

Restart Series

Sermon 2

Re-Discovering the Mission of Jesus

Luke 19:1-10

This week we will continue the series entitled RESTART. The series began last week, and we looked at what it would take for us as adult believers to restart our faith journey. If you were here last week then you received a daily reading plan and I challenged everyone to spend some time this past week rediscovering the resurrection of Jesus. If you need a restart in your walk with Christ then you have to wipe everything else out and go back to the beginning, the beginning of your relationship with Jesus. That beginning was the same for all of us who are believers when we first believed in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and submitted our lives to him. As Christians our faith hinges on the resurrection of Jesus and nothing else, and if we are to restart, then we must refocus our lives around this foundational truth that we once confessed as the driving force for all that we say and do.

So as last week we looked at the one foundational truth we needed to restart, this week we are going to answer the question what was the singular purpose of Jesus' earthly ministry? Now because last week we started at the end of Jesus' life you might say well I already know, "he came to die on the cross," and you would be right. However, I want us to zero in on the specific task that was the driving force behind everything Jesus did. Last week we rediscovered the starting point for our faith, however, our faith is expressed by far more than our knowledge; knowledge alone does little good, if it does not result in action. So what then is the desired action of our Lord? How can we best reflect Jesus? To

answer that we must determine what Jesus did, and what he is doing! For if we are not doing what Jesus did then we are simply church attenders. If we are not following in his actions then we are not really followers at all. Then if we are not truly followers, then I revert back to the word's of Paul in saying that our professed faith, our so called Christianity is futile, useless, or worthless.

So today I want to share with you a story that many of you will be very familiar with and even learned about by singing a song as a child. Ok I'm going to start singing the song and everyone that knows it go on ahead and join in. I know for a fact some of you know this song, so I better not be singing by myself. ****SING SONG****

Now this song was sufficient for us as children in teaching us this story, but what I'm afraid of is that many of us have tucked this away in our mind as a children's story and we have failed to see the greater point of the story which we don't hear in the song.

Our passage today will be found in Luke 19:1-10. What I'm going to do is I'm going to tell you the story much like what we do in our Community Life Groups at FIBC. Then when I finish telling the story, you guys are going to put the story back together, a piece at a time in chronological order, and we can help each other out, but you have to pay real close attention. The after that we will actually read the passage. We use this technique in our small groups and have found that it goes a long way in helping commit scripture to memory.

Before I tell you the story let me tell you a little about the author. Luke the author of this Gospel (self entitled), wrote this account specifically to Theophilus and other Gentiles (Luke uses Greek names instead of Hebrew) to record an orderly account or narrative of the Life of Christ based on eye witness testimony. As a matter of fact there

are several accounts of Jesus' life that are found in Luke but in no other Gospels, such as this encounter with Zaccheaus. In this story and in many others that Luke wrote of Jesus, they are very precise, matter of fact, and to the point, however, as we will see here with Zaccheaus if we will slow down and look a little deeper we will find there is much more going on.

*****Tell the Story*****

*****EXPLAIN PASSAGE*****

*****19:1*****

Jesus was merely passing through. He was making his final trip to Jerusalem where he would soon be crucified. Jericho was just a place on the way from point "A" to "B". We do the same thing. You get off work and before you can go home you have to stop at the bank and then wal-mart before you can finally arrive at home. There is no real significance to Jericho it was just simply on his route.

*****19:2*****

Here Zaccheaus is introduced. The chief tax collector, which was a despised occupation, and Zaccheaus held the highest position. Tax collection during this time looked something like a toll booth. Upon entering a city you pass by a booth and there would be a man, stationed there who would tax you on your goods. How these guys made their money is that they would collect the designated tax by the Roman government then whatever amount they added to this tax went to their pocket, and there weren't any regulations or oversight boards that kept these people in check. So basically they just took whatever they felt like it and since they were doing the work of the government

there was nothing to be done. So often times these tax collectors were very well off, and I would say that almost all the time they were hated.

Not only was Zaccheaus a tax collector, but he had done quite well for himself and had climbed the so called corporate ladder and earned the position of Chief tax collector. Luke then makes it a point to tell us this man was rich. That's important because just want chapter prior to in Ch. 18 you have the story of a rich man where Jesus states that it is easier for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle then to enter the kingdom of God. Why you ask? Those who have an abundance of earthly wealth typically find it hard to give all of that up for the sake of Jesus.

*****19:3-4*****

Zaccheaus was a short man and he wanted so badly to see who this Jesus was that everyone had been talking about for the last couple of years was. In the culture in the middle east even still today it is somewhat undignified for an adult male to be running and climbing trees, especially one of Zaccheaus' status. Though he was hated by many, he was none the less seen in some circles as successful, powerful, and obviously wealthy. So it's strange that he would go to such lengths to see another man, unless even Zaccheaus knew that there was something more at stake.

There may be some of you here this morning who have never encountered Jesus. You have heard of him, but never personally experienced all he has to offer, and you came to church this morning just hoping the preacher would say something, or by some miracle Jesus would appear to you, or give you some kind of an answer. This is the same as Zaccheaus, he had to have known in this moment this might be his only chance.

*****19:5-6*****

We don't know how Jesus knew his name, but when he got to the tree he stopped and called to Zaccheaus by name. Maybe it was through divine knowledge, maybe he had passed by his tax booth, or maybe even his friend Matthew that had been a tax collector and was now one of Jesus' closest followers had mentioned Zaccheaus, and maybe they had even prayed for him, either way Jesus knew him by name, and invited himself over. Fortunately Zaccheaus responded correctly and gladly welcomed him over. Now you know there are some of you in here, if Jesus would have invited himself to your house that your mind instantly would have been looking for excuses. The house is dirty, I have plans, a million things would have crossed your mind, but not Zaccheaus this was better than he had planned.

*****19:7*****

Wouldn't you know it as soon as this happens immediately the haters come out, and they start griping about Jesus eating with this sinner, this tax collector. Remember Zaccheaus was despised by most and no body could believe that of all the houses in Jericho, Jesus was going to stay there.

*****19:8*****

This verse seems to come sudden and we don't know at what point Zaccheaus made this statement. Maybe it was upon Jesus' initial interest in Zaccheaus that he knew this man was who everyone said he was. Maybe they had already had dinner and Jesus had been speaking with him. We don't know. What we do know is that the power and presence of Jesus, was enough for Zaccheaus to immediately decide to change his life. Here is this wealthy man who without provocation, or so it seems, offers his belongings

as a sign of repentance and his new found faith in Jesus Christ. He didn't have to ask what he needed to do, he was willing to give any and everything in return for what Jesus had to offer.

*****19:9*****

The reason we know what Jesus was offering was because of what Jesus said Zaccheaus had received, salvation! Zaccheaus had been saved from eternal punishment and forgiven of his sins, and as a result expressed his faith and repentance by giving away, more than what was even required of the law. It wasn't that Zaccheaus was literally a son of Abraham, but that he had responded to Jesus in the same manner in which Abraham had responded to the Father so many centuries before. *Genesis 15:6 says, "Abraham believed and it was credited to him as righteousness."* Salvation had come to Zaccheaus, the tax collector, the despised, the wealthy, not because of who he was, but because of who he wasn't, and he immediately responded in faith.

*****19:10*****

That brings us to verse 10. The verse that is not included in our song, and a verse, by many scholars, that is regarded as the key verse in all of the book of Luke. Jesus said "the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost."

The title "Son of Man" is used in the Gospels when Jesus is referring to himself, there are only even a couple of other instances in the NT where the title is used apart from Jesus referencing himself. In particular Jesus seems to use this title when speaking about his earthly ministry, the things he would do in the flesh, in human form, while walking the earth.

This is what he had to say about his earthly ministry; “I have come to seek and to save the lost.” My purpose while I’m here is to search for those who are lost and bring to the Father safely. Just as parents scourer the earth when one of their children have gone missing, so Jesus’ mission was to search for those who were lost and bring them to salvation. Just a few weeks ago my son slipped away from me at Goodwill. For a brief moment my wife’s heart and mine sunk. We began feverishly searching to find our child. We split up and both began to check the parts of the store we thought he would be, and sure enough we found him playing with the toys. Likewise Jesus’ mission was to seek and to save the lost.

I don’t think I have to develop the idea of saving the lost this morning. Those of you who are believers understand what it means to be lost and what it means to receive forgiveness of sins, and salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ. The opposite is probably true though you may not have a relationship with Jesus, you know what it means to go through life filling lost. The Bible says that salvation comes when we believe in Jesus Christ life, death, and resurrection, confess him as lord, and repent of our sins. How many of you this morning know that God has saved you?

So let me just share with you what is on my heart and how God has been dealing with me lately. Several months ago I started asking myself this question; why are we not seeing people come to faith in Christ amongst us here at First Indian Baptist Church? I have wrestled with this question for quite sometime now, as I know others of you have as well. Through a series of events, sermons, searching the scriptures, interactions with lost people, prayer, and so on, God began to remind me of this one verse. The Son of Man came to Seek and to Save the Lost, and when I began to compare my life with this verse

there weren't many parallels. When I was finally honest with myself, I began to see that at this moment in time in my life, I was not reflecting the example set forth for me by my Savior. Now I was doing a lot of good things, a lot of church things, certainly still very involved in ministry, but my primary task had shifted from Jesus' stated primary task.

So what is it then that Jesus did in this story that I believe is imperative for us as believers and for us as the church to do

- I. Jesus intentionally sought out those who were lost.
 - a. Jesus didn't stop to chat with the church people. He did not address those who were simply there to see someone famous, or in hopes of seeing a miracle. Rather while he was in the midst of his regular day, while he was traveling from point A to point B he was seeking, searching, scanning, for the one that was lost, for the one, (that while he may not have been aware at the time what he was looking for) that was actually broken, despised, the unwanted, and unloved. Jesus was searching for a lost sheep to return to the Father.
 - b. If we are going to reflect the image of Jesus, then we must be intentional about searching, seeking, scanning, scouring the community to the ends of the earth in hopes of discovering one who is lost. What I know to be true about searching, is that if you will commit to God to look for those who do not know him, he will be faithful in making sure they cross your path. If we desire to look more like Jesus then we must look for the lost.
- II. Jesus initiated the relationship.

- a. Now I don't know how well Jesus' tactic would work for us today. If you start walking up to people and just inviting yourself to their house you might get a lot of weird looks at best. However, what I think is practical and applicable for us today, is that we make it a point to build a relationship with those God brings into our life. Without being pushy or abrasive we need to be intentional about investing ourselves in their life.
- b. "Investing" may leave a poor idea in your mind, and when I say that I don't mean we are expecting anything in return, we are concerned about telling them how sinful they are, even if it is true, but by investing I mean that we love them enough, and are concerned for their eternal well being enough to take the time to make them a priority in our life. The lost need to know that we love them and care for them and more importantly they need to know there is a God who loves them and cares for them.
- c. This could mean playing golf with them, going fishing, inviting them to your house for dinner, or out for coffee, or maybe offering your services to help with a project they have going on around their house. You can be as creative as you want with this, but once God brings a lost person into your life you must be faithful to build a relationship and insert yourself into their life.

III. Jesus invited people to follow him.

- a. He didn't look for the lost to simply say "hey there is another one dying and going to hell," and he didn't go over to Zaccheaus' house to simply

eat dinner. Rather he sought out Zaccheaus inserted himself into his life so that he could offer salvation.

- b. Obviously we don't offer salvation of our own merit, and we don't invite people to follow us, but we present the Gospel "good news" and make it known to them that salvation is offered by God and that Jesus invites us all to follow him. We tell them of Jesus who loves them, who can heal them, and forgive them of their sins. We speak to them about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
- c. Here is the mistake I have made a lot in my life. I look for the lost, and I even build relationships with the lost, and then I invite them to church. Folks salvation doesn't come by church, though many of people accept Christ at church. Rather salvation comes by the sharing of God's Word from the lips of God's people. Salvation comes when we hear the truth of Jesus Christ; that he suffered and died for us. That he lived a life we could not live and died the death we deserve. Salvation comes when we hear that Jesus paid the price for our sin with his blood, and we can no longer deny God, but cry out to him to save us, we repent of our sins, and we confess that Jesus is Lord. If you want to start seeing people come to faith in Christ among this body of believers then you need to start sharing Christ with them. Speaking the truth of Jesus.

If we are going to be the church, if we are going to be fully devoted followers of Jesus, the we need pick up the mission of Jesus and run with it. Jesus' mission was not

for you to become a faithful church attendee, it wasn't so you would live a more moral life, it wasn't for you to teach Sunday school, or tithe, and while all of those things describe the Christian life, they do not define it. Jesus defined his own mission here on earth as seeking those who were lost and saving them. If we are going to call ourselves Christians then we should reflect the image of Jesus, and that is impossible if we refuse to do what Jesus did.

Jesus went out and met the people where they were and brought them to the father. He did not expect them to come to him, just as I didn't expect my lost son to somehow find his way to me, but rather I went to where I thought a lost 2 yr old would be. Likewise Jesus went to where he thought the lost were, he didn't send out a message for all of them to meet him at the temple.

I would guess that every one of you knows someone personally that is lost. Maybe it's a family member, maybe it's an acquaintance. Probably at this very moment you have someone in mind. Everyday this week I want you to pray for the salvation of that person. 7 Days you are going to pray for them, and beyond that, each of you received a little blue print out that has a prayer guide on it for this week. I want to challenge to you to follow this guide, and there is a prayer for everyday. We must become intentional about seeing the lost found, and that starts with prayer. If you don't know somebody personally that is lost, that's ok, you aren't off the hook, I want to challenge you to pray that God we bring somebody into your life with whom you can share the Gospel with.

We are going to close this morning with a time of response and I want you to reflect on your life and compare it with the mission of Jesus. You may need to bow before a holy God this morning at the altar and confess your sin of neglecting the mission

of Jesus or maybe you would like to begin praying for someone this morning. However you choose to respond I would encourage you to not leave here today without responding in some manner as the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart.

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through.

² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy.

³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd.

⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.”

⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

⁹ Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.

¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” ¹

¹ *The New International Version*. (2011). (Lk 19:1–10). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

