

Family Worship Booklet



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day, and that the people of God
were filled with joy!

Friday – Luke 19:11-14

The parable that Jesus now teaches here is similar to the parable of the talents in Matthew chapter 25. Some commentators think they are the same parable but are heard differently by Matthew and Luke. We have seen that Matthew, Mark and Luke all see the same thing from a different perspective, but given the differences in the content, it is more likely that Jesus used the same basic idea when teaching on different occasions.

Jesus is now nearing Jerusalem, and it's clear that as he does, many of those following him are getting the sense that this is the end game – that he will establish the Kingdom of God when he gets there. They, of course, hadn't grasped that being with Christ meant that the Kingdom was in their midst. That is because they were looking for an entirely different type of Kingdom to be established. All the parables are about the Kingdom of God; its nature, extent, manner of growth, etc., but the fact that the people are now actually thinking about the Kingdom of God, you would think, make this parable resonant all the more with them. We will see, but as we do so, let's be careful. I am not condoning their ignorance, but are there not things that we are getting wrong, even though we have the privilege of hearing the Word received in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In essence, the parable is about a nobleman who has to make a long trip to another country to obtain a new kingdom, but before he leaves, he calls in ten of his servants and gives each of them responsibility for some of his business activities. Each one gets the same responsibility, ten minas, equivalent to almost three years' basic wage. They are told to invest the money on the nobleman's behalf while he is away to make more money for him. The parable then tells how each of these ten servants responded to and managed the responsibility given to them. It also addresses what happened to the people in his kingdom who didn't want him to reign over them.

Next week we will get into the parable in detail.

Q1. What did the people think would happen?

Q2. What is the parable about in general?

Thursday – Luke 19:1-10 – Jesus came to seek and to save

Yesterday, we saw how Zacchaeus professed the reality of his new life in Christ through the two-fold vow that he made. But the account of the interaction between Zacchaeus and the Lord doesn't end there. Now Jesus speaks in the hearing of all gathered in Zacchaeus' home. All his family and friends will know that this isn't some momentary lapse of sense just because the great prophet Jesus has come to stay in his home for the night. The salvation that Zacchaeus received when he responded to the Lord's call to come down out of the sycamore tree not only changed his life it would impact every member of his home tremendously.

What a wonderful blessing it is when salvation comes to a member of a godless home, especially when the head of the home is converted. Everything changes; the language in the home, the level of love in the home, how the money is spent, how the Lord's Day is kept, and how family worship, something never previously thought about, becomes an integral part of everyday life.

Zacchaeus had begun the day as a son of Abraham by birth and ancestry; he was a Jew. As he would go to his bed on this evening, he would do so as a true son of Abraham, for Abraham is the father of all believers and faith alone makes us, whether Jew or Gentile, sons of his; Galatians 3:7, Romans 4:11,12, 16. Jesus, in making this point, is declaring in this city, full of Jewish priests, that salvation is by faith alone, in him alone and that it is his task as the Son of Man to seek and save the lost, including the chief tax collector, a man who many in Jericho would have considered beyond saving. While the people who fill the streets around him may constantly be murmuring about why he is giving himself to men like Zacchaeus, Jesus never loses sight of the fact that that is precisely why he came to earth – to seek to save the lost. Praise God for the glorious truth.

And note the word 'came.' It's as though Jesus, as he nears Jerusalem for the last time and the accomplishment of his life's work, is speaking of his ministry in the past tense. It is almost at an end, and he knows it.

Q1. What does Jesus say has come to Zacchaeus' house?

Q2. What was Jesus focused on throughout his ministry right to its end?

Monday – Luke 19:1-10 – Jericho and Zacchaeus

Although it is now a relatively small city with a population of less than 20,000, Jericho had a long and illustrious history. Antony had given the palm groves and balsam gardens in the city to Cleopatra as a source of revenue, and, when Luke is writing, it is a modern, vibrant, cultured and very prosperous place. Known as the city of fragrance or the 'paradise of God,' many priests and tax collectors lived within her walls, and if you were travelling up to Jerusalem, it was the place to stay. And this is a peak season for visitors to the city, with the Passover Festival about to take place in Jerusalem in just a few days.

Jesus now arrives with his disciples and all those following Him, which means that the streets are absolutely thronging with people. Luke's focus, though, is on just one man. He's called Zacchaeus. A tax collector by profession, but more than that, he is a 'chief' tax collector, the only tax collector in the New Testament to be called that. This means that every tax collector in Jericho and the surrounding region would have worked for him. Speak of Zacchaeus in Jericho, and people would have immediately known whom you were referring to. This is a man of considerable status in the city, albeit largely unpopular because of his profession. Not that that would have concerned him because he had made a phenomenal amount of money. Tax collecting was a very lucrative business, and to be a chief tax collector, was a licence to print money, both legitimately and illegally. I say illegally because, as we see from the passage, he's been highly abusive in dealings with others (verse 8). The fact that his name meant 'just or righteousness' was nothing to him. He didn't care; it was all about money and power for Zacchaeus until this day when Jesus comes to Jericho, and his interest is spiked.

But why is Zacchaeus even bothered by the commotion around Jesus's presence in the city? Why take time off his work to chase down the street to try and catch a glimpse of the prophet? Hasn't he better things to be doing, like making more money and furthering his status in the city? Well, there is the fact that Jesus is famous, and fame does attract people. It's incredible what people will do to get a glimpse of someone famous. But there is something more at play here; in fact, two things are going on there is Zacchaeus' desire to see Jesus and Jesus's desire to see Zacchaeus, because he has a divine appointment with him.

Q1. What city does Jesus come to?

Q2. What do we know about Zacchaeus?

Tuesday – Luke 19:1-10 – Jesus seeks Zacchaeus out.

Yesterday we were introduced to Zacchaeus, a physically small, extremely rich, unpopular chief tax collector living in Jericho. And when Jesus arrives in the city, Zacchaeus leaves his work, and because the streets are thronging with people, he runs down the street to get ahead of the crowd and climbs a sycamore tree to get a good vantage place from which to see Jesus. That says something about his desire. Surely his willingness to experience the reputational damage that will come from climbing the tree to see Jesus tells us that he's not entirely happy with his life for all his immense wealth and societal status. He's searching for something else. That's the reality of life, even a life surrounded by great wealth or fame. If riches could bring eternal peace, the rich young ruler would never have come to Jesus and asked what he had to do to inherit eternal life. Yet the world is full of people who are constantly searching for contentment and real peace through money or status though no one has ever experienced it through those means.

It's wonderful that Zacchaeus is brought to this point where he seeks out the Lord and is brought to it by God. He wouldn't have come to it by his own thought process. Left to himself, unhappy or not, Zacchaeus would have given the rest of his life trying to fill the gap in his heart with more money and more power. We need to pray and ask God for His work in those around us who are dead in their trespasses and sins.

God has been preparing Zacchaeus, and now Jesus comes to him. Surrounded by hundreds of people, Jesus stops in the street right beside the tree Zacchaeus is in, and looking up, Jesus calls him by name. Imagine the shock that must have been to Zacchaeus, and it's a shock when God speaks to us personally through His Word. Is that something you desire in your life, or are you content with a form of religion? I hope not.

Jesus doesn't ask Zacchaeus if he can stay at his home; no, Jesus tells Zacchaeus that he must do so. Again, God is at work here, pre-ordaining and then controlling the events developing in Zacchaeus' life for good and His own glory. Let us thank God for his foreordaining work in our lives.

How does Zacchaeus respond? He does as Jesus tells him, and he does it immediately. Without hesitation or second thought, he climbs down, drawn by the Good Shepherd's voice, and we are told that Zacchaeus received Jesus joyfully, with rejoicing. Why? Because of salvation.

Q1. What does Zacchaeus do to see Jesus, and why?

Q2. What does Jesus do when he gets to the tree Zacchaeus is in.

Q3. How does Zacchaeus respond to what Jesus tells him?

Wednesday – Luke 19:1-10 – Zacchaeus is a changed man.

As soon as Zacchaeus begins the journey to his home with Jesus, the murmuring starts. Note it's not confined to a handful of people; it says that 'they all grumbled.' They're not happy that Jesus is talking to their chief tax collector and even less so at the idea that Jesus will go and stay in his home. There are hundreds of homes that Jesus could have asked to stay in; why Zacchaeus? This is the thought in all their hearts. They don't think that Zacchaeus may be changed, and if they weren't going to take delight in the salvation of another godless soul, even if it were to impact their lives positively.

At some point in the evening, maybe before the evening meal, possibly after Jesus has engaged in some teaching, Zacchaeus gets to his feet. What he has to say and who he has to say it to cannot be said from a sedentary position. Note that he is not concerned with how the people will view or talk about him; his sole desire is to tell Jesus that his new heart desires to live before him in loving obedience. The word 'behold' indicates the formal dignity he speaks as he vows concerning his wealth. It's a vow that comprises two statements, which will reveal how God's work of salvation in his life has truly changed him.

First, Zacchaeus expresses his thanksgiving for what God has done that day in his life. His former bondage to the love of money has gone, something the rich young ruler in the previous chapter had not experienced. He now has a newly found liberty to do with his goods, something he would never have contemplated before, and so he vows to give half of all his goods to the poor.

Second, Zacchaeus declares that he will make restitution to those whom he has financially abused, put another way, stolen from in the past. The law required that if you wronged someone financially but admitted it, you were required to give them what you took plus an additional fifth (Leviticus 6:5 and Number 5:6). If you didn't volunteer and were caught, the Law said you had to make restitution for four or five times of what you took. (Exodus 22:1, 1 Samuel 12:3, Exodus 33:15). In behaving as though he had been found out, Zacchaeus essentially says he is volunteering because Christ had found him out and changed his life. He wants those murmuring at Jesus to know that what Jesus has done in his life is real and that he is overjoyed with it. Not just in terms of a smiling face or an open door or exciting words but real deeds of consequence. Many will know in their bank accounts within a few days that what Jesus did to Zacchaeus was something truly astonishing.

Q1. What does Zacchaeus vow to do?

Q2. What does that say about Jesus' work in his life?