

91# Sermon @ Little Hocking, OH 4/8/2007 a.m.

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Looking for Jesus
Text: Luke 19:1-10

Purpose: To show that we can find Jesus and Jesus is looking for the lost.

Introduction

A. "The meanest man in the Texas Prison System" was a title well earned by Clyde Thompson. Two-time murderer at age 17, youngest man in Texas to be given the death sentence. But 6 hours before he was to die, his sentence was commuted to life. After that, Thompson engineered 3 unsuccessful escape attempts and then, murdered two fellow inmates. Of course he was labeled incorrigible and given a solitary confinement cell.

B. But after 28 years, He was released from Prison. He spent the rest of his life serving as a minister for the churches of Christ until he died a few years ago by natural causes.

C. Now, what made the difference? Well, a guard gave Clyde Thompson a Bible to read and he became a Christian. (<http://www.afn.org/~ccpm/history.html>).

D. A four-time murderer, in solitary confinement, changed completely. I wonder if there still might be hope for us? If Clyde Thompson could change his life, do you think we can change ours?

E. The Bible reminds of another "Clyde Thompson" although not a murder but one who was considered by many in the same class of sinners and that was Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10.

Body

I. Seeking the Savior

A. Zacchaeus was not happy where he was in life and he was seeking something better, He was seeking the Savior.

1. Zacchaeus was a sinful man; a tax collector who cheated people out of their money. A job considered as low as a thief or prostitutes.
2. But although Zacchaeus was a sinful man, he still sought after the Lord. In fact Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus so badly that when Jesus entered in to Jericho and the crowds made it impossible for him to see, he climbed a sycamore tree just to get a closer look at Jesus and possibly be recognized by Him. And as the story goes, Jesus spotted Zacchaeus in a tree and told him to come down immediately because He wanted to stay at his house.
3. And while at the house the Bible says that "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." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save what was lost."

B. Zacchaeus teaches two things about seeking after Jesus.

1. First, it does not matter what kind of life you have lived or how sinful you are. You can still seek after Jesus and once you find him, He will give you an opportunity to change your life. (Zacchaeus was a sinner

but Jesus gave him an opportunity to change). We must give people a chance to change.

- i. There are many reasons why people hold back, but for some people, the reason why they don't seek after Jesus is because they feel as though they are too sinful and that Jesus would never have fellowship with them because of the sinful lives they have led.
 - ii. I believe people who fill their lives with sin tell that they are searching for the Savior.
 - iii. Yet Zacchaeus shows us that one can change from a thief to a man who gave half his possessions to the poor.
 - iv. He shows us that no one is too bad or sinful for salvation.**
2. Second, no one is too successful for salvation.
- i. Zacchaeus had more to give up than most men, for he was rich.
 - ii. Jewish tax collectors during the first century were considered the most vial sinners there were. For the tax collectors of that day, it was not just a job. Being a tax collector meant the man was a traitor to his own nation. He was working for the Roman government, raising money from his own people to support the very government that had overrun his homeland. Besides that, the tax collectors were regarded as thieves. The Roman government would set an amount that the tax collectors were to bring to them, and whatever they collected above that amount was theirs to keep.
 - iii. Such a system invited deceit. Knowing all of that, imagine what it was like for Zacchaeus. He was a Jewish tax collector who worked for the Roman government. He was wealthy, and the implication seems to be that he had gotten his wealth by taking it from his own people.
 - iv. Yet rich or poor, Jesus takes us just as we are.
- C. After one seeks Jesus out, one can realize from Zacchaeus that He doesn't leave us the way He found us. We see from the life of Zacchaeus that Jesus will change our life.
1. Once Zacchaeus found Jesus, he was willing to change his life by giving half of his possessions to the poor and giving back the money that he had stolen.
 2. Like I said earlier, too many people think that their lives need to be perfect and without sin before they will come to Jesus. But that's not true. We can come to Jesus as sinners and He will begin to help us change our lives.
 - i. 2 Cor. 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come"
 - ii. When we become Christians, we are a new creation; our old way of life must be replaced with a new way of life. A change must take place.
 3. If you want to change your life, then change is possible. There is hope for a new beginning and a new way of life. If you know that you need

to make some changes, as Zacchaeus then you can do it with the help of God.

4. By Believing in Him, repent (changed lifestyle like Zacchaeus), and by being baptized into His name for the forgiveness of your sins.
 - i. By Zacchaeus' actions he climbed into the tree. He put himself in the path of Jesus. By Zacchaeus repenting and giving to the poor he shows that he is following in the path of Jesus.
 - ii. Do you realize that by being here today you have put yourself in the path of God? I believe most if not all of us here today are searching for the Savior? You have but yourself in His path? How will you respond to him? What are you going to do with what you have found?
 - iii. For Jesus is knocking at the door of your heart but the question is are you going to open the door so that He can come in and begin His life changing presence within you.

II. The Savior was Searching

A. Jesus was searching for the searching. Looking for the looking.

1. ***Why is it so hard for us to allow Jesus Christ to find us when he is so fervently seeking us?*** What if someone had a million dollar check to give you, how hard would it be for the person to find you to give you that gift? Yet, Christ has something far more valuable to impart to us, and somehow we make it difficult for him to find us.
 - a. We don't answer the phone when the preacher calls.
 - b. We skip out on worship.
 - c. We leave our Bibles closed.
 - d. We ignore the invitation to obey the Gospel. Why?
2. Sin; ***it tells us that we can't come to God from where we are.*** Sin separates us from God. Sin makes us want to hide from God, as Adam and Eve did in Eden. We can't fathom the idea of pure holiness meeting a sinner where he/she stands!
3. Such concepts result in many thinking that they have to go back and make themselves right before they can meet God, but God must meet you where you are. Sin seeks to drive you away from God; it seeks to make your world so dark that you can't even see your way to God.

B. But the Bible tells that Jesus came to seek and save the lost. Lk. 19:10

1. Luke wants us to know that not only in our darkest moments can we seek the Savior, but the Savior, Jesus is seeking those who are lost in darkness. As we search, he searches and as we look he is looking.
2. Jesus entered into Zacchaeus' life for the purpose of restoring that which was lost. To do that he had to meet Zacchaeus where he was. Jesus had to go to Jericho. He had to go to the sycamore tree. He had to go to Zacchaeus house. Jesus went to where the sinners lived.
 - i. When the crowd reached the tree and Jesus was at the foot of it, He stopped, looked up into the tree, and said, .Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.(19:5).

- ii. What a shock! The crowd must have wondered why Jesus would bother to tell him to come down. And why would He go to his house?
- iii. **Jesus was a soul winner.** Even though a multitude was surrounding Him, wanting to hear Him and see the marvelous miracles He performed, He focused on one man who needed to be taught the right way. One searching heart was more valuable than a multitude of amusement seekers.
- iv. One willing, listening person was sufficient for Jesus to teach the way of God. People are converted one at a time. People come to God personally, individually, and by their own choice.
- v. Many of the greatest lessons Jesus ever presented were presented to one person.

C. Jesus shows the heart of a soul winner. Soul winners focus on sinners. They know no one is too lost to be saved if he is willing to turn to Jesus for that salvation.

- 1. Jesus tasted death for *every man* (Hebrews 2:9).
- 2. He commissioned His disciples to go into the entire world and preach the good news to *every creature* (Mark 16:15).
- 3. No one is beyond the reach of the gospel of Christ or the power of God to save. There can never be a better prospect for salvation than one who knows he is in sin and is lost, and who wants to change and be right with God. Zacchaeus shows signs of both in this passage.
- 4. Jesus described His mission in the world when He said, .For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. (19:10).
 - a. He was always open to the opportunity to carry it out. The mission of the Christian is to follow the pattern of the Savior, to be seekers of Souls!
 - b. It would be great if we were determined to take each day to look for and act upon opportunities we have to lead others to God. Just as Jesus did. Wouldn't be great if we would be searchers of the searching, and looking for the looking?
 - c. Paul said pray for opportunities in Col. 4:3-4 share the gospel.
 - d. Alexander Maclaren- A church which does not address itself to the outcasts of society has no business to live; and that Christian people who are too proud of their righteousness to go amongst the unclean and the degraded are a great deal more of Pharisees than Christians.
 - e. Church we have the responsibility to carry out our Saviors mission to seek and bring the lost to Him to be saved. Are we searching for the searching? Are we looking for the looking?

Finally,

A. For years, the opening of "The Wide World Of Sports" television program illustrated "the agony of defeat" with a painful ending to an attempted ski jump. The skier appeared in good form as he headed down the jump, but then, for no apparent reason, he tumbled head over heels off the side of the jump, bouncing off the supporting structure.

B. What viewers didn't know was that he chose to fall rather than finish the jump. Why? As he explained later, the jump surface had become too fast, and midway down the ramp, he realized if he completed the jump, he would land on the level ground, beyond the safe sloping landing area, which could have been fatal.

C. Today you may need to change your life by seeking after the Savior; you may not be a murder or a thief, but Rom. 3:23 reminds all have sinned, will you seek Him today by confessing your belief in Christ, repenting of your sins as Zacchaeus did, and putting Christ on in baptism? Or maybe you have done that but your not carrying the mission of the Savior, your not seeking the lost and bringing them to Salvation. Will you not change today? Will start today being by searching for the searching and looking for the looking?

D. As it was, the skier suffered no more than a headache from the tumble. To change one's course in life can be a dramatic and sometimes painful undertaking, but change is better than a fatal landing at the end. Come now as we stand and sing.

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