

# Luke 19

by John Nelson Darby

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*The sermon explores the themes of grace, responsibility, and the compassionate heart of Jesus as illustrated through the story of Zacchaeus and His entry into Jerusalem.*

**Scripture:** Luke 19:1

**Topics:** "Grace", "Responsibility in Service"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby explores the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19, emphasizing the transformative grace of Jesus that reaches even the most despised individuals. Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, overcomes societal prejudices and personal obstacles to seek Jesus, illustrating the deep hunger for divine connection that the Holy Spirit instills in believers. Darby highlights that true joy comes from recognizing our need for Christ, even when our understanding of His righteousness is still developing. The sermon also addresses the responsibility of believers to serve faithfully while awaiting Christ's return, emphasizing the importance of holding fast to the truth and the dangers of complacency. Ultimately, Darby reminds us that Jesus weeps for the lost and calls us to reflect His grace and compassion in our lives.

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## Transcript

Next, we have the account of Zacchaeus (chap. 19:1-10), for the Spirit of God did not tie Luke to the mere order of time; and morally viewed, it was the fitting sequel to the healing of the blind man. Found only in this Gospel, it is a striking illustration of the grace which receives a man, no matter how low, and in the face of Jewish prejudices. For a publican, a rich chief of the publicans, was justly an object of abhorrence to those who regarded him as the expression of Gentile dominion. All was wrong through sin, and Israel was not humbled. Still it was a sad position for an Israelite, however honest and conscientious Zacchaeus might be in it. But it was the day of grace, and "he sought to see Jesus." There were difficulties, hindrances in him and around; but faith perseveres in spite of opposition. As the blind man was bent on his object, so was the rich publican set on seeing Jesus. This marks the working of God's Spirit - the apprehension of the worth of the object. We want it and more of it; we know enough to want more. It is an appetite produced by the Holy Spirit. It is a terrible thing, if we, as Christians, have not this craving, this hungering and thirsting after a greater enjoyment of God; for where this is not, deadness and apathy of soul have come in.

Jesus came to the place, and saw him and said unto him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully." He had

not yet the full knowledge of Jesus, but his desire had been met, and he had joy. It was neither law nor glory, but a hidden Messiah come in full grace. There was abundant evidence who He was, but in grace He was come down where they were. No matter what people thought. Finding Jesus is everything. Zacchaeus had the answer to the want which divine grace had created. Grace does not give at first the knowledge of Christ's work; there may be little or no understanding that we are made the righteousness of God in Him. Hence the first joy often wanes; because, when conscience is accused, I want the consciousness of that righteousness. The first joy is constantly that of discovering that we possess the felt need of the soul for Christ; but the full question as to righteousness may still have to be met in the conscience, though of course every believer in possessing Christ does possess divine righteousness. Nevertheless, much as there is to learn, there is joy. New interests are awakened, new desires arise, a new insight is obtained into good and evil. When there is a deep sense of what it is to be lost and saved, the world (man) is a light matter. But when the pressure on the conscience is removed, too often nature resumes a sort of place, and Christ is not all and everything to the saint.

161 Zacchaeus' heart is opened. There is confidence, which tells itself out. There might be ever so much honest effort to satisfy conscience in his false position; but after all what a place it was! Men murmured. The Lord passed all over. Self-defence was needless. The Lord did not accuse, and speaks of nothing but the salvation which was that day come to the house. Zacchaeus was a son of Abraham, and the Son of man was come to seek and to save that which was lost. What, could a Pharisee object? There had been a work with the conscience of Zacchaeus, but the Son of man was come and salvation was the word. He brings it. He gave what Zacchaeus had little thought of. He was come to meet the need He had created. He was come to seek, that is, to produce the desire; and to save, that is, to meet the desire.

The Lord was now nigh to Jerusalem, and so He added a parable to correct the thought that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear; for Jerusalem is the city of the great King, and the question of His rejection would be closed there. He shews, on the contrary, that He was going away - going to a far country, to heaven, where He was to receive the kingdom and to return. The time was not come to set up the kingdom on earth. Meanwhile, the business of His servants was to trade with the money He delivered them. When returned, having received the kingdom, He assigns them places according to their faithfulness; for in Luke it is a question of man's responsibility; in the corresponding parable of Matthew God's sovereignty is the point. Difference of gifts appears in Matthew, difference of rewards in Luke. In Luke each servant receives a mina from the Lord; in Matthew all who gained in trading enter alike the joy of their Lord. Here the whole force is, occupy. "Occupy till I come." Our position is serving a rejected Saviour till He comes again. We are not yet to share in the glory of the kingdom. When He returns, all will be disposed of impartially, and there will be that which answers to authority over ten cities and over five. The righteousness of God is the same for us as for Paul; but as there is very different service, and different measures of fidelity, so there will be speciality of reward. No doubt it is grace that works, still here there is reward of faithful service. The secret of all service is the due appreciation of the Master's grace. If one fears Him as "an austere man," there is unfaithfulness too, even on one's own principles.

162 Verse 26 is a universal principle. When through grace there is the realisation in our souls of the truth presented to us, we are of those "who have." But if a truth comes before a man, and he talks about it without its being mixed with faith in the heart, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. Truth, if it reveals Christ, humbles me and deals with the evil within. Then it is not only Christ as an object outside me, but a living Christ in my soul. Knowledge, which has not power over the conscience, only puffs up. If truth be not acted on, it troubles the conscience. But how often one sees a conscience, having lost the

light, quite easy at a lower standard than before, rejoicing that it has lost its trouble, though the light of truth be lost with it! The soul has sunk below that which had exercised the conscience, and thus the whole standard, principle, and life are lowered, and opportunities of winning Christ lost for ever.

Holding fast the truth - Christ - I have Him as it were a part of myself, and learn to hate the evil and to delight in the good; so that I get more, till I grow up into Christ, into the measure of the stature of His fulness. Common duties do not rob us of Him: from these the heart returns with fresh delight into its own centre. It is the heart clinging to vanity that spoils our joy; it is anything which exalts self and lowers Christ - an idle thought even, if allowed in the heart. As to the citizens, the Jews on whom He had rights as king, their will was against Him, not only hating Him there while among them, but above all, sending the message after Him, We will not have this man to reign over us. Unsparing vengeance must take its course on them in His presence.

Verse 28. Jesus enters Jerusalem as Messiah. His rights as Lord of all were to be asserted and acted on, verses 29-36. He presents Himself for the last time to Israel, in the lowliness of grace, which was of far greater importance than the kingdom. This gives rise to the most marked contrast between the disciples and the Pharisees. The whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with loud voice, saying "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven and glory in the highest." Some of the Pharisees appeal to Him to rebuke the disciples, but learn from His lips that if these were silent, the very stones would cry out. There must be a testimony to His glory; verses 37-40.

163 When Jesus was born, angels announced it to the poor of the flock, and the heavenly host praised God, saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace - good pleasure in men. Such will be the result, and the angels anticipate it, without reference to the hindrances, or to the means. But Christ was rejected here below; and now the disciples say, "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest." When the question of power is raised, in order to establish the kingdom, there will be war then (Rev. 12). In fact there can be no peace in heaven till Satan and his host are cast out. Then will the King be established in power, when the obstacles shall be taken out of the way. Psalm 118 celebrates this, His mercy enduring for ever, spite of all the people's sins. It is the song of the latter day. If God sends peace to the earth in the person of His Son, it is in vain, not as to the accomplishment, but as to present effect. Meanwhile, to faith there is peace in heaven, and when this is asserted in power against the evil spirits in the heavenly places, there will be blessing indeed. Oh, what a time will it be! What a relief to the working of God's grace! For now it is ever toil and watching. What, always? Yes, always; and that is not the rest. But then it will be, as sure as God takes His great power and reigns. "The Lord shall hear the heavens," etc. (Hosea 2). There will be an unbroken chain of blessing, and that too on earth. It will not be one "building, and another inhabiting," but blessing flowing down and around to the lowest and the least. Till then, as now, the word is suffering in grace, not victorious power. Never fear persecution: it will make your face shine as an angel's. But God could not be silent if His own Son were cast out. He might leave Him to suffer, but not without a testimony. If there were no others, the stones would speak. And so if we are faithful and near to Christ, this will turn for a testimony.

164 Next (v. 41-44) we have, not the cursing of the fig-tree, but the spirit of grace in the Lord's weeping over the city. The counsels of God will surely be accomplished, but we ought also to know His real tenderness in Jesus. Those tears were not in vain, whatever the appearances. It was the time of Jerusalem's visitation, but she knew it not. We ought, as having the mind of Christ, to know when and how to interfere spiritually. We are the epistle of Christ, whereby the world should be able to read what God is. Christ manifested Him perfectly. But what did He find in the people? See verses 45, 46. God declares His

house to be one of prayer: men - the Jews - had made it a den of thieves. It was a terrible moral estimate, but this is the true way to judge; that is, having God's word, to take facts as they are. We are ignorant and morally incapable of judging without the word of God. Let the eye be fixed on Christ and our judgment be formed on things around by the word.

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