      2. “Inviting” him
         1. Actually inviting himself in
         2. I “must”
         3. On overnighter
            1. not for tea and crumpets
            2. not for a beer, though they probably did have wine
            3. to stay at his house

Wish we knew what was said there!

* + 1. Do we forgive people?
       1. Do we need to forgive people in our lives
          1. A parent who didn’t treat us well
          2. A former spouse in a hurtful marriage
          3. A colleague who continues to be a jerk
       2. Can the respect and forgiveness we give as Christians be a sermon to them, that they “want to see who Jesus is”

1. Zacchaeus’ Joy
   1. What we can assume
      1. Joy of being accepted
         1. Do people get that from us?
            1. How many people are in a hurry these days – that Post Office guy serving me as fast as the lawyer speak at the end of the radio commercials
            2. Time, Interest, You Are Somebody to Me
      2. Joy in salvation – which Jesus only mentions here
   2. Joy that we know
      1. Whether this was in the morning or not, we don’t know
      2. But a desire to live to God’s glory
         1. The “pay back 4x” was immediately known to Jews
      3. Do you give gifts to God with such holy joy.
         1. When we give in front of people we can’t avoid pride
         2. But before God, in faith, we can. Because we know he sees through it all, and we can *never* be proud before God.
2. Contrast the Rich Man of last week, and the rich man of this week
   1. Relation to the Law
   2. Spirituality
   3. Standing before Men
   4. Rich
      1. If that rich man couldn’t get in, what about this rich man?
   5. And what would our reaction be?
      1. Seeing the respectable pillar of the community walk away, that we might just think, “If pastor would have just said something different.” Bragging rights about the guy who was almost here.
      2. Seeing the reviled tax collector in our pews, could we think, “Glad he’s here, but we tend to collect the odds and ends. Sure would’a been nice to have *that* guy here.” Head hunting.

Luke 19:1-10; Ex 34:5-9; Rom 5:6-11 10/26/2019

**Accepting the Unacceptable**

About a week ago a certain member of this congregation was educating me about politics in the Vietnam Era. He wasn’t talking about the national politics. He was explaining the internal politics of the military. He was telling me about how at a certain point in that war, standards were relaxed for draft inductees—very relaxed. People who arguably should have been in a mental health facility were handed a gun and trained how to use it. Results were not good. Lowering standards cost many their lives!

Judging from the things we hear, we may become convinced that lowered standards are the hallmark of our times. From dumbing down curriculums, to worse customer service, to more informal dress codes, to less civility in speech, standards seem to be falling everywhere!

Now, to be fair, I think we exaggerate this phenomenon. Not everything is getting worse. But you can’t deny that some things are. So the cry goes up. “Improve the curricula! Stricter background checks! Keep the standards up.”

Maybe that’s why Zacchaeus couldn’t get a curb-side seat to see the Jesus parade passing through his town. A noted religious teacher, a man of faultless morality, a magnetic personality was coming to town, Jesus. Zacchaeus, who just wanted to see who this Jesus man is, couldn’t even get a glimpse. Some of the taller men felt someone pushing at their side trying to make his way to the front. At first they thought it was an impatient child trying to squirm through. They almost let him. But then they saw it was Zacchaeus. They saw that cog in the oppressive Roman machine; they saw the tax collector. With a sideways full-body shove they knocked him off-balance and out. It sure felt good to give *him* the heave-ho for once!

The citizens of Jericho wanted to put on the best look, to keep the riff-raff off the street for at least the afternoon. “Don’t even let him see the parade. That’s not who we are. We aren’t a bunch of extortionists, a bunch of swindlers like this tax collector. We are decent people. We don’t need his face on the front page of *The Jericho Gazette.* We don’t want his mug smiling back at us from Jesus’ Instagram post.”

I don’t know if that’s how it went. But that’s what people thought of tax collectors, and for good reason. When it came to workplace ethics, tax collectors were on the bottom of the dog pile. Briefly, here’s how it worked: The Roman government didn’t have an IRS. They farmed out their revenue collection to highest bidders. The Romans said, “This is how much money we want. However you get it, that’s your business. Just get us this much money.” Well, the collectors also had to make some money for themselves. So the tax collectors went out like bounty hunters, just barely under the cover of law, to get whatever the Roman government needed, and they wanted for profit, by whatever means they could. Always hassling people to palm a few bucks. Always overcharging. Always at the behest of the foreign conquerors, giving good Jewish money to the Romans. There are a few rare reports of tax collectors with religious tendencies, or at least guilty consciences. But even their exception proved the rule. For example, they would “give Rabbis timely notice to go into hiding”[[1]](#footnote-1) before they came through to shake down the neighborhood.

It sounds like tax collectors had the last laugh. But human society being what it is, has a way of getting revenge. Tax collectors, not just Zacchaeus, but no tax collector was allowed to be a judge. Tax collectors could not even stand as witnesses in the Jewish courts, they were counted so dishonest. It isn’t real clear who got the last laugh – the tax collectors who had all the money, or the society which barred their doors against them. Like most feuds, both were probably miserable.

But in a sense, society was right. Tax collectors were thieves. They were dishonest. Money was their god. The Gospel of Luke notes: ***“and he was wealthy.”***

Maybe that’s what made Zacchaeus want to see Jesus so badly that he was willing to shed some of his personal dignity and climb a tree. If the people spat when they heard his name, what did it matter if they laughed at him up in a sycamore-fig tree? He had heard of this rabbi. He had heard incredible stories: a respectable rabbi eating meals with tax collectors. Rabbi Jesus even enlisting a tax collector (Matthew) as one of his inner circle of twelve. ***“Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was.”***

But really, what chance does Zacchaeus have? Do remember last Sunday’s sermon reading? Remember our guest preacher, Pastor Hundley, explaining for us about that rich young ruler who came to Jesus asking, *“What must I do to be saved?”* Remember how Jesus told him to take his wealth and put it down so that God could fill his arms with true blessings? But that rich man just couldn’t do it. He couldn’t let go of his wealth. Then Jesus said this about rich people, *“How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”*

That rich, hopeful, moral, Scripture reading, golden boy came to Jesus with an optimistic look to his face. He knew his Bible. He was of flawless personal character. No one could dig up dirt on him. He treated his neighbors well. He honored his parents. He told the truth. But Jesus just couldn’t accept him.

If *that* rich man couldn’t pass the grade with Jesus, what about *this* rich man, Zacchaeus? Every cent of his wealth stunk of corruption. He was so dishonest society wouldn’t let him take the stand in a courtroom. He felt no loyalty to his countrymen and neighbors. If that golden boy failed Jesus’ test, what about this sewer rat?

***“When Jesus reached the spot [where Zacchaeus was], he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.’”***

Zacchaeus must have just about fallen out of that tree. The man who couldn’t find a hand to shake in his own town—a greeting from a rabbi? Rabbis usually wouldn’t even look at him. This renowned teacher actually invites himself to spend a night at his house? At one point in his life Zacchaeus had hungered for wealth. Now he realized that he was starving for respect, and it was given by Christ—profound respect!

In this single verse we see so much that we love in Jesus. Yes, we know he is our Savior, but what a Savior! Watch him look Zacchaeus in the eye. Look at how Jesus releases Zacchaeus from the laughable position he had put himself in—a grown-up climbing around in the tree branches. Look at how Jesus releases him from the social pressures of what to say next and simply informs Zacchaeus that he is going to lodge at his house this evening. Yet Jesus invites himself into Zacchaeus’ house in such a way that one might think that Zacchaeus has done a favor for Jesus! Jesus gives such dignity to Zacchaeus, almost as if Zacchaeus has something that Jesus needs. ***“I must stay at your house today.”*** This is what we love about Jesus.

This is what you find about Jesus when you engage in regular Bible or Bible-based devotional reading. This is what you find about Jesus when you pair that Bible reading with regular prayer. And by that, not just the at the momentary middle-of-the-day prayers—which are good prayers, but not the sum today of prayer any more than snack food is a healthy diet. When your life is one of hearing and watching Jesus in the Scriptures, and of speaking to him in heartfelt prayer, you have the soul lifting experience of meeting a great person who profoundly respects you. No, you aren’t his equal. But he respects you like a good teacher respects a student, a parent a child, a conscientious officer a dependable enlisted man. When we sing that song, “Jesus Sinners Does Receive,” we don’t state it, we sing it, even as Zacchaeus’ soul sang when Jesus spoke to him.

I wonder if Zacchaeus who knew so few genuine friends thought, “Jesus, aren’t you afraid of what people will say?”

Jesus should have been, because say it they did. ***“All the people saw this and began to mutter, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a “sinner.” ’ ”*** “Keep the standards up around here. We can’t have religious teachers staying the night at tax collectors’ houses, sleeping in beds bought with extorted money, eating food purchased with stolen funds. Guess this Jesus of Nazareth fella isn’t such a great guy after all.”

And so it will be wherever the true Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached. There will always be people to whom the message of God’s gracious undeserved, unearned forgiveness is a scandal. “You can’t just be handing out forgiveness. You’ve got to keep the standards up. People gotta be worthy of it,” they think. There will always be those who think that Jesus shouldn’t be chasing after the lost causes, the basket cases, the humble.

But to all who know Jesus’ forgiveness, love and, yes, also respect, the heart erupts in gratitude. ***“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.’”***

We know that Zacchaeus’ joy was only partly of being respected. It was about far more than that. Indeed, with Jesus at his house for 12 hours or more, there were other conversations about faith and sin and forgiveness and obedience that we can’t even guess at. Zacchaeus had come to know how lost he had been, and how amazingly Jesus had found and reclaimed him and accepted him, the unacceptable. And now he just *had* to walk as a child of the light. He had to use his wealth for godly purposes and to generously repay those whom he had wronged.

I suppose that with a tax collector in the ranks, there may have been some who were a little less interested in being a Jesus follower. Standards for getting in seem to have slumped. I suppose some probably never forgot what Zacchaeus had been. But when it comes to Jesus the standards have always been the same: ***“The Son of Man came to seek and to save…”*** what was it? The bold and the beautiful? The movers and the shakers? The up and coming? The brightest and the best? What was it Jesus came for? ***“The Lost.”*** Don’t you just love him? Amen.

As a case in point: of the two men, the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus, what do you think the human reaction is? I am guessing they were just as sad about that pillar of society not being in their pews, as they were about Zacchaeus being there! If an influential person of the community were to visit our church a couple times, and has conversations with a few of the people around here, and then is never seen again, he would be remembered. And people will be wishing they could have said something just a little different that maybe he would have stuck around and joined. What a feather in the cap! But have a visitor obviously struggling to make ends meet, looking like maybe there is a struggle with a chemical dependency there, and does our concern reach the same level? I am not struck that we are a cliquish or snobbish church, but human nature being what it is, we need to ask ourselves this.

O brother and sister in Christ, on the one hand we see ourselves in Zacchaeus. We know our failings, don’t we. Maybe we have not signed on the dotted line with a foreign power and defrauded our neighbors. But we know the commitments we have not kept. We know the failures of trust. We have known times where it seems that no one understands us, no one

can others feel a basic respect from you, regardless of who they be? The

Of the two rich men in Luke’s Gospel between last week and this, which are we? Of the sort who would say, “All these commandments I have kept since I was a boy” or who would admit with Zacchaeus that we have nothing to offer Jesus, but to freely

I imagine the people of Jericho felt more or less the same thing. “Jesus is coming! The miracle worker, the preacher, some say he is the Messiah. We’d better clean up the town make it look presentable. And keep the riff-raff off the streets when he comes through.”

But how many miles do you expect to drive a car before it dies? 200,000 at least? When I was growing up car owners bragged about cars that reached 100,000. Grocery prices, in real dollars, are the lowest they have ever been in human history. Not everything is worse.

Nonetheless, lowering standards do cause worry. And for good reason.

That’s why Christians get distressed over the social acceptance of casual sex, the slaughter of babies by abortion, a no-fault divorce system, doctor assisted suicide. These problems have existed nearly since mankind’s Fall into sin. But they have all become much more accepted in the public’s eyes—and, dare I say it, maybe even in our own.

Some in society realize that we must fight these things. What happens when a criminal is invited to the White House and given a presidential pardon? Everything is tarnished. What happens when…

So, even if the citizens of Jericho couldn’t ride tax collectors out of town on a rail, they could let the sleaze know what they thought with a casual shove of the shoulder.

They had a point, didn’t they. Zacchaeus had made a living off overcharging other people. He *had* made

No wonder they grumbled when Jesus went to his house. Zacchaeus’ house had been built with their money! The food, the bed, the wash basin, all of it was theirs. No wonder they grumbled, because all they thought of was themselves. They did not think about what Jesus’ was after, and the change that was taking place in Zacchaeus’ heart. They could not forgive, and that is a problem.

Maybe it was the years of people scowling at him when they saw him coming. Or maybe it was the times when people would talk and joke with him, but he could tell it wasn’t sincere. It was just their way of staying on the good side of the guy who could make their life very unpleasant.

For whatever reason, ***“He wanted to see who Jesus was.”***

Do you remember last week’s Gospel reading? Remember our guest preacher, Pastor Hundley, explaining for us about that rich man who came to Jesus asking, “What must I do to be saved?” Remember how Jesus told him to take his wealth and put it down so that God could fill his arms with true blessings? But he just couldn’t do it. He couldn’t let go of his wealth. And then Jesus said this about rich people, “Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” How much more so a man who had gotten rich through the inherent dishonesty of being a cog in the Roman tax system.

It’s easy, with our system of short readings, to forget the impossible situation in our reading today.

Jesus knew that he “must” stay at Zacchaeus’ house this evening. So it had been in the Father’s eternal plans that this tax collector be one of eth elect, those known by God, and loved for eternal dwellings in heaven. Jesus the Christ knew this. How often is this “must” in our lives, but being not God’s Son but only children of God, are not so privileged to know about those “musts” – those times when we help the downcast, encourage the anxious, give spiritual guidance to the lost, and God uses those moments like this single evening that Jesus spent with a wealthy yet unwelcome man named Zacchaeus. Have you seen some of God’s “musts” in your life, when later people have said of you that you were the Holy Spirit’s nudge toward their Savior. Think of those times. Treasure them. God will use your words stammering though they be, your generosity though not complete, your compassion even with its reservations. God’s ways of salvation are “musts” that you can be part of.

Whenever he walked by the Jericho synagogue on a Saturday, he knew what they were doing in there. It was one of their weekly prayers, a prayer mind you!, to call down a curse on his sort. They cursed him. (*Need to research if this is true. It may be only of Samaritans.*) Well, he had the last laugh. All those poor people in church, one or two had a bit of money, but not like him. He didn’t need their well-wishes, or their God. He had money. He had influence. Not only was he an appendage of the Roman state, he was a chief tax collector. He didn’t need to grovel before their God. He had all the wealth dreamed of as a child. With the strong arm of the Roman state at his back, none could publicly disrespect him. He was as secure as people can be in this world. That’s what he had thought for many years. But lately it was starting to grind on him. None welcomed him, none had a sincere conversation with him. None except his fellow tax collectors, and they were generally the money-hungry sort who were always on the look-out for something in every relationship, at every meal. He was hungering for a bridge, for a link to the world around him. No man is an island, but he felt like he was, and he was tired of being an island.

He knew that if he ever were to witness a crime, the judge wouldn’t be calling him to the witness stand. Tax collectors were so incurably dishonest that Jewish law declared that no tax collector could be a lawful witness in a courtroom. You just couldn’t trust them. Not a one of them. They are all the same.

This was the life situation of Zacchaeus

POSSIBLE CHILDREN’S SERMON

Prop:  
Truth:

Message:

1. Edersheim, 357 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)