

Salvation and Your Home

Casting a Tall Shadow:

Luke 19:1-10
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In the Bible there was a very short man who cast a very tall shadow. We remember him with this song:

*Zacchaeus was a wee little man
And a wee little man was he
He climbed up in a sycamore tree
For the Lord he wanted to see
And as the Savior passed that way
He looked up in that tree
And He said, "Zacchaeus, you come down!
For I'm going to your house today
For I'm going to your house to stay"*

When Jesus spotted Zacchaeus, he told him, that he ***must stay*** at his house today. Jesus understood that God had an agenda for this man. God had something he wanted communicated to this chief tax collector and hated sinner. What followed Jesus' stay with Zacchaeus helps us answer three fundamental questions.

Question #1 is "can we have an intimate relationship with God?" It is clear from the book of Genesis that human beings once had a very close relationship. Question #2 is "how can we have an intimate relationship with God?" Question #3 is "how can I know that I have an intimate relationship with God?" We can be deceived. The crowd in Jericho was. They probably gave no thought to their treatment of Zacchaeus. Some may have felt they were doing God's bidding when they showed him no deference. They had an agenda for Jesus that did not include Zacchaeus. Don't you think Satan was involved in their attitude and actions? Satan used their

attraction for Jesus and their disdain for Zacchaeus to block God's salvation for him. Zacchaeus had to overcome the barrier of a self-righteous, self-centered crowd to meet Jesus.

Do any of you here remember the Jesus People? During the 1960s, a countercultural movement drew many young people into a lifestyle as hippies. Hippies rebelled against anything conventional: dress, color patterns, institutions, music, morals, diet, family and so on. A large portion of those young people became disillusioned in their rebellion, in their drug use, in their communal life, yet they still rejected the superficial faith and morals they had observed in their parents and societal leaders. The Spirit of God swept upon tens and hundreds of thousands of young people, using Christians who were more concerned about the souls of these young people than the comforts of their congregations. Unfortunately, the church's attraction to Christ and preoccupation with their comforts were as much a barrier to that generation of youth as the crowd in Jericho was to Zacchaeus. Thankfully, some believers repented, left their comforts and served these disillusioned youngsters. Today, most of our contemporary Christian music traces its origin to the Jesus People that God rescued.

I know that we have often talked of being witnesses; however, have we ever discussed being barriers? What are our attitudes and actions that inhibit others? Society hears Christians condemn homosexuality and Hollywood ethics. However, do they hear and see our concern for them and commitment to them? Do they see our joy in knowing God and his mercy? The Jericho crowd, the Jericho religious crowd murmured when Jesus went home with Zacchaeus. They saw Jesus' actions as confusion or tacit endorsement of sinful living. Jesus responded that he came to seek and save what was lost.

What was lost? Our intimate relationship with God, our innocent relationship with one another, and our instrumental relationship with creation!

Last week we saw how Jesus' stay with Zacchaeus affected his work. Zacchaeus did not merely repent from taking advantage of others in business; he didn't merely offer restitution. No, he blessed those he hurt. He paid them four times the amount he had cheated them. After Jesus' stay, Zacchaeus' work became a blessing. Is that happening in your workplace? Is Jesus' conversation with you affecting what you do in the workplace? Have you welcomed Jesus to live and breathe and converse with you at your workplace?

Remember what Jesus said when he saw Zacchaeus perched in the tree?

Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today. (Luke 19:5, NIV)

We are not called to observe Jesus from some overhang. We are not called to admire or honor him from afar. We are not called to affirm his historical position. We are called to relate to him as the Messiah; we are called to open our home to him as the Holy One of God.

Think about that. Doesn't entertaining someone impact our routine? Do you have a different routine when you have an important house guest? Don't priorities change? Don't practices change? Don't schedules change?

If I invite people over to work on something, and I plan to learn from them, I adjust my schedule. I make preparations; then I dedicate my time. I devote my attention to them and whatever they say and do. As I learn from them, I imitate their behavior and cultivate their attitude. When I was working in the Hurricane Katrina mission with craftsman like Gary Collins and others, I imitated some of their behaviors and picked up on their attitudes. Increasingly, I became confident and competent in some things. When I left Mississippi, I still had a long ways to go, but I grew to be a little more like these men facing certain construction challenges.

Now turn with me to 1 John 3 (page 957). I'm going to read a portion of this chapter beginning with the first verse. I'm using the New International Version.

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. (1 John 3:1, NIV)

John argues that the world would know we are children of God if they knew God because we are like him. He makes that argument more specific:

Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:4-10, NIV)

If we are in an intimate relationship with the Spirit of Jesus Christ, won't we take on his behaviors? Won't we pick up his attitudes? Won't both the Bible and people become dear to us? However, if we grieve the Spirit and put out his flame of passion and faith, won't we become more like the Jericho crowd? Won't we be driven more by self-interest than Christ's fellowship?

The mark of salvation is not our baptism or circumcision. It is the obvious presence of the Holy Spirit at work in our lives. That's the official seal that God gives his children. Jesus waited and said after Zacchaeus' declaration about his work and community:

Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. (Luke 19:9, NIV)

Salvation had come to the house, not just the person. It had come to the home and was making an impact on every aspect of life.

Notice why salvation came to the home, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. He wasn't a son of Abraham because of his bloodline. He wasn't a son of Abraham because of his circumcision. He wasn't a son of Abraham because of his creed. He was a son of Abraham because he was like Abraham walking with God in faith. To do that we must repent and believe.