

Jesus Came to Save Us from the Love of Money

by Zac Poonen

This sermon delves into the teachings of Jesus in Luke 16 regarding the choice between serving God or wealth, emphasizing the need to prioritize God over money. It explores the story of Zacchaeus as a demonstration of repentance from the love of money and the importance of integrity in financial dealings. The sermon highlights the characteristics of being a true 'son of Abraham' by showcasing Abraham's faithfulness, humility, and refusal to accept gifts from the ungodly.

Scripture: Luke 16:13, Luke 19:8, Genesis 14:19, Genesis 23:13

Topics: "Serving God vs. Wealth", "Integrity in Financial Dealings"

Description

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Transcript

I'd like to turn to Luke's Gospel and chapter 16. There are a lot of things that Jesus said in relation to money and wealth and it's important for us to understand it because of one reason. You know Jesus said in Luke 16 verse 13, this is a very important verse, Luke 16 13, where he speaks about two masters.

Now my guess is that most Christians in the world would think of the two masters as God and the devil, but Jesus never spoke about the devil as a possible master. Here it says the two masters are God and wealth, verse 13. No servant can serve two masters.

Either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to one and despise the other and he's speaking about God and money. Now if you're really serious about walking with the Lord and growing spiritually and pleasing the Lord and becoming Christ-like, you have to take this word seriously and not try and get around it and find some explanation to get out of it. He will hate the one and love the other.

God and money. To love God, I got to hate money. Now what does that mean? We got to think about it carefully.

Two chapters earlier, Jesus also said we got to hate our father and mother and wife and children in Luke 14 26. So obviously, because there are other passages in the Bible which say we got to love our wife and our parents. So hate does not mean that we reject and have nothing to do with them.

So it doesn't mean you've got nothing to do with money. It's a question of a right attitude towards our parents in relation to God. God takes first place and we never allow our parents or wife or children to hinder us from doing what God wants us to do.

That's the point. That's the meaning of hatred in Luke 14 26. So it's exactly the same meaning here.

That I don't let money ever come between me and God and hinder me from doing what God wants me to do or fulfilling God's will for my life. But there's a real possibility. And if you study these four chapters 16 17 18 19, it's almost like a treatise on money.

There's a number of things he speaks about in the earlier part. He speaks about a steward who was unfaithful. There's something about money there.

Verse 19 onwards, he speaks about the rich man and Lazarus and that's something about money there. And then you go to chapter 18. He speaks there also about a rich young ruler.

And when you go to chapter 19, you come to a parable on money usage in verse 11 onwards. But in verse 1 to 10, Luke 19 1 to 10 is about Zacchaeus. And that's the part I just want to speak a little about.

Zacchaeus was a very rich man, but he made his riches in a wrong way. He had cheated, probably told a lot of lies, and got his money in the wrong way. And when he encountered Jesus, and Jesus came to his house, it's an amazing word here.

Jesus said, I'm going to come to your house today, I'm going to stay there. Luke 19 five. And it says, as they were going to the house, there's an amazing word here, verse eight, Zacchaeus stopped.

He didn't allow the Lord to enter his house. Just stop. He says, Lord, I got to set something right.

This house is built with a lot of money that I stole from others. So before you enter this house, I want to tell you something. I'm going to set it all right.

I'm going to give back, verse eight, four times what I cheated people about. I mean, that means he calculated the interest for how many years he cheated them. Now many people when they repay a debt, they never think of the interest that person lost in the long time that I kept his money.

I see faithfulness here. People borrow \$1,000, and they'll return \$1,000. Six months later, or a year later.

It's unrighteous, totally unrighteous. Zacchaeus is not going to be unrighteous. He says that man lost interest during that period where I took his money, I'm going to return it with interest.

And just to be on the safe side, he gave a lot more. He gave four times back because I would have inconvenienced him in so many ways by cheating him. And so I must return four times.

And then I thought he, he must have, I mean, there's a long period of time that he cheated these people. And there were lots of other people whom he cheated, he wouldn't even know where they were, what is their address? And how can I go? All these people, his addresses, he knew he could go there and return

the money. What about the people he cheated whose address he did not know? Now the average Christian would just conveniently forget it.

Okay, well, I don't know where they are. So what can I do, Lord? I'll just keep it. No, he wouldn't keep it.

I can't keep the money because it's not righteously earned. And even if I don't know that guy's address, I can't keep that money. So in those days, the alternative was to give to God and that was to give to the poor because they were all Israelites.

They were all brothers. There was a brother in need who was poor. So he said, all that money, which I don't know where the address of these people are borrowed from, I'll give it to the poor people.

That was giving it to God. And when people have come to me today, I've said, if you don't know where the guy is who you cheated from, put it in the offering box. That's giving to God.

But there's another thing here which struck me. Jesus said, today salvation has come. And I remember the first time or many years ago when I read this.

What was Zacchaeus saved from? For many people, salvation is salvation from hell or we get a little better than that and say salvation from sin. And so you say in CFC, we preach about salvation from sin. But what salvation was Jesus speaking about here? Today, salvation has come to this man from the love of money.

Have you ever thought of being saved from the love of money? Saved from hell, yes. Saved from sin. Here he's not talking about saved from hell or saved from sin.

When Zacchaeus said those words, he was so upright. Jesus said, this guy's been saved from money, from the love of money. Every human being loves money.

It's not only the rich. I've never seen a homeless man who doesn't love money. Have you seen a homeless man who doesn't love money? Millionaires love money.

Homeless people love money. Everybody, all the way from top to bottom, they all love money. There's one thing universal about the human race.

Every one of them love money, including Christians. But it says here salvation has come to this person because his whole attitude to money changed. Now I want to say it's not a question of me thinking like that or you thinking like that.

I want to say to you, my brothers, this was my longing when I read it. I said, Lord, you were the one who gave a certificate to Zacchaeus. This guy has been saved from money and I want that certificate from you, not from any man who, though Brother Zac may not be interested in money.

I couldn't care less for the opinion of men. Jesus must give you a certificate that you have been saved from the love of money and it's got nothing to do with how much you earn. I told you the homeless man earns nothing, but he loves money.

So becoming poor won't save you from the love of money. And it doesn't mean if you're rich, you'll love money. Not necessarily.

I'll come to that. Salvation has come to this house because he's a son of Abraham. And that's what I wanted to meditate on.

I said, why did Jesus say this guy being saved from money has become a son of Abraham? Very often in the New Testament, God's people are called children of Abraham, not just children of God. Turn with me to Galatians in chapter 4, sorry, chapter 3. Galatians chapter 3. By the way, this is the one verse, one place in the Bible where it says Jesus became a curse on the cross. We know 2nd Corinthians 5:21 says he became sin.

He took our sin. But here it says in Galatians 3:13 that he became a curse. And that's why he had to be crucified.

He could not die by his head being chopped off. There was an Old Testament law, verse 13, which says cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree. That's the verse from Deuteronomy 21, verse 23, which says everyone who hangs on a tree is cursed.

And when God gave that law to Moses in Deuteronomy, he was looking forward to the future day when his own son would hang on a tree and be cursed. That's what that verse was referring to 1,500 years before Jesus died on the cross. The Lord gave it to Moses.

And that is really something to think that Jesus became a curse from you. And the purpose, you know, the opposite of curse is blessing. So the purpose of Christ becoming a curse was not just to take away the curse of God upon my life because of my sin, but to replace it with blessing.

But it's not called the blessing of God here. It's called in verse 14 the blessing of Abraham. Isn't that interesting? That Christ became a curse for me to take away the curse and to give me the blessing of Abraham? And what is that? That we can receive the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith.

So the Holy Spirit coming upon us and filling us is called a blessing of Abraham. So the Holy Spirit has got to do something in us, has come to do something in us so that the blessing of Abraham is ours. So I connect that with Jesus saying about Zacchaeus, this guy is a son of Abraham.

So you saw the connection between us as children of God and Abraham. So when you go back to the Old Testament, you know, when I find a word like that and I can't understand it, I just have the habit of trying to find out why. It's like when I, this is how I improved my English in my younger days.

If I read a word in a book or the newspaper that I didn't understand the meaning of, I put the book down, take the dictionary and find out the meaning. You'll improve your English if you follow that practice. And the same thing in the Bible.

If I read a reference somewhere in a book and I don't know what that reference is, I put the book down and turn to the Bible and look at the reference. That's how I got to know the scriptures. Lazy people will never learn the scriptures.

Or if I read some quote quotation in the New Testament where it refers to the Old Testament and 99% of believers will never look back to the Old Testament. They're too lazy. And they say, what to do brother, I don't know the Bible.

Brother Zach is a Bible teacher, that's why he knows the Bible. No sir, it's because you're too lazy that you don't know the Bible. When you come to a quotation in the New Testament, have you ever thought of going back to the Old Testament and see where it comes? If you did, you'd know a lot more of the scripture by now.

So when I see Son of Abraham, I say hey, I'm gonna see why it's called the Son of Abraham. Have you ever thought of that? I'm sure all of you have read Luke chapter 19. I'm just trying to, I'm not trying to provoke you or condemn you.

I'm just saying my brothers and sisters, you are missing something in your life when you don't know the scriptures. It'll be a tragedy when Christ comes back and you discover that there's so much more you could have had on this earth spiritually if you had only taken the trouble to search the scriptures a little more. Imagine, it'll be too late then.

That's what I want to encourage. You can become rich spiritually if you search the scriptures. So I went back and said, how is this? He's Son of Abraham.

His attitude to money that Zacchaeus demonstrated there was what made Jesus say, this guy is the Son of Abraham. I say Lord, I want you to say that about me as well because turn back to Luke 19. He says in verse 9, today salvation has come to this house because he's the Son of Abraham.

He returned what he took wrongfully and not, you know, some people even don't return what they borrow. We were reading Psalm 37 earlier for our memory verse. Did you notice sometimes you look at the memory verse and you hit upon some other verse before that.

So when we were looking at Psalm 37 verse 23, the steps of a man are established by the Lord. I saw verse 21. Psalm 37 verse 21.

The wicked borrows and does not pay back. Any man or woman who borrows money and does not return it is a wicked person according to this verse. He's not just a weak believer.

Far from it. He's a wicked person. W-I-C-K-E-D.

Wicked. When you do not return, it could be a book that you borrowed. Forgot to return it.

It's been lying with you for ages. Wicked. I believe that.

It's not a question of how expensive it is. No, you don't have to borrow a thousand dollars to become wicked. You borrow a book and you don't return it.

Or you borrow some equipment or something that you completely, you conveniently forget about it. These are the little things that God looks at. And if you're faithful in the little, Jesus said you'll also be faithful in much.

There's so much I have seen Christians have completely missed out in their Christian life because they're not careful in the little, little things. I've always been careful to the best of my knowledge. Never, never to borrow.

In 83 years, I never borrowed one dollar or one rupee from anyone. I don't want to be in debt. I'd rather die as a poor man than die with even one cent debt to anybody.

The wicked borrows and does not return. These are little, little things. You know, I've discovered through the years you don't have to do fantastic things for God, for God to bless you.

You've just got to be faithful in the very, very, very little things. Learn to be faithful in the little. The wicked borrows and does not pay back.

And I don't want God to call me a wicked person. I borrow something to the best of my knowledge. I may have forgotten about it.

That's something. But why do I forget? Why am I not more faithful to remember the things I borrowed? We remember the things other people borrowed from us, right? Why don't I remember the things that I borrowed from people? Or if I've taken a loan? So, the Bible says, owe no man anything. Romans 13.8. It's a very clear verse.

I must never be in debt to anyone. If you love me, keep my commandments. Owe no man anything.

And if it's difficult to pay back, cut down your expenditure. Live more simply. Definitely.

I believe there's no command in the Bible that cannot be obeyed. You had to call God a hard taskmaster if you say he's given a command which cannot be obeyed. Owe no man anything.

You say, Lord, that's a very difficult command, cannot be obeyed. Oh, that's like that evil servant who turned around to his master and said, you're a hard taskmaster. You read that parable? What a way to talk to God.

You're a hard taskmaster. You give me commands which cannot be obeyed. Oh-ho.

Anyway, further, he's a son of Abraham. Luke 19 and verse 10. Because the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

So, you've got to meditate on that verse now. Don't rush through Scripture. There are many times in my Bible reading, I read only one verse.

I can't get past it because I want to understand it. And the next day when I go try to read further and the Lord say, no, stick at that verse. The red light is still there.

I can't go forward. I've got to stick at that verse till I've understood it. If you meditate on this a little bit and you have the habit, you know, the Bible says, blessed is the man who meditates on the law of the Lord day and night.

Psalms 1 verse 3. Whatever he does, he will prosper. Have you ever thought of applying that verse to yourself? Lord, I want to prosper in everything I do. If I preach, my sermon must bless hundreds of people or thousands of people.

Everybody who sits and listens must be blessed. Psalm 1 verse 3. Or anything I put my hand to, you must bless it. Success must come out of it.

Not to make a lot of money. Just that it's done well. So here we read, the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Meditate on it. What was Zacchaeus lost in? Not primarily sin. He was lost in the love of money for many years.

That's the meaning here. The Son of Man has come to seek those who are lost in the love of money, who will admit it, and to save them. I remember years ago when that hit me, I actually raised my hand before the Lord and I said, Lord, I'm lost in the love of money.

I admit it. But you came to seek people like me, right? Please save me. And I believe He did.

And I found out, I said, Lord, I'm sorry, I'm lost in the love of money again. Well, He said, the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost. I said, Lord, I want to be completely saved.

How many of you want to be completely saved from the love of money? Do you believe it's important? You want to be completely saved from hell, right? You want to be completely saved from sin, right? What about being completely saved from the love of money? I tell you, He will not make you starve. I've never starved in my life. I quit my job 57 years ago nearly.

And I told the Lord I would never ask anyone for money. I would never send a prayer letter. I would never depend on anyone.

I would trust the Lord. God is a faithful Father. If you seek the kingdom of God first and His righteousness, you will always have all that you need.

And I guarantee your children will always have all that you need. You will never be, even if you lose your job, He'll provide for you in some way or the other. You will never lack.

I can say that from my experience. I trusted the Lord all the years, my wife and I, that we brought up our four sons. We never asked a single soul for money.

But I've seen, you seek the kingdom of God first and His righteousness, all the other things you need will be added to you. And one of the things I prayed is, Lord, when I come to the end of my life, if somebody could examine every area of my life, including my private life, my accounts and my bank account and everything, and every part of my life, they should be able to say, this guy must be having a Father in heaven. That should be their testimony.

There's no way to explain it except that he's got a Father in heaven. That should be the testimony people have about you as well. Please pursue it.

Jesus has come to seek and to save all who will admit that they are lost in the love of money. Don't we tell a person who's a sinner, admit that you're a sinner. Then only Jesus can save you from sin.

How many self-righteous people there are in the world who say, no, no, no, I'm okay. Jesus can't save them. He can never save a man who does not admit his need.

If you say, Lord, I'm lost in the lust of my eyes. Boy, I'm always lusting with my eyes. He'll save you.

But if you pretend that you don't, well, you'll never be saved. You'll be a hundred years old and you'll be lusting after women. Whatever you admit that you're lost in.

Remember, he came to seek and to save those who are lost. In this case, it's the love of money. Son of Abraham.

When I look at Abraham's life in the book of Genesis, I see Genesis 12, for example, the Lord told him, go away from your relatives and from your father's house. And he was 75 years old. And I presume he had just built a house way back there in Ur of the Chaldeans where he was settled down at the age of 75 to a comfortable retired life.

And all of a sudden in the middle of his retirement at the age of 75, the Lord says, quit, leave your house, leave your family and go where I tell you to go. And he couldn't carry all, you know, those days people's wealth was mostly in land and property and he couldn't take all that with him. The Lord said, forget it.

Come without all that. He was weaning him away from the love of attachment to earthly things. That's how Zacchaeus was a son of Abraham.

Abraham obeyed. And you know, later on, it says here, he came with Lot and they both had so much of flock and herds. Luke Genesis 13, 7, there was strife between Abraham's servants and Lot's servants.

And it's Abraham who said in verse 8, look at this. Lot was never called. Remember, Lot was not called by God to leave Ur of the Chaldeans.

He just hung on to his uncle Abraham and went along. And when the strife came, Abraham said in Genesis 13, 8, these are little things we must see. Please let there be no strife.

What should he have said next? Lot, I am the one God called. Don't forget that. You were not called.

You just hung around with me and became prosperous here with the word. Go back to Ur of the Chaldeans. This land is mine.

That's not what he said. You know what it means to be a child of Abraham? Here it is. He said to this man, please, you choose where you're going to go, verse 9. You choose first.

You want to go to the right? I'll go to the left. You go to the left, I'll go to the right, verse 9. You want to be a son of Abraham? You want to be like that where you have a right to something? That guy's got no right to it. You say, no, you choose first.

I won't fight with you for property. The number of Christians I have met in my life, when it comes to property, the fighting, the subtle way they want to grab, inheritance, fighting over this, that, and the other. It's all a question of whether you want to be a son of Abraham or not.

Let there be no strife. What an attitude to have. Abraham knew nothing about Calvary or the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We claim to know so much more. He said, Lot, you choose first. And Lot chose all that wealthy part of the land.

And Abraham was left with a poorer part of what we call Israel today. And Lot went and took. And Abraham settled down and says in verse 12, but you know there was somebody watching this whole thing? That's what you don't realize when you have a transaction with somebody.

There's somebody watching the whole thing. And that was God. And God said, Abraham, I saw what you were doing.

I saw your gracious attitude. You had every right to that, but you gave up your right. And if you do that, my brother, sister, God will say the same to you.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear. Maybe you're facing something like that today. The Lord said to Abraham, verse 14, and I want to paraphrase God's words to Abraham.

In Genesis 13, 14, Abraham, I was watching the whole transaction. I don't know whether you realize that when you have transactions with people, there is an unseen watcher watching the whole thing, watching your attitude, whether it is the same attitude that you sing in CCF and you're dealing, financial dealings with people. He said, I watched the whole thing, Abraham.

Mark my words. Did Lot grab that? I tell you in future generations, your children will have not only this, but that, but this whole area, because I am the one who decides what people get. Today, this was nearly 4,000 years ago.

Let me ask you, who's living there today? Children of Lot or the children of Abraham? It's the children of Abraham, the land of Israel. God keeps his word. There's no doubt he does.

How many generations in 4,000 years since Abraham made that transaction? Today, God keeps his word. All this land, look north, south, verse 14, east, west. I'm giving it to your descendants forever.

Yeah, that's how God is. Another example, Zacchaeus, the son of Abraham. Lot went after money and he got into trouble.

You know, there was a war there and he got captured. Abraham could have sent him a message, serves you right, Lot. You grabbed from me.

Have you learned a lesson now? You got captured. I hope you suffer. That's not Abraham.

He behaved better than most Christians. Abraham, he was captured. Let me go and fight.

He risks his life to save his nephew. Amazing. He went and rescued Lot and brought back all that.

It says in chapter 14, verse 16, he brought back all the goods and his relative. This is property of the king of Sodom, which was lost. In those days, the rule was in war.

It was a standard rule adopted by everybody in war. If you go to war, whatever you win is yours. The property of the enemy is yours.

So it was Abraham's. And so the king of Sodom says, verse 21 to Abraham, Genesis 14, 21. Abraham, I know the rules of war, but whoever wins can keep the property, so it's all yours.

Take it. Just let the people come to Sodom, but all my property is yours. And Sodom was a very rich place.

And see what Abraham said. I have sworn to the Lord God most high, possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not even take a shoelace from you. Not a thread or a shoelace, because one day you'll say you made Abraham rich.

And I don't want you to get the credit. God has told me he'll make me rich. I don't want the king of Sodom to go around saying, I was the one who made Abraham rich.

I won't take it from you. Take it. I don't want any of that.

Zacchaeus was a son of Abraham. There he demonstrated I would not take what was rightfully his. Now, the other thing I want you to notice, you know, when you meditate on scripture, you learn some amazing things.

If you don't rush past any verse and meditate, meditate, meditate. Where did he get this title? The Lord God most high, possessor of heaven and earth. Abraham had just come back with all these possessions.

There are two things Abraham accomplished. One, he defeated the enemy. And second, he got all this possession.

And at that particular time, God had a faithful servant there in another part of the country called Melchizedek. He was in touch with God and God said to him, I want you to go and give a message to my servant Abraham. So he goes like a prophet and he goes and tells Abraham.

He didn't give him a big lecture. Prophecy is not always a very long message. It can be two sentences, only two sentences.

Abraham, I want you to know two things. Number one, Melchizedek, verse 18, goes to Abraham and says in verse 19, remember Abraham, all this property you got is nothing. It's a pittance compared to God who's a possessor of heaven and earth.

Remember your God is the possessor of heaven and earth. What have you got here? A few cents, the property of Sodom. Ignore it.

That's where he learned to tell the king of Sodom, I don't want your property. The second thing, there was another danger Abraham faced and that was a danger of one of becoming covetous. The other was the danger of pride that I defeated so many kings with 318 servants.

That also the prophet saved him from that saying, remember verse 20, it is God who delivered these people into your hands. Don't get puffed up. I tell you, prophecy is an amazing thing.

The Bible says we must covet to prophesy. Have you read that verse? 1 Corinthians 14, verse 1. Covet to prophesy. And I'm not talking about this Pentecostal nonsense where some people just stand up and say whatever comes to their mind and call it prophecy or thus said the Lord and all that.

It's never the Lord at all. It just comes out of their minds. I've heard enough of that.

But I'm talking about where you never say thus said the Lord. In my case, they'd never use that holy expression, thus said the Lord. I'm sick and tired of people who use that expression.

The Lord told Jeremiah, be careful about those, read Jeremiah 23. The Lord said, be careful about those who go around saying thus said the Lord. I never spoke to them.

No, you don't have to use that expression. But if you are in touch with God and you have a compassionate heart and you love people and you covet to prophesy and your conscience is clear, God will sometimes

give you one word, one sentence when you speak to somebody on a phone or somebody, you meet somebody and you share a sentence with them, which will be a prophetic word to that person to a particular need that they're facing. Like the two prophetic sentences Melchizedek spoke here.

Remember Abraham, it's God who gave you these enemies. Don't think it was your ability. And remember Abraham, this money of Sodom is pittance compared to God who owns the whole earth.

And he's your God. That's what saved him. If Melchizedek had not come at that time, Abraham would have grabbed that property and been proud that he had won the victory and ruined himself.

Thank God for prophets. And you and I can be that to the people we know. If you say, Lord, make me a blessing to others by giving me the right word to bless people.

So he was freed from that. And we read another time, I'll give you one more example where we read that when he offered up his son, which is worth more than all the money in the world, he offered him up. But I'll give you one more example.

When Sarah died in Genesis 25, and he wanted to find a burial place for Sarah. Genesis in chapter 25. Sorry, not 25.

Let me get that. 23? I think it's 23. Yeah.

Sorry, it's not 25. It's 23. I must be getting old.

And he wanted a burial place. Yeah, that's right. So he said, please, can you give me a burial place? He told the people in after Sarah had died in Genesis 23.

He said, please speak to Ephron, verse 8, and tell him to give me the cave of Mephala, verse 9. And he said, sure. And Abraham said, Abraham went there and Ephron was sitting there in verse 13. He said, please give me this land.

And Ephron said, my Lord, listen to me. What is this a land worth 400 shekels? There's nothing. Take it freely.

But Abraham would not take it freely. He said, I'll pay you for it. Now, everybody in the world loves to get something free.

Don't you? Be honest. And Abraham is being offered this land free. And he says, no, I will pay for it.

Lest you one day say that you gave me a gift. That chap was not a... Abraham was a man of God, and he wouldn't take a gift from a godless, unconverted person. You know, the Bible says that believers should not take money from unbelievers.

You read that in the third episode of John. So he says, okay, I don't want it free. Verse 16, he weighed out that amount of money and gave it.

Just a few examples to say why Jesus said about Zacchaeus, this man is a real son of Abraham. I hope we get that certificate too. Amen.

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