

Christ Came to Seek and Save

by Rolfe Barnard

Christ came to seek and save the lost, and the key to salvation is to become a seeker, persistent seeker, and hearer of the word, and to receive Christ with emotion.

Duration: 42:32

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 15:6, Matthew 6:33, Luke 19:1-10, John 11:43-44, Romans 10:17, Ephesians 2:8-9

Topics: "Conversion Experience", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of being converted and experiencing a true change in one's life. He tells the story of a man who was a seeker, persistent in his search for truth, and eventually became a hearer of the word of God. This man received Christ with emotion and was completely transformed. The preacher highlights the need for emotional engagement and urges the audience to listen to God's voice through feeble human voices like his own.

Transcript

Some years since, the then Prince of Wales, who later became for a season the King of England and advocated for reasons that you are familiar with, some years since when he was the very popular Prince of Wales and heir to the throne of England, he made a visit to the United States and stayed some two weeks. And the reporters from representative papers nationwide followed him and hung on his every word and got in every question they could edgewise. And they were seeking just the answer to one question.

For what purpose did the Prince of Wales leave his native land and pay a two week visit to these United States? But the Prince of Wales was wily and of course was somewhat of a playboy and he hadn't come for any ostensible purpose except to see the country and have a good time. But whatever his purpose was, the newspaper men were never able to get him to tell them the why of his coming to this country. And so he came and he saw and he left.

And to this good day the world has not found out whether he had any purpose at all in his visit. Not so when the Pearl of Great Price, when the Lord of Glory, when the Sovereign of the Universe, when the Prime Minister of the Godhead humbled himself and took upon himself the form of a servant and made a visit to this little tiny earth upon which you and I live. He came and he tells us exactly why he came.

And he tells it by way of explaining what happened to a man by the name of Zacchaeus to whose home salvation, the most precious, the most weighty word this side of eternity, salvation, came to the home, the

household of a thieving, despicable, traitorous man by the name of Zacchaeus, who was so low in his moral thinking that he'd take a job and be employed by the hated Romans to gather taxes, exorbitant and dishonest as they were, from his own Jewish people. But salvation came to that man's home. And in explaining why salvation came to this home, the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 10 of the scripture that you followed as the pastor read, Luke 19, he tells us why he came and left his father's estate and tabernacle here in the midst of sin and misery and was like unto us in everything except sin.

He says he came for the Son of Man. He has come for a definite set purpose. The Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost.

He certainly didn't try to hide his purpose. He's either terribly fooled about it or he thought that whatever that word saved means. And I guess we'll still be studying the meaning of that word a million years after we've left this life.

The Lord Jesus thought people need to be saved. And he thought that in order for them to be saved, they had to be found. And he thought that in order for them to be found, somebody would have to seek them.

And so he said, Zacchaeus, thy salvation came to your house, for inasmuch he also is a son of Abraham. That's why I came, looking for those sons of Abraham. They by covenant are mine.

But they're out on the mountainside, down in the crevice, and I've come to find them. I'm going to find them, to save them. That's the purpose of the visit of the one who is a little baby in a manger.

My soul, all this foolishness about with your little old puny mind being unable to understand and explain and think through and revel out the gospel story. Nobody that's got sense enough to come in out of the rain could possibly believe that God would pay a visit to a fallen world in the person of a little helpless baby born in a cow stable. But that's what the book says.

I want to call your attention, if I am able this morning, to a look at this verse of scripture from the divine side, and we'll get into mystery and I'll hurl you over it, because I wouldn't have time to unravel it, and I wouldn't have sense enough if I had time. But I want to look at the salvation of this man Zacchaeus with you and invite your very courteous, as you are, attention. As I look at the reason for this man's salvation from the divine side, the scripture tells us why this man got saved.

And then it gives us a picture of why he got saved from the human side. Now, I've got about as much sense as you have, not enough to brag about, but I have. And so I can understand a little bit about the human side.

But when we come to looking at it, if God looks at it, I can worship and I can believe, but I cannot understand. That's a good place to camp for a little while. One of the most despicable forms of rebellion and lawlessness of this hour is people like us with our little puny minds that will never be fully recovered from the awful ruin of the fall, this side of eternity.

We are trying not to believe anything that we can't understand. And so we just have to throw the whole Bible out the window, because it can be believed, but I'm telling you the truth. There's sure a way of a lot in there that can't be understood, because we'd have to have the mind of God to understand the workings of God.

From the divine side, why was Zacchaeus saved? He was saved because, in the language of the Lord Jesus Christ, verse 9, he was saved because he was one of those people whom God gave to Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant. Way back in the 12th chapter of the book of Genesis, for the first time, the 15th chapter of the book of Genesis, God preached the gospel as a covenant for the first time. Abraham was the first man who ever heard the gospel preached by Almighty God in the form of a covenant.

A covenant that is not made between God and man, but a covenant made in the circles of eternity, and that all hell cannot and will not, bless God, be able to undermine or undercut. And God took Abraham out one night when the sky was blue and clear, and the sky was full of stars, so many of them that they could not be numbered. They were as numberless as the sand of the sea, says the scriptures, and God preached the gospel in covenant form to Abraham.

He said, Abraham, look up there and count. Tell me about those stars. How many are up there? Abraham, oh, I couldn't do that.

No, no. Well, that's the way it's going to be with your seed. Come hell or high water, Grace Baptist Church, take on nice little ways and depart from the faith and go down the drain, but come hell or high water, this promise of Almighty God will take place.

And lo and behold, the time came when the Lord Jesus Christ was running along down the road toward a city by the name of Jericho, M-T-I-N-E, time, on this earth. And he brought in himself that Christ is salvation. And when Christ came into that man's life and home, that salvation, and he brought salvation to this man, and he told the carping religious acts of his day, who were murmuring that the Lord, or the one who claimed to be the Lord, would stoop to have commerce with this hated publican, and the Lord addressed himself to them and said, I'll tell you why I saved this man, for as much as he also is a son of Abraham.

Now, I'll have to go on. But come good wind or ill, the day must surely come soon when we'll quit demanding that God explain himself, and like little children who've got so much more sense than grown people, just believe what God says, and be happy about it. And if you could ever come to that place, and you have the slightest evidence or assurance in your own heart that you have been sought out, and sought out until you've been found, and in being found come face to face and then confronted with the Lord of glory, all hell can rage, but it'll not stop the joy of bells and the bells of gratitude from ringing in your soul.

John Neal, the great philosopher, said, Every bell in heaven rang again when I was born again. Why did Christ save Zacchaeus? The book of Galatians says, God made a covenant with a man by the name of Abraham. That's the gospel.

And the book of Galatians said that Jesus Christ is the blessing of that covenant. Through him we receive the gift of the Spirit, through him only. And there's a man that in eternity God gave to Jesus Christ.

Explain it. I can't. Believe it.

Thank God I do. And in time the Lord went down to the city of Jericho and found the man who was a spiritual descendant of a man by the name of Abraham by the grace of God. And he saved him.

Now I can't understand that, and I pass from it to the human side, from the side that you and I can sort of get our teeth in a little bit, and I come with some sort of a hunger in my heart that these next few minutes

would not just be wasted. I wonder why you're here. Let me mention out of this passage, this scripture, five truths, and I can just mention them.

Anybody who's going to get saved there's come in a time when five things can be said about it. First, there's a man that back yonder from eternity was included in that company of people the Father gave the Son. But he didn't know it.

Nobody else. But it came to pass that after years of moral depravity, for he did have the most despicable job in the country, he was as low in that respect, I guess, as a man could be, a man that would be a publican, a tax collector under the circumstances. Everybody hated him.

It came to pass that this man became, first of all, a seeker. He sought to see Jesus, who he was. There came the Lord, and as a little bitty fellow short of stature, and he ran along in the woods, and he had a lot of money.

That handed him two. Must have had a bag full of it. And he's a publican, a hated tax collector.

But praise God, before it was too late, something took place and this fellow became a man who wanted to find out the answer to the only question between the eternities that's worth playing with or fooling with or working at or striving for. A man could face the truth of who Jesus is. My fear is that most of us church members have trusted in Jesus.

We haven't the slightest idea who he is. But I think the only Jesus that would pay a man to do a man a bit of good on God's edge to trust would be him of whom the angels said unto you, this day is born in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord. Oh, if, since I can't learn it through my mother or through my son's school teacher or through my pastor, since nobody can enter into this transaction, it's a matter between me and the eternal God, that I must come to the best possible answer to this question as for myself.

Who is Jesus? No matter what mama thought about it, how about me? This cannot be passed from parent to children. This is between you and the Creator. Here's a man who got interested in finding the answer to the one big thing he sought to see Jesus who he was.

When I never get saved, that time's got to come, it'll be pinpointed. Some of these days, you'll be changed from a nice little church member to a nice little good person that hadn't killed anybody lately. Some of these days, you'll get vitally interested for yourself answering this question if the answer can be had.

Who is Jesus? I want to find out. I want to know. I've heard people tell me they've found out.

I want to know. My mama said she knew who he was, but I want to know who he is. He's either the world's greatest demon and devil, or he's the Lord God Almighty.

There's no middle ground. He can't be a good man if he's not God. Who is he? Who is he? There's a second thing that'll be true of a man whose home salvation is brought by the entrance of Christ.

And that's the same thing I said a little deeper. This man became a persistent seeker. He went ahead and he couldn't see the Lord Jesus because he was short of stature.

And because of the great, I think they're having a Bible conference, you know, and they're all getting some new life that they never would share with anybody. And they're just pressing about him. And he said, well,

I wanted to see him, but I can't.

No, no. He went ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree. He made himself conspicuous.

Thus, God, he became a persistent seeker. I would not come to the pulpit with doubts, but I come with this solemn statement. Honey, if you actually want to come into vital living, being united to a living Christ, you're going to have spit on your hands and roll up your sleeves and go at this for all there is in it.

It's not going to hit your happenstance. It's not going to creep up on you backward if you want to come, not to simply a decision or a profession or a church membership or a creed or anything. Yes, but if you wish to experience Christ in you making life worthwhile, you're going to become a persistent seeker.

Every church has got its different viewpoint. Every preacher's got his different. Listen to the radio and you'll go crazy.

Every magazine tells a different story. This is the day of Babylonia's confusion. This is almost the day when we're in as bad a shape as there were when Constantine made Christianity popular and gave people the alternative of becoming Christians and people decided it would be a little better to be saved than it would to have their heads cut off.

And the whole world got converged there in a few years and never got over it since. You and I have lived in the greatest revival of going to church and church membership this world's seen since then. And it means just about as much.

And I look you in the eye and tell you, if you want to find out for yourself, not some facts, but the reality of a person, you're going to have to become a persistent seeker. You're going to have to get desperate about this business. I pass on to the third word.

This man got saved. I don't understand a little about what I'm preaching now. He became a seeker.

I don't understand a little about that. And he became a persistent seeker. Now, I'm not saying he sought the Lord for 40 years.

This happened by the quick, but brother, it's not the time element. It's the intensity of it. And he became a hearer of the word of the Lord.

He went and climbed up in that sycamore tree and here came the Lord. And when the Lord came to that place, oh boy, he might come around here sometime this Sunday morning. Somebody'd come out here with a hungry, thirsty expectancy.

Oh, I would see Jesus who he is. I tell you, there is bread for the hungry, but just for the hungry. There is water for the thirsty, but not for the satisfied.

The gospel is good news to the guilty, but not to the goody-goody. And the Lord came to the place where there's a man trying to find out who he was. Can't do this in any school.

Can't do it for confining. It appears too big for you. He came to that place and he looked up and he said, Hey, Zacchaeus, get out of here.

Come on down. He spoke to her. That's going to have to happen to you someday.

People are not saved by screwing up their courage and doubling up their energy. No, no, they're saved when they hear somebody that speaks of us already. That's right.

Come down. And he heard him. Oh, I go from place to place and the ache in my heart and gets a little bigger every year, is the fact I can't get anybody much interested in listening than I hear from God.

And when I remember that if you hear from God, in his providence he's ordained that you'll hear God speak through some feeble human voice like mine. And I can't find many people now trying to hear from heaven. I wish under God somebody here this morning would be seized upon, if this is scripture, I don't know, but the Holy Ghost, and you'd never be satisfied again till you hear the voice that speaks from heaven that's got the power to say, Stretch forth thy hand.

But I can't. It's withered. I haven't used it.

I can't. Stretch forth thy hand. Lazarus, come forth from the grave.

But he's dead. He can't come forth. No.

Except as he's commanded to by a voice that's got authority to raise men from the dead. The gospel doesn't say, Stand up! Save yourself! The gospel bids you hear faith cometh by hearing. Listen to my voice.

Listen. Hear it through some man. That's the only way you hear it.

It's God's voice. And when you know that God's spoken, well, that settles it. That's your assurance.

But this man received the Lord Jesus with emotion. He skedaddled down that tree, and he received the Lord how? Joyfully. Joyfully.

It just wasn't a matter of getting everything all reasoned out. Two and two make four. There was some emotion in him.

God help us. God help us. He said, This is it! Whoop-dee! Hallelujah! He's come! He's spoken to me! He's commanded this whole barnet to skedaddle down that tree.

He received the Lord joyfully. Emotion. Now, that passed from that.

It'll be one o'clock in the gutter hour. But oh, my. I want to ask you a question.

Don't you throw a songbook at me. You've got to wear it. You can't weep for joy.

You've got so pious and dignified and separated and nice and dead that you can't weep with joy sometimes when you're contemplating Jesus Christ. I'm telling you, you're in bad shape and so am I. If you can't weep in your heart as you try to sow the gospel to somebody else. I get to be the dictator of the United States.

I'm going to gather all the church members of America and I'm going to keep them there for ten years if they've got so nice that they think that if you get the truth to people you'll be all right. No, it's still true that he that goeth forth and weepeth. That's the weeping in here.

I know people. There's something wrong with their what is it, tear ducts? I know one young preacher. He came to me about to die.

He heard me preach and he said, Brother Barney, I can't cry. I've never shed a tear in all my life. Is it tear ducts or something wrong? I said, oh.

He said, yeah. My soul hath a need of baptism of emotion. But then this man first he became a seeker, second a persistent seeker, third a healer, fourth he received Christ with emotion, fifth, bless God, he was changed.

That's the acid test. Something happened when he saved me. Happened! In my heart, says the little boy.

He wasn't made perfect. And bless God, he was a changed man. He said, I'm going to take four dollars and give for every dollar I stole and I'm going to give the half of what I got to the poor.

Ah, there was a change. There was a change. No use to talk about being converted unless we understand that being converted means to be changed.

Nicely appointed, this woman got out of a car in front of the entrance of a big hotel and marched up in the dorm and was splendid in his uniform and said, how are you this morning? She said, converted, thank God. Change. With a change that keeps on changing until we are conformed to the very image of here.

I have a black pearl ruby, I can't remember which it is, stick pen. I never wear it. I think it's pretty valuable.

I prize it very highly. I got it this way and you'll let me have another two minutes. I went soon after I hope I was converted to a world largest oral town at that time.

Just sprung up on a man's ranch. I was used to the Lord, I hoped to build a church there. As time went on a lady by the name of Carnes, C.J. Carnes, asked for membership in the congregation and after a while she got to where her husband would come along now and then to hear him preach.

Then he got to where he became more or less a regular attendant on the public preaching. Things began to go on. He had been a man of big business.

He'd been connected with Andrew Carnegie and men of that deal, men of that stature. He was a, we call a big man in the financial world. Things had gone to the bad and here he was in this oral town trying to recoup his finances.

At the time I was preaching to him he was engaged in a number of business deals that were not outside the law, but they were crooked. In other words, you couldn't put him in jail for them, but they weren't straight. Aside from him he preached.

I remember it came to pass that one week his wife got in touch with me before and said, you're going to have Sunday dinner. I was not married at the time. She said, I want you to have dinner with us Sunday down south.

That's at 12 o'clock. That's not like you Yankees. She said, after the meal, I'm going to have to run an errand.

I'm going to have to leave. I'm going to leave you with my husband. I want you to tackle him.

He said, he's interested. He's interested. She left and I tackled him.

He chewed me up and spit me out. Man, he'd studied the Bible for years to make fun of it and to prove it wasn't so. He was sparse.

I just kid preached about all I knew was that I once was lost but now I'm found. He asked me questions, all these fool questions about the discrepancies in the Bible. I couldn't answer them.

I just finally broke down and just sobbed. He just ruined it. I was a big preacher.

I'm going to win him to the Lord. Just knocking me and tell him every time he opened his mouth. Finally I got up and got my head and ran out of the house and left.

I didn't say it but I guess I just said he'd just go on to hell. That afternoon it commenced raining and then quit raining and went to pouring. We had just a downpour.

That night it was just raining cats and dogs in West Texas. I just had enough people that night, just a little handful of folks the Lord couldn't keep out of heaven. I don't guess it was a crowbar, just a little faithful crowd.

Most folks said, oh, it's just raining and I'd worked all week. You talk about having a sermon. I had one, wouldn't quit.

I had all the I's dotted and the T's crossed and I had a place for poetry. I'd worked hard on that sermon. But of course I couldn't preach it to that little old handful.

I couldn't waste that big sermon on them. And I was desperate and I was mad and I was blue and I was discouraged. Of course in those days I was a pretty big preacher.

I couldn't afford to just preach that little old handful. I sort of got broken from that. I got up there that night and I didn't have a thing to say.

About two-thirds mad and one-third heartbroken. And lo and behold that guy sitting out there. And I got up and hymned and hoed around a little bit and finally we stood and I said we'll sign an invitation.

I won't get rid of it. Get out of there. And just as soon as we struck the first note here that man came.

He came to me and put his arms about me and hugged me. And he said, Pastor, Pastor, the Lord's gone out. I can't resist him any longer.

Next Sunday morning I called on him to lead in public prayer. I never, this I've attended to get how he prayed. He said, Lord, you know I've never done this before, but if you could help us we'd be much obliged.

Amen. But the Lord began to grow in me. And he began to raise money.

He wrote letters everywhere, former contacts, telling about the young preacher and building a church in that oil town. Oh, he got out all his shady business and got him an honest job and his testimony in an oil town. I said he was the only little church in the town, 5,000 people.

Just trummeling over one another's backs who could get to hell the quickest. And yet this man, his testimony and his life began to count. One day he called me up and said, could you come down to the office? I want to talk to you.

And I went. While I was there, he gave me the most blessed present I've ever got. He said, young preacher, he said, I'll always love you.

He said, I heard all the big preachers. He said, I used to go here and sort of criticize them. He said, can I get this oil town out on the plains of Texas and hear you? He said, you're not even dry behind ears.

He said, I kept listening to you. And I got to where I had to say yes to him you preached. He said, I'll always love you.

I went away to school and they sent a telegram and he got lost. By the time he got to me, he was three days old. C.J. Carnes had his wife send me a telegram.

He was on what proved to be his deathbed and said to send for the pastor. He still called me the pastor. But I didn't get there.

He was dead by the time and buried by the time I got the telegram. And when he saw I wasn't coming, he didn't know exactly what happened. But I didn't show up.

He had his wife go to his little kitty head and take out this pen and said, when I'm gone, you go and give it to the pastor. And tell him to wear it. And when he doesn't wear it, sometimes when he gets blue, bless God, I feel guilty to that.

So weak. When he decides, it's a losing battle. When he decides, he'll just throw up his hands and quit.

To remember that God who conquered C.J. Carnes can save anybody on earth he sets out to save. And tell the pastor to think of me and the great God who saved me. And when he does get this courage to tell the devil to go back to hell where he belongs.

That God is a seeking, saving God. And I rejoice in that this morning.

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