

J.J.

JESUS IS THE MESSAGE

Luke 19:1-10

INTRODUCTION :

When I was a young pastor, I met this man who in the course of our conversation learned that I was pastoring a church. His first question then to me was, “Ah pastor ka, anong bawal sa inyo?”

I just finished reading this Christian book entitled “True Spirituality” by Francis Schaeffer. One of the things that struck me in the book. One of the things that hit me was this line.

Quote : “The local church or Christian group should be right, but it should also be beautiful.”
(True Spirituality by Francis Schaeffer)

Sometimes, Christians are known for what they are against for rather than our love.

During Jesus’ time, what was He known for?

Luke 7: 34 The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’

I think the church loses its attractiveness if we lose love for God and love for others. And when there’s no love, there’s no joy.

And when I say “love”, it’s not just the love for one another but a revolutionary kind of love.

When I say revolutionary love that Jesus has, it’s not only the love for the sick, the downtrodden, the persecuted. That’s a good kind of love and we should do it but the world can do that.

But the love our Lord Jesus mentions is the love that loves the unloveable – our enemies, the Christian’s enemies or those who are against our beliefs, our code of conduct and even people who wants to destroy us.

I’ve read somewhere that sometimes when “we meet homosexuals and couples living in together and etc, our first reaction is to correct them. AS IF THAT’S THE FIRST THING IN GOD’S MIND. It’s not.”

The first thing in God’s mind is for this people to know who Jesus Christ is and that’s where the real change will come from.

John 3:16 says *“For God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son...”*

The first thing God wants to show the world is His love through His Son Jesus Christ.

Let's look at this through one of the meetings of Jesus Christ.

Luke 19 : 1 Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. 2 Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. 3 And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way. 5 And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house." 6 So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully. 7 But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."

8 Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." 9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; 10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Pray

Today what we have is a story that shows the heart of Jesus and when you see the heart of Jesus, you see the heart of God.

I. JESUS MEETS YOU WHERE YOU ARE

1 Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

We have to remember that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem as you can see the preceding passages.

He has been making waves and people were hearing about him and people were following him and they know He's the Messiah.

The reason people were following Him is because people think He's going to throw out the Roman people.

Jericho from Jerusalem is not too far and he can reach it in a few hours **but then he determines to make a stop here.**

Why? It's because He wanted to show people why He came.

What's with Jericho?

Jericho = literally means "place of fragrance". During the time of Jesus, it's abounding with balsam, honey, Cyprus, myrobalanus, roses and other fragrant products.

It's a beautiful place where it's not too hot during summer and not too cold during winter. It's got Springs all around.

It's also a rich place because people need to pass by that place if they are on their way to Jerusalem or even on their way to Egypt.

So, this place is like a resort city but also a trading city.

The rich and famous have their homes here. It's like Beverly Hills or New York

No wonder Zacchaeus lives here.

Who is Zacchaeus?

2 Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich.

Etymology : Zacchaeus "pure"

But he was *chief tax collector*

Now let me tell you something about tax collectors.

- **The Jews hates tax collectors**

They are put in their own category. Look at this.

Luke 7: 34a friend of tax collectors and sinners!

The people could have just said "a friend of sinners" but they had to categorize "tax collectors" and "sinners"

They were sometimes labeled as "beasts in human form" In tagalog, mga hayop itong mga ito.

Why the hatred?

Remember the Jews were under Roman rule and they collect taxes. They sell tax franchises.

This means, if you have enough money, you pay the Romans the amount of money they need sometimes upfront and then you will have to get your investment back by gathering the taxes.

And they tax everything, from the wheels of your cart, by entering a city....everything.

Not only that, since the Romans would only require a certain amount of tax from the Jews, anything that is beyond that is yours. So you can really become rich by being a "tax gatherer"

Why? It's because you just need to pay the Romans their due and anything else that is beyond that is yours and there's no limit to what you can tax. WE CALL THAT EXTORTION. LEGAL TONG!

That's why in Luke 3 it says :

Luke 3:12 "Then tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" 13 And he said to them, "Collect no more than what is appointed for you."

But why the hatred?

Illustration : REMEMBER ISIS...those ultra-radical terrorist group that invades countries. Let's say they invade and rule Canada were making it hard for us Christians to practice our faith and put heavy taxes on us and seizes our homes and our business. If we refuse, you will be put to death. Now in order for the Isis government to function, they need to get taxes from us. But instead of collecting the taxes themselves, **they sell this "franchise" to your fellow Christians.** **Let's say with one of our brother or sister in church.** And these Christians are now in connivance with Isis because the taxes you get from their fellow Christians are used to fund the soldiers of Isis who has killed your son, your husband and just imposes a lot of restrictions on you. What would you call that Christian? HAYOP DI BA?

NOW ZACCHAEUS WAS NOT ONLY A TAX COLLECTOR, HE IS *chief tax collector*.
He has many tax collectors under him and that's why *he was rich*

3 And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way.

Note : I don't think he wants to meet Jesus because he wants to be saved. He just knows He is the "Messiah". He's heard about Him because He is popular and He's heard about His goodness and His miracles and His claims **but we don't think he wants to meet Him because He wants to be saved from His sins.** **He was just there out of curiosity AND** *And he sought to see who Jesus was*

But since he was short, he needed to climb up a tree and that's where Jesus met Him.

Jesus wants to meet you in your situation right now. He doesn't say, I want to meet you when the circumstances are correct or in church or when things are fine and dandy.

Illustration : You might be listening on this Facebook Live right now out of curiosity or out of duty or for whatever circumstance, but the reason why you are here...God always has a purpose...OUR LORD JESUS WANTS TO MEET WITH YOU.

Biblical Illustration : We also saw the same situation in John 4, where He passed through Samaria and talked with the Samaritan woman by the well who have had 5 husbands and currently living in with a man and then introduced Himself and then she believed and she was saved

Our Lord meets people where they are right now.

What's your situation right now? It's not the perfect situation? Our Lord wants to meet you where you are.

Now what happened.

II. JESUS ACCEPTS YOU FOR WHO YOU ARE

5 And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house."

Again, it's not because he did not want to see Jesus in order to be saved by Jesus. It's just out of curiosity. Remember, this man is very rich. **He is the big boss.** He is the drug lord. He is the kingpin. He is the Jeffrey Epstein. He is the Harvey Weinstein. He is the Chaviv Singson. He is very rich and powerful.

Now let me tell you about the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have been hardwired to believe that before you meet Jesus, you need to clean up your life. You need to be good in order to be accepted by God. You need to have the proper motives and etc.

Important scenario : Jesus did not say when He saw Zacchaeus, "*Zacchaeus...tsk...tsk...tsk... you got to correct your ways man. Look at all this people that you have robbed.*"

I'm pretty sure, he looked at Zacchaeus, he was smiling at Zacchaeus and said, "Hey, I want to have dinner at your house tonight."

Jesus accepts you for who you are.

That is precisely what happened with Zacchaeus.

Why would Jesus do that?

Romans 5:6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

Quote : Jesus Christ knows the worst about you. Nonetheless, He is the one who loves you most. – A.W. Tozer

What's the reaction of Zacchaeus?

6 So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.

Of course Zacchaeus will be joyful

Here is the Messiah. Zacchaeus knows His teachings, His perfect life and His miracles. It is said that there are around 10,000 priests that live in Jericho, He would understand if Jesus wants to stay with them and be with them but huh...

Jesus called my name and He chose me.

I'm the most hated person in this place and he wants to be in my company?

Note : This is what I love about our Lord...He calls us by our name...

You are here right now and our Lord is calling you by your name...and He wants to be with you. Yes, you. You who have failed Him several times.. You who have sinned against Him. You who are hated by other people.. JESUS IS CALLING YOUR NAME.

That's why look at the reaction of all the people there?

7 But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."

I can understand their reaction.

Why would Jesus want to be identified with this guy? I hate this guy. I lost my house because of this guy. I lost my retirement because of this guy. My kids weren't able to go to school because of this guy. The tax that this guy got from me was used by the Romans to imprison my husband.

I can understand if Jesus would stay at the house of those who are sick or those simple folks with simple life. Nooooooooooooo....he chooses the home of the rich and became rich because of stealing.

Illustration : It's almost like I can understand if the Pope or Franklin Graham would spend time in Tacloban or the poor folks or the religious people...but what? He wants to spend time and have dinner and stay for the night with THE RICH MOB BOSS WHO BETRAYED HIS OWN PEOPLE.

III. JESUS CHANGES WHO YOU ARE

8 Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."

Look at what happened. Jesus eats dinner at their house. They must have talked for 30 minutes, an hour, they must have laughed, ate, joked around but surely they must have talked and then comes the announcement.

"Look, Lord

Zacchaeus now calls Jesus "Lord", which means he believes that Jesus is who He is, the Son of God, the Master, the one who holds everything and controls everything.

And what did He say?

Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."

It's like this. Remember Zacchaeus is chief tax collector so it means he is riiiiiiiiich!

So it's like he said, "Lord, I'm worth \$100M right now. I'll give \$50M to the poor. And I've stolen \$10M, I'll return it 4x...In short, if there were accountants present in the dinner with Jesus, they would have said, "Boss Zakky, baka nabibigla ka....malulugi na tayo niyan."

But that is what Jesus does to a person. You remember the rich young ruler who asked Jesus in Matthew 19, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He thought it's about doing the right things like honoring father and mother (which are all good) but in the end, Jesus is saying, "I should be Lord of your life and to be Lord of your life, I should be all in all in your life."

Quote : A true encounter with Jesus changes your life radically and forever.

Why did I say radically?

Look at what's required only by the Jewish law when you have stolen from someone.

Leviticus 6: 4 then it shall be, because he has sinned and is guilty, that he shall restore what he has stolen, or the thing which he has extorted, or what was delivered to him for safekeeping, or the lost thing which he found, 5 or all that about which he has sworn falsely. He shall restore its full value, add one-fifth more to it, and give it to whomever it belongs, on the day of his trespass offering.

Illustration : the law requires when you steal something for example, \$10, you must return \$10 plus add another \$2, so all in all it's \$12. That's what the law requires.

But what Zacchaeus did is he stole \$10 and he is paying back \$40 (fourfold)!

A real encounter with Jesus did what the law wasn't able to do.

Zacchaeus did this out of his heart not out of compulsion because he saw the love and compassion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace did what the law can't do...CHANGE PEOPLE FROM THE INSIDE OUT!

I love the songs we sang today.

*And now that You're near
Everything is different
Everything's so different, Lord
And I know I'm not the same
My life You've changed
And I wanna be with You
I wanna be with You*

Real life examples : I had a classmate in university who was a homosexual. I wasn't a born-again Christian yet. But there three classmates of mine who were born-again who was friends with him. Real friends and accepted him for who he is. But of course, in the course of friendship there will be opportunities that they will be able to tell him about Jesus. Years later, I met him and didn't even recognize him. He was now changed radically. He now has a wife and kids and now a real man who goes to church.

Remember Tom, one of my classmates whom I have invited to share his testimony was an alcoholic who lost his job and his family because of his being an alcoholic. And then someone introduced him to Jesus Christ through the church and now he's done with alcohol, always posts Bible verses in Facebook and now back with his family.

How do we apply this?

Our job as Christians is not to tell people what's wrong or what's right and you should fight for this and fight for that.

Our main role is to accept and love people as Jesus accepted and loved Zacchaeus. In this way, we point people to Jesus!

It's because there will be real change when people meet Jesus.

Or you should change your life...no that's not our job! Our job is to love and accept so that we can point them to Jesus.

Quote : "Christians are the only Christ that will be seen in this world" - David Jeremiah.

Did you notice that it wasn't recorded what Jesus and Zacchaeus talked about.

Why? It's because it's not the message that's important, it's the person of Jesus....

JESUS IS OUR MESSAGE!

That's why our Lord said,

9 And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; 10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

While I was writing this sermon, the Holy Spirit wanted to also talk to our brothers and sisters who have backslidden. Those who have started well and yet somehow has fallen into sin.

Here's the message of our Lord to you, "He is looking for you." Not with angry or judgemental eyes...but loving eyes.

How do I know? Remember the story of the lovesick Father or the prodigal son. The son was really far away from God and in the end decided to come back, look at what happened next.

Luke 15: 20 So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him."

Are you the person who is far away from God right now? Our Lord is looking for you. You need to only take that one step back and our Lord comes running for you.

Why?

for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

This is why that song we sang earlier, resounds a lot to a lot of people...

Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God

Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the ninety-nine

And why are we sure the God will do anything for you to be back with Him.
HE GAVE HIS OWN SON JESUS CHRIST. John 3:16

In the end.

The only message of this church is Jesus Christ.

It's not about us correcting people. It's not about correcting society. **It's about pointing people to Jesus.**

JESUS IS OUR ONLY MESSAGE. HE IS THE GOSPEL. THE LOVE OF JESUS IS WHAT WE SHOUT ABOUT. THE GRACE OF JESUS CHRIST IS WHAT WE TELL PEOPLE ABOUT.

S.G.D.