

The House of Clay

by Fred Tomlinson

This sermon emphasizes the transformative power of Jesus entering our lives, using the story of Zacchaeus in Luke's Gospel as a focal point. It highlights the necessity and command of Jesus to bring salvation and transformation to our hearts, challenging listeners to surrender fully to God and allow Him to establish His dwelling within us. The sermon underscores the radical change that occurs when Jesus enters our lives, breaking bondages, forgiving sins, and illuminating our need for His grace and mercy.

Scripture: Luke 19:1, Revelation 3:20, Isaiah 6:5, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 3:17, Psalm 39:7, Exodus 40:34, Mark 7:24, Acts 16:25

Topics: "Transformation through Christ", "Surrender to God's Will"

Description

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Transcript

Well, hello everyone. As you can see, I am speaking to you from my study. Here in British Columbia, we've been saddled with some further restrictions and limitations, and we're now not allowed to meet in person in our meetings.

But I'm grateful to God that we can still go ahead and make recordings like this, and while the whole technology of it is rather beyond me, I'm grateful to God that he's given me some colleagues who look after these things. Again, I'm grateful to God for that. And then the recordings go on to our fellowship website, mackenziefellowship.com, and then a good friend is kind enough to put these messages onto his website on sermonindex.net.

So, praise the Lord for all of that. Right now in this session, I'm going to speak to you around some thoughts that arise out of Luke's Gospel, chapter 19. Let me just read a number of verses here to you.

But Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through, and there was a man called by the name Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. Zacchaeus was trying to see who Jesus was and was unable because of the crowd, for he was a small man in stature.

So he ran on ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree in order to see him, for he was about to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must abide at your house. And Zacchaeus hurried down and came and received him gladly.

A little later in the ninth verse, I read Jesus saying to Zacchaeus, today salvation has come to this house. Amen. Amen.

Salvation has come to this house. For many years, I've appreciated the writings and the hymns of Charles Wesley, a man who was clearly a godly man, but also had a remarkable gift for bringing the great truths of scripture together poetically and has written this huge amount of hymns. And I'd like just to read a couple of lines from two verses of one of his hymns.

They read like this. He visits now the house of clay. He shakes his future home.

Oh, wouldst thou, Lord, on this glad day into thy temple come. With me, I know, I feel thou art, but this cannot suffice, unless thou plantest in my heart a constant paradise. You know, that's exactly what the Spirit of God is seeking to achieve with men and women today.

He's seeking to achieve it more fully and more completely in my life, as I am sure he is seeking to achieve it more fully and more completely in your life. So to put it very succinctly, this is what the Spirit of God is up to today. He's seeking to establish your heart as a dwelling place for his Holy Spirit.

Amen. Now in the reading here from Luke's Gospel, I'm intrigued really with the way that Jesus speaks to Zacchaeus. He stops under the tree where he is ostensibly hiding.

And Jesus calls out his name. He already knows who he is. Never met him before, but he knows exactly who he is.

He knows exactly who you are as well, and he knows your name. And he says to Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus, come down, for today I must abide at your house. You'll be able to detect from my accent that I'm British, although I've lived in Canada for a long time now.

But in Jesus' statement to Zacchaeus, there's no British politeness. He doesn't say, excuse me, I was wondering if maybe you'd be interested in having me come over and have a cup of tea with you. Nothing like that.

Jesus says, come down quickly, because today I must abide at your house. The issue is not, is it convenient or anything like that? He just simply makes the statement, this is a necessity. Nothing was going to stop him in his purpose.

And I want to tell you, whoever you are today, that nothing is going to stop him in his purpose. Let me put it this way. If you have heard him call your name, nothing is going to stop him or hinder him from accomplishing his purpose with you and in your heart.

I think that's very wonderful. Very wonderful indeed. Sadly, you know, in many, many cases, the cutting edge and the strength of the gospel is weakened by the way in which we read it, the way in which we think about it, and the way in which it's preached.

For example, the way the gospel itself is presented in these days, and I had it presented to me like this many, many, many years ago now, it leaves me with the impression, although it's not intended this way,

but it leaves people with the impression, you know, poor Jesus is standing at the door knocking, and he's just waiting for someone to say, yes, oh yes, come on in. And, you know, we use phrases like accepting Christ and the sinner's prayer, phrases that don't arise out of the text of scripture at all. The verse I'm referring to here, of course, is in Revelation, and chapter three, and verse 20, where Jesus is speaking, and John, the apostle, is able to hear all of this and document all of this.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him and he with me. And this has been a basic gospel verse used over and over again for presenting the gospel.

But once again, on the surface of things, it seems as though it's leaving poor Jesus out in the cold, and he's just waiting and waiting and waiting for us to make our responses. But I don't believe that's the intention of the text at all. And to simply run with that is to end up with a wrong concept altogether of what is going on.

Let me just emphasize to you, from this very passage that I've now turned to, that we need to remind ourselves who it is that's actually speaking. I mean, if I just turn your attention a little earlier to verse 14, I read this, and unto the angel of the church. So this is a statement, as you know, he's speaking to the churches in Asia here.

He's not addressing individuals with a message to bring them into new birth individually. That's true for all the members of the churches, certainly. I understand that.

But listen, he says, this is who's speaking. I am the Amen, the faithful and the true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. And if I look in chapter two, just going a bit earlier, I read this.

These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven churches. Or I could go to verse eight of chapter two. These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive.

Or in verse 12, these things saith he which has the sharp sword with two edges. Or in verse 18, I read the son of God who has his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass. Back in chapter three, what Jesus is saying is, I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear, and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve that thou mayest see.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore, and repent. This message here is a message primarily being given to the various churches, and his message here is not one that leaves us with the idea that some poor Jesus is standing at the door, but we're reminded of the greatness and the awesomeness of this God with whom we have to do.

And he's described in these passages in these various ways that I've drawn to your attention. And he has a message, and his message is repent. You know, Jesus never invites men and women to repent.

He commands them to do it. He commands men to repent today. So this statement to Zacchaeus in the tree is not prefixed with an if, or if you don't mind, or if it's convenient, but it's prefixed with a statement of command.

I must come to your house today. So once again, I would say to you, if you sense that he's calling your name in some way, speaking to you in your heart, prompting you, he will bring it to pass. There's no ifs about it at all.

If he's locked onto you, he will capture you in the end. And it's because he loves you. We read that in the passage there from Revelation.

He's speaking in this way and commanding them to repent before him because he loves them, because he wants fellowship to be restored between them. You know, there's another piece of poetry which I'd like to read to you. It was written by someone called Francis Thompson many, many years ago.

He was hooked on opium and he sold matches for an amiga living and he slept in doorways under bridges in London. But he penned these words which are known as the hound of heaven. And this is the way it goes.

I fled him down the nights and down the days. I fled him down the arches of the years. I fled him down the labyrinth of ways of my own mind.

From those strong feet that followed, followed after. And Thompson would go on to describe that those feet beating with unhurrying chase and unperturbed pace and deliberate speed and majestic urgency which were surrounding him. And ultimately he accepted the gracious invitation that was being reached out to him as this hound of heaven finally cornering him said, clasp my hand and come.

Amen. You know, the necessity that is in the mind of Jesus when he speaks to Zacchaeus is the way he's dealing with men and women today. There's a necessity because he's intent on bringing about something very, very wonderful in the lives of men and women.

And you know, this may shock you, but I believe that if necessary in the end, he'll actually rip the door off your life. He'll rip it off its hinges. There are those who believe that today this very pandemic is being used in that kind of way for many people as a sort of a wake up call to bring them to attention.

The whole idea is that each of us will respond to these words, this command of Jesus as readily and as joyfully as did Zacchaeus. His intention is not merely to come for a cup of tea. It's not merely to come for a visit.

It's not merely to have fellowship with us for an hour, once a week. His intention is that he would come, he would make our lives, our hearts, this house of clay to be his domain. He's not coming for a social visit.

This is the one before whom the prophet of old said, mountains melt at his presence. He comes to us as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He comes to us with this gracious plan and purpose to enter into our lives, into every quadrant of our lives, into every moment of our lives and establish there his holy dwelling place.

What an awesome, awesome concept. I often say that familiarity breeds contempt also in the precious things of the Christian gospel. I fear that we get so familiar with phrases and terms that we fail to really grasp the impact of the fact that this is almighty God and he has this gracious purpose to accomplish this astounding, awesome miracle that he might enter into our lives by his Holy Spirit and make it his home.

Let me just point out that when he accomplishes this, when he enters into our lives, he fills the house with light. You know there's a verse from the book of Exodus chapter 14, it reads like this, Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Light in the scriptures is a visible symbol of his presence and there are various scriptures we could look at that would reinforce this.

But the fact is light is not something he does, light is that which he is. And in Psalm 39 we've got that statement, some of us sing it as part of a chorus in your light we see light, in your light we see light. What's so wonderful about this is his presence brings his light and his light reveals it, illuminates us and first as he comes to make this house of clay his dwelling place, he comes by his spirit, light is brought into my heart and his light reveals and the first thing his light reveals to us is our own darkness.

You know I'm thinking as I'm saying this of an event many years ago now, I was preaching in a certain city in the US and I was staying in an apartment building, the home of my hosts and I will never forget I needed to get up during the night and visit the little room and as I put the light on outside to go out I couldn't believe what I saw the floor was just alive with cockroaches. They were there but I couldn't see them with the light off but when the light came they were revealed and you know it's true to say that man cannot see, cannot understand his own corruption until it is exposed by the holy presence, the holy light of God, there's no other way for it. There's a statement in the first chapter of the book of Revelation that I have spoken on many many times over these years and it refers to John the Apostle on the Isle of Patmos and the Lord himself is revealed before him and then comes this statement that I want to focus on for just a moment.

It reads like this and when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead. The light that comes in a sense first of all there's a flash of light, a flash of recognition in whatever limited degree comes of the wonder and the holiness of God but instantly it reflects back onto our own hearts and when I saw him I fell at his feet as dead. Do you remember a very similar situation recorded in Isaiah chapter 6 where Isaiah sees the Lord high and lifted up in his glory filling the temple and it immediately illuminates his own sense of sinfulness.

Woe is me says the prophet for I am undone. Amen. You know until this salvation comes to my house, until this salvation comes to our houses, our lives, salvation and the gospel really means nothing to us.

Amen. When he comes he brings light. He brings a light of his glory.

He illuminates to us our own need of the grace and mercy of God to reach out to us. We need his salvation. Jesus said, says Zacchaeus, this day salvation is come to this house.

His house received this light through the gracious life of Jesus as he came into his home but his home became because Jesus was there a house of transformation. Amen. His house became a house of deliverance.

Amen. You know this is the very thing that happened time and again when we read the gospel story and the stories of Jesus, see him going into homes. For example I see him going into a home and there's a mother with a boy who's got demonic issues.

You know I wasn't sure whether to say this but you know sometimes there's a need for this incoming king to break even demonic bondages in lives of men and women. We need to hear the gospel. We need to understand the gospel.

We need to embrace the gospel. We need the spirit of God to make it real in our hearts. But so many of us who are coming to him we've got hang-ups.

We've got bondages and some of them have very very real demonic roots and I wonder whether in the course of your life, whether it's been in your own experience personally or whether you've been able to witness the power of God breaking satanic bondages in lives and transforming them where salvation in a very real way is coming to that life. God's still doing this. Many years ago in England a lady was brought to us who had, she was a nurse and she'd actually set fire to herself.

This was her latest attempt at suicide and this time was very very serious as the result of it and having now had the procedure of a leucotomy performed upon her. The medical profession had basically exhausted all of their resources and she was left vegetating in a psychiatric unit in Liverpool, England. She later became one of our dearest friends.

Many years passed and now quite a number of years ago she's been taken home to glory. But what a wonderful wonderful trophy of the grace and of the power of God to bring transformation, to bring deliverance into a life. Amen.

You also read in the gospel of men who lowered their friend down on some kind of stretcher through the roof that they'd just opened up and made the entry possible and as the story goes on we see this man skipping out. He's lowered through the roof on a stretcher. He skips out through the door.

He's been in a house in the presence of Jesus and he was transformed. What I'm thinking again of that prison house in the book of Acts where Peter is chained in prison and he's visited by the angel bringing the ministry of Jesus to that man there and his colleagues and they're released from their prison. It reminds us of another great hymn of Charles Wesley where he said he breaks the power of cancelled sin, he sets the prisoner free.

And again he said my chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth and followed thee. What a wonderful thing. The gospel of the grace of God is such an incredible message.

There's nothing like it in the world and Jesus maybe is speaking to someone today and he's saying you know Fred, you know John, George, Jane, whatever your name is, my intention is to come and bring salvation to your house and bring such a transformation that you will scarcely be recognized as the same person, released, washed, cleansed. You know before I close let me just draw your attention to another fact. You know in Mark's gospel chapter 7 and verse 24 and in the NIV translation it reads like this that Jesus he'd traveled a long distance, he'd gone to Tyre and Sidon or the towns of Tyre and Sidon and he enters into a house there and the text reads like this, he could not keep his presence silent.

He was seeking, it would appear from the text, he wanted to just spend some time, some downtime alone but he couldn't keep his presence secret. You know last Sunday I had the privilege of getting up very early in the morning and I was on my computer at 2 30 a.m because I'd been invited to participate in a zoom meeting in a fellowship in Dublin, Ireland and I was privileged to speak there and in the course of that particular meeting I made reference to some days when I was a very young boy going to school and how I would walk to school about course of a mile and I'd pass all these very ordinary houses and buildings and so on but I emphasized that there was one particular building that stood out from all of the rest and it was the Hales bakery building. It's a huge outfit where they made bread to be distributed around the city and the fact is there was an aroma that could not be hidden, the aroma of fresh bread being baked in that

building.

It made that building a standout, it stood out from all the other houses and all the other buildings. My mother used to tell me before I left for school she'd say Freddy don't dawdle, hurry up get to school but I've got a feeling she knew that there were places where I tended to hang around and dawdle and no doubt Hales bakery was one of those. Amen.

When Jesus enters into the house of clay by his Holy Spirit the house of clay is no longer merely just a house of clay. The house is not just a house, it's not merely a house. When he enters that house ceases to be ordinary because when the Holy Spirit of God comes he brings into that house the very aroma, the fragrance of the life of Jesus.

Amen. Many years ago when my oldest boy who is now in his mid-50s was young we went into the Liverpool Cathedral, huge huge cathedral in Liverpool which is of course where we hail from and inside it's an awesome construction. I remember dad saying that men started their apprenticeship working on that cathedral and they retired and they were still working on that cathedral and so to go inside was awesome.

We went in as a family just to have a look and walk around and I'll never forget my little son saying daddy do they really believe that God lives here? You know some years later than that we were part of a house church in England and that same boy would describe that house as the glory house. Are we going to the glory house he would say in his very English accent he no longer has. Are we going to the glory house? Well the reason he called it the glory house was because a man in that house who he referred to as Uncle Glory lived there and that man was referred to as Uncle Glory because he was he was such a Christ-like and godly man and he was always saying glory glory glory to God and so on and our son had picked that up.

The evidence, the concrete evidence, the aroma of the Christ life so prominent so evident that's what happens when the spirit of God enters into a life. You know we noted in the reading that Zacchaeus received Jesus joyfully. We could have read a little more of the text where we would see how Zacchaeus in response to this gracious outreach of Jesus to him and the ministry to his heart that day made the statement that he said I'm abandoning my former lifestyle completely and this was the proof of his repentance.

It doesn't the text didn't read and he repented and so on but it tells us that there was such a transformation in his life. It was a transformation that would be made very at high cost. It was a costly and radical response that he was making.

This is what happens when Jesus comes. You don't stay the same. You're not the same person.

He comes in when he sets up his throne room in our hearts. He breaks the bondages. He forgives our sins.

He cleanses our hearts. He sets his very glory there in our own hearts. The fragrance of Jesus is there and as a result the way we live our lives and the way we our whole value system and the whole trajectory of our lives is changed.

If any man is in Christ he is a new creature altogether. Amen. This day Zacchaeus salvation has come to your house.

Could it be could it be that he's standing under the tree of your life today? Could it be that he's calling your name out right now? My question to you beloved is are you ready to come down? We always have to come down. Our responses to him always start with us coming down. He's high and lifted up but we come down because we come down to bow and surrender our lives at his feet as it were at the cross.

Are you ready to come down? Are you ready to receive him into the domain of your life? I referred to Charles Wesley earlier. Let me just finish by reading some more of his words. He said come oh my God thy self reveal fill all this mighty void thou only canst my spirit fill come oh my God my God fulfill fulfill my large desires large as infinity give give me all my soul requires all all that is in thee.

I trust that's your cry and your prayer today beloved. Let's just pray as I close. Father we thank you for the glorious gospel the glorious gospel of the blessed God.

We thank you for your grace in reaching out to mere men and women such as we. Father I pray today right now Lord by your Holy Spirit you will reach out to precious souls who are listening to these words and being reminded of the gospel and the love of God and the challenge that comes to their own hearts. Lord let it be with power and I pray Lord that there will be those today who surrender to you and surrender their entire lives more fully than ever before more completely than ever before.

Come Lord and make their house of clay your future home and I pray in Jesus name God bless you.

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