

# Zacchaeus

by Ken Baird

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*The sermon explores the story of Zacchaeus and how Jesus' association with him teaches us about God's love and willingness to forgive sinners.*

**Duration:** 38:15

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 21:23, Matthew 6:33, Luke 19:10, John 3:16, Romans 8:1, Galatians 3:10, Galatians 3:13

**Topics:** "Salvation", "Redemption"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the story of Zacchaeus, a tax collector who was considered a sinner. The preacher emphasizes that Zacchaeus was lost until Jesus came into his life. The preacher highlights the significance of Luke 19:10, where Jesus states that he came to seek and save the lost. The preacher also mentions the importance of being plain and clear when speaking about salvation and shares a personal anecdote about speaking on this topic in Colorado. Additionally, the preacher briefly mentions a verse from Galatians that discusses the curse of not following the law.

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## Transcript

On Saturday mornings at 7.50, I wonder if any of you have heard it. You did? That's good. Every Saturday morning, set your clock if you can't think of it, perhaps your timer on your stove, for 7.50 on Saturday mornings KSIB.

And I appreciate your prayers for it. I appreciate your prayers for the Sioux City Conference, I have to be one of the speakers there, along with Paul Fapp and David Glock. I'm anxious to hear David Glock, I've heard good things of David, and I know Paul.

Now, in your interesting lesson this morning, this human interest story of the conversion of Zacchaeus, I think that you have a human interest story without parallel. I love it. I'm not going to treat it like a certain young preacher taught it, or treated it, rather, who was in a seminary.

They were in a seminary learning how to preach, and learning the science of homiletics, and they were assigning different portions for these young preachers to preach on. And they assigned a certain young man the subject of Zacchaeus, that we just read out in Luke 19, chapter 19. And he read it, and he thought, well, that's a nice little story, but the story is just self-explanatory.

There's nothing to say about it. And he was very, very fearful, having been assigned the story of Zacchaeus. And so he got up on the platform, and he said, Zacchaeus was up a tree, and so am I. And Zacchaeus came down, and he says, and so am I. And he got down off the platform, and he left the platform.

He wouldn't talk on the subject. Well, I'm not going to do that. Don't expect that from me.

Because I'm going to stand up here and talk about Zacchaeus, this little man, this tax gatherer, for he is the most interesting person, and there is so much about this account, this narrative, in Luke chapter 19, the first ten verses that challenge our thinking. Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. Now, the first thing of interest is, was where the man lived.

Zacchaeus is the picture, I think, of us all. Somebody says, well, he can't be a very good picture of me, because I'm not rich. Zacchaeus was rich.

Well, I don't know about that. You have a good many things that Zacchaeus didn't have. We live in a land of affluence.

We live in a great land. And you and I have so much more than the richest had a few decades ago. But Zacchaeus is a picture of us all, and I'd like to illustrate that as we go along.

First of all, where did he live? He lived at Jericho. Jericho was a city that was rebuilt under the curse of Joshua. Let's talk about that town.

It was down on the Jordan River, way below sea level. The whole course of the Jordan, from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea, is over a thousand feet below sea level. It's the lowest spot, geographically, on the face of the earth.

The towns, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, were at the sea of, at the site of the Dead Sea. They are now buried, actually, beneath the water of the Dead Sea. Now, I don't know whether the Dead Sea has suffered any geographical changes since the time when God poured out his judgment upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

But I know that the site is there, at the Dead Sea. That was a site of judgment, surely. Now, the city of Jericho was the first city that the children of Israel came up against as they crossed over the Jordan River, coming from the east, through the land of the Moabites, through the kingdom of Og and Bashan.

They came up to the Jordan River, and you will remember that the priests were told at this time of year, they came at the time of the Passover, which is the time of the swelling of Jordan, when the snows of Hermon and Lebanon are flowing down to the Dead Sea. Now, as they approached the Jordan River, you will recall the waters were overflowing all the banks. At this time of year, the Jordan River is about a half mile across, so I've been told.

I missed my opportunity to see the Jordan a few years ago, by reason of some illness. We won't go into that. Now, the priests stood in the center of the Jordan.

They were told that as soon as they dipped their feet in the Jordan River, that the waters would be cut off. And the priests led with the ark, and they came down to the Jordan bank. They dipped their feet in the water, and the water miraculously receded.

They stood down in the beds of the Jordan River, and the waters piled up upstream. And the children of Israel, some two million strong, went miraculously through the beds of the Jordan River, as they had come through the beds of the Red Sea. Now, the first city that was to meet them was the city of Jericho.

And the city of Jericho held out against Joshua and the children of Israel. Though they knew the miraculous power of the Lord, they knew that the Og, the king of Bashan, had fallen. They knew that others had fallen before Joshua and his host.

They knew the miraculous power of God, and yet they stubbornly held out against God. Well, you remember that Joshua and the children of Israel overcame the city of Jericho. The walls fell flat at the blast of the trumpet of the ram's horn.

And the children of Israel took the city, and only Rahab the harlot and her family were spared from the judgment of that city. Now, when that city fell, Joshua pronounced a curse upon the city of Jericho. And he predicted, and accurately, that the man who would rebuild the city of Jericho would set up the gates when his youngest son was born, and complete the wall when his oldest son was born.

And that was actually carried out to the very letter. And the city was rebuilt again, and assumed considerable prominence in the cities of the land of Palestine. Now, the judgment had not fallen, and it had not fallen in the Lord's time.

The Lord went to Jericho. But it was a city that was built under the curse, and that is where Zacchaeus lived. Now, you and I are living in a scene that is going to be cursed by the judgment of God.

We will not go into the prophetic aspects of what is coming upon this poor world. But this world was the scene of the murder of our blessed Lord. The children of Israel said that when they clamored for his blood, his blood be upon us and upon our children.

They have demonstrated, as no other historical fact, the power of God. They have been under the judgment of God all these years. Some five or six million Jews were slain during World War II.

Oh, the terrible curse that they brought upon themselves. His blood be upon us and upon our children. A curse is something to be dreaded.

Now, Joshua cursed the city of Jericho. The law curses you and me. We don't think so much about curses now as we did.

We relegate them to more or less superstition. But a curse can be real. And the Lord Jesus Christ himself died under a curse.

A lot of people don't realize that. I'd like to refer you to that. I was speaking in the mountains of Colorado a number of years ago, and I was speaking on this verse.

And it left an impact upon one of the ladies that was sitting in the audience. I'll tell you about it after we read this. We read in verse 10 of the third chapter of Galatians, For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse.

For it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. Now, are we cursed? Are we living in the city of the curse? I'd like to read this scripture over again. Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do

them.

Have you kept the Ten Commandments perfectly? Well, I haven't. I'm sorry to say, I haven't. I don't think it would do much good to tell children of this day and age that when you disobey your parents, you have broken the Ten Commandments.

Because the Ten Commandments say, Honor thy father and thy mother. And that means to obey them. Well, I had.

I suppose that was my most flagrant disobedience of the Ten Commandments, was that I didn't always obey my parents. Well, that put me under curse. And everybody that does not keep the Ten Commandments perfectly is under a curse.

That's what the scripture says. But I'm glad I can read the 13th verse of the third chapter of Galatians. Here it is.

Verse 13 of the third chapter of Galatians. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. For it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.

Christ was cursed for me when he hung on the cross. The law put me under a curse because I had not kept it. Christ died under that curse that I might be freed from the condemnation of the law.

Now, here was a man who lived in the city of Jericho, the city of the curse. And you and I, apart from the salvation that's in our Lord Jesus Christ, is living. You and I are living under a curse.

It's the curse of the law. But Christ bore that curse for me. As I was telling you, I was preaching on this subject in the mountains, a little town in the mountains of Colorado, a number of years ago, and there was a lady sitting in the audience.

And this really struck her. And she was reported to have gone to her place of business the next morning. She and her husband commuted to Boulder.

And she said, Do you know that Christ was cursed for you and for me? Now, I don't know whether that was a proper subject of conversation in that office. But she was so struck with that fact that she talked about it. I didn't know, she said, that Christ was cursed.

But he was. He was cursed for me. That I might not have to bear the curse of the law.

Well, that's where Zacchaeus lived. Now, Zacchaeus was a publican. We read of him, Behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.

Now, the publican was a traitor as far as the nation of Israel was concerned. He was a quisling. The Romans demanded so many taxes from the children of Israel.

But the children of Israel had a way of hiding their real estate and their property that was subject to tax, so that the Romans couldn't collect it. So the Romans said, We know what we'll do. We'll set your own people over you to gather the taxes.

They know you. And you'll pay. Now, the people that volunteered for that service, or that were selected, volunteered sometimes like they volunteered in the army, perhaps, they were given the responsibility of

collecting those taxes.

Now, their pay, the pay of the publican, was whatever he could collect over and above what the Roman government demanded. Well, now, Zacchaeus must have done quite well. He was the chief of the publicans, and he was rich.

He evidently had been able to very successfully sell his countrymen on the fact that they owed more taxes than they really did, and he pocketed the difference. Well, the publicans were hated by the rest of the children of Israel. Now, they hated the publicans because of their collaboration with the Roman government, and because of the fact that they charged them too many taxes.

So Zacchaeus was a hated man. He was a marked man, and he was a man of infamy. They hated people like these Quislings.

And, of course, Quisling is the name that was of the man, you remember, in Norway, that turned the Norwegian over to the Germans in World War II, and so a traitor has earned for himself the name of Quisling. Well, Zacchaeus was a Quisling of sorts. Now, he was chief among the publicans.

He wasn't just one of the tax-gatherers. He was the chief, commander-in-chief of the tax-gatherers, and he was rich. Now, I sought to see Jesus, who he was.

The Lord Jesus Christ visited the city of Jericho on this occasion. Now, so far as I'm able to determine, and I haven't researched this, so don't hold me too tightly to this statement, but as far as I'm able to determine, the Lord Jesus visited the city of Jericho just once. Now, I may be wrong, and I may be assuming too much, but this was a rare opportunity that Zacchaeus could not afford to pass up.

He had heard about this wonderful man, Jesus. But Zacchaeus was a little man. He was a little man of stature.

He was short, and he picked out the route that he knew the Lord Jesus Christ was going to take, and he sought to see Jesus, who he was, and could not for the press, that is, the press of people, because he was little of stature. The people on this occasion were so determined to see this man, Jesus, the one who had done all those mighty miracles. His fame had spread abroad, and they were so determined to see him that when Zacchaeus tried to elbow his way to the front of the crowd, he couldn't do it.

He could not see the Lord Jesus. They would not give way, because of the people's curiosity to see this wonderful person that could heal the sick, give sight to the blind, that could raise the dead. And so Zacchaeus ran before, and he climbed up into a sycamore tree.

I think the Bible dictionary would call this perhaps a fig tree, not the sycamore as we know it. But he climbed up into this tree on the route that he knew the Lord Jesus would take, because he wanted to see him. Now this is quite unusual, to see a small man calling attention to his smallness.

Ordinarily, small men don't like to be reminded of their littleness of stature. Actually, as far as I'm concerned, there would be no disadvantage in not being tall, even as tall as I am. I have a son who is much less tall than I, and I have not seen that he has suffered any great disadvantage by it.

You have less to fall on ice. But he does come in handy in parades. But Zacchaeus was a small man.

Now, lots of small men are very sensitive about that problem. But this man was so excited about the fact that he was going to have a chance to see the Lord, that he went and climbed up in a tree. Robes and all.

You know, I like a sanctified imagination. I like to see Zacchaeus climbing up that tree. He was all set.

The Lord was coming that way, and he had now devised a way where he was going to see this wonderful man called Jesus. Well, the procession came down that way, and here Zacchaeus was up in that tree with his flowing robes. And there he was.

And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide as I have. You know, when the Lord came to the tree in which Zacchaeus was stationed, and looked up and said, Zacchaeus, I think I can begin to see Zacchaeus grabbing for limbs to keep from falling out of that tree. Here is a man so famous that he, willing to show off his lack of stature, climbed up in a tree and made a public example of himself, to see the man, this great person, came to the foot of the tree, he looked up and he called him by name.

And he did more than that. He said, Zacchaeus, I must stay at your house tonight. This was an honor that Zacchaeus did not feel that he would ever be accorded.

So much had been heard about this wonderful person, the Lord Jesus Christ. I think probably with that he was surprised that the Lord would speak to him and call him Zacchaeus. He says, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must abide at thy house.

Pardon me. How did the Lord know Zacchaeus' name? He was an evident stranger. How did the Lord know Zacchaeus' name? Well, I'll tell you something.

It's a big word, but I'm going to use it. Our Lord is God and therefore is omniscient. He knows everything.

He is God, manifest in the flesh, and here is an example of his omniscience. He knew a man that he had never seen before in the flesh, I'm sure. Zacchaeus' deportment here on this occasion, his anxiousness to see the Lord, is evidence that the Lord had never seen him before.

He'd never seen the Lord and he was determined to see him. For that we must admire him. So here on this occasion, the Lord comes and calls him by his name.

Our Lord is omniscient. That means that he is all-knowing. He's omniscient, he's omnipresent, he's omnipotent.

He's all-knowing, he's everywhere, he's all-powerful. Well, now, you and I are just as open before the eyes of the Lord today as Zacchaeus was on this occasion. Let me tell you something.

The Lord knows your name, he knows your birthday, he knows your characteristics, he knows your pet peeves, and I hate to say this, but he knows your sin. This is the one that Zacchaeus was dealing with. He knows all about us.

He did that and he knew all about Zacchaeus. Just as well. This is an example of the omniscience of the Lord Jesus.

He knew all about Zacchaeus, but yet he said, Zacchaeus, Make haste and come down, for today I must abide at thy house. You know, that caused a storm of protest. We read here, And he made haste, and

came down, and received him joyfully.

And when they saw it, the people that were standing around, they all murmured, they complained, saying that he was gone to be guessed with a man that is a sinner. Now, this shows us the character of Zacchaeus. This shows us his reputation.

These people knew who he was, and they complained about the fact. Now, I really suppose that what they would like to have said and didn't say, Why couldn't he stay overnight with decent people like us? Now, isn't that human nature? Isn't that human nature to point the fingers? And we shouldn't be pointing fingers. I think it was Robert Burns that coined the phrase, There is so much good in the worst of us, and so much bad in the best of us, that it ill behooves any of us to speak poorly of the rest of us.

Now, maybe that was Samuel Clemens. But isn't it true? Here these people said, He's gone to be the guest of a man that's a sinner. Well, now, if the Lord Jesus didn't associate with sinners when he came into this world, who would he have associated with? Some didn't realize it.

Others did realize it. These people are critical of the Lord Jesus because he went to Zacchaeus' house. And they said that Zacchaeus was happy about it.

He made haste and came down and received him joyfully. I know a good many preachers that have made much talk of the fact that the Lord wouldn't let Zacchaeus remain up in the trees. He said to Zacchaeus, in effect, Zacchaeus, come down to my level.

Don't stay up there. Come down to my level. I think of a preacher that some of you knew years and years ago by the name of David Lawrence.

David Lawrence was a little man like Zacchaeus. As a matter of fact, he drew the parallel himself. David and I sang a duet together.

That was years ago, incidentally. And I stood on the floor and David stood up on the platform so we could both watch the same book. We sang out of the same book.

That was quite a duet, incidentally. And I may have to add that he drowned me out. Well, David Lawrence says, I was like Zacchaeus.

He said, lots of people are brought up to be Christians. He says, I was brought down to be a Christian. Zacchaeus had to be brought down out of his tree.

And there are a lot of other people in the world today that I think need to be brought down out of their tree. Zacchaeus came down, but this was a wonderful day for Zacchaeus. This man, of whom he had heard so much, the Lord of heaven and earth, though he didn't know him as such, was going to be his guest.

And Zacchaeus' joy was abounding. He had made contact with the Lord. And now the Lord went home to be with Zacchaeus.

Well, not before Zacchaeus had engaged in a bit of self-assessment. We read in verse 8 of our text, And Zacchaeus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

Now, this does not accord with the estimation of these people who were murmuring on this occasion. Somebody's wrong here. Zacchaeus says, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor.

And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. That doesn't accord with the estimate of the crowd. They said he's gone home to be guest of a man that is a sinner.

Pardon me. Zacchaeus on this occasion, I think, has reacted like so many other people since that time. And other people, incidentally, in the Bible.

He got religion in a hurry. He got into the presence of the Lord and he started talking about all the good things that he'd done. Well, nobody likes to be faced with the fact that he's a sinner.

We like to think that there's something good about it. And he talks about his fancy goodness. You know, it's interesting to me that the Lord doesn't buy his story to use a very modern expression.

The Lord makes no comment upon this great generosity that Zacchaeus speaks of. Now, that's quite a proportion, isn't it? Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. I doubt that.

However, I'm not going to fault Zacchaeus. I'm not going to fault him because I don't know him. And if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

Well, I would like to ask a question. Zacchaeus, why are you so rich? Why are you so rich? Well, his story availed nothing because the Lord says in the next verse, Jesus said unto him, this day his salvation come to this house. Now, he didn't say to Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus, this is wonderful.

Very, very few people that I ever meet that are rich give half of their goods to the poor. Zacchaeus, you're a wonderful person. The Lord doesn't say a thing.

Zacchaeus' little speech was to no avail. The Lord set it aside. He took no note of it whatsoever that he purportedly gave half of his goods to the poor and restored that which he took unlawfully away fourfold.

He wouldn't have remained rich very long if he had paid back in that proportion. But the Lord does say, this day his salvation come to this house. Now, that's significant.

This day. How could the Lord say something like that? He could say it because salvation pertained in the person of Christ. The Savior had come to his house.

Now, it hadn't happened if Zacchaeus was talking about that prolific giving that he had engaged in in days gone by. It availed him absolutely nothing because the Lord says, this day his salvation come to this house. Zacchaeus is talking about history, historical facts, what he had done in the past.

But the Lord set it all aside and he said, this day his salvation come to this house. For so much as he also is a son of Abraham. Now, salvation came in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the Savior. It is not what Nicodemus did. The Lord ignored it.

And incidentally, the Lord will ignore our fancy goodness as well. He can only see one thing. And that is our sin.

He died for our sin. Now, Zacchaeus was just as natural as he could be. You know, it's even fashionable to be religious on occasion.

I think probably this is true more in the small towns of the Middle West. I've spent most of my time living in cities, but I'm living now in the small town of Greenfield. And we love it, incidentally.

There's only one thing you've got to be careful of when you take a walk in Greenfield. Don't walk too fast or too far or you're going to be walking out of town. But I love it.

We love that small town. But you know, this is characteristic of small towns. People want to be well thought of.

If you will permit me to use the preposition to end the sentence with. People like to be well thought of in small towns. And there's quite a bit of church going.

I wonder. Are they like Zacchaeus? I wonder about this. It gives me some real thoughts.

He brings up his religion. Now, there's another woman that brings up her religion in the fourth chapter of John. And looking at the clock, I shouldn't have even mentioned it.

She was a sinner. An out-and-out sinner. And the Lord cornered her about her sins.

And she brought up the subject of religion immediately. Now, salvation came in the person of Christ. When he walked in, salvation walked in.

Salvation is not a creed. It's not a list of good works. It's not my tears, my alms.

It is making a vital contact with Christ. And thank God Zacchaeus made that contact. That is so wonderful.

He knew the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. I'm glad Zacchaeus was so anxious to see the Lord. I wish there would be a lot of other people that would be as anxious as Zacchaeus.

To make that vital living contact with the Lord Jesus Christ. And then the Lord, when he mentioned the fact that he was a son of Abraham. Incidentally, his name is Zacchaeus.

So we have the whole story of salvation from A to Z. Excuse the pun there. I can't resist these things sometimes. We have the whole story.

From Abraham to Zacchaeus. And the Lord loves them all. And he died for them all.

And then the Lord comes out with one of the most wonderful statements in all the Scripture. He says, after this, And Jesus said unto him, This day of salvation come to this house. Forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. Zacchaeus was lost until the Lord came that day. Now, that verse, Luke 19 and 10, contains all monosyllable words.

A whole verse of one syllable word. Notice them, please. For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

One syllable word. You know, when it comes to speaking the matter of salvation, we can't be too plain. Can we? We want to be plain.

I think it was C. H. Spurgeon that said, God forbid that I should make the cross of Christ a peg upon which to hang my oratory. Thank God for the simplicity of Scripture. I may know the Lord.

I may trust the Lord. I can have a faithful relationship with him. Thank God for the story of Nicodemus.

And now, after a closing word of prayer, My brother, Bruce, if you will, please. I'm going to come down.

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