

## I. Introduction to the Sermon's Premise

I want to invite you to turn to Luke chapter 19. I told the kids last week, and I've been telling them about this week, normally what you do is you take an adult Sunday school lesson and then you break it down to the kids. But that's not what we are going to do today. If this is your first time here, it's a great-looking crowd out here, and I am excited about what we are going to do. We are going to take a children's message and then we are going to build it to the adults. So I am going to have to have your help this morning.

I am going to talk about a story in the Bible that is a kid's story, and then I am going to bring it up into an adult kind of understanding because there are some great lessons here. How many of you kids know the story of Zacchaeus? Let me see your hand. Oh boy, look at that. We have done a good job with Zacchaeus.

Tell me, what was Zacchaeus' job? Raise your hand. Somebody tell me what his job was. What did Zacchaeus do for a living? Anybody know? Yes, sir, Jack? He was a tax collector, that is right. And what kind of tree did Zacchaeus climb up? Let's see your hand on that one. Caleb, what kind of tree? It is okay. I know you are still struggling through life with finding out who your mother is, but that is okay. Do you know what kind of tree it was? Anybody? Who else is back? All right. What kind of tree was it? A sycamore tree. That is right. That is right.

What was the problem that Zacchaeus could not get close to see Jesus? What was it? Jack again. The crowd was too big, but there was another problem. He had a second problem. What was the second problem that he had? Anybody know that one? Maddie? He was too small. Why did you look at your grandpa when you said that? He looked at that. He was too... Well, you guys have done a good job. Okay. I know now you are familiar. I am going to have to have your help. I will tell you how we are going to do it here in a second so your parents do not get bored and start getting fidgety.

## II. The Story of Zacchaeus

Let's look at Luke chapter 19, and I am going to read the story here, and then we are going to come back and we will show you what we are going to do with it.

*Luke 19:1-10*

*1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.*

*2 And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.*

*3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature.*

*4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.*

*5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.*

*6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.*

*7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.*

*8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.*

*9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham.*

*10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

Now, Father, we come to You today and we ask You to help us grasp the great principles that are found here. Truly, this is one of the greatest stories in the Bible. Lord, there are a lot of things here that we want to look at today. I thank You for the children that are here. There is no greater vision for this church than the young men and women that are sitting here this morning with their parents. Lord, help these moms and dads to realize that days like this are great teaching tools for their children. Lord, there is absolutely no greater testimony to the grace of God and no greater privilege than to have these little kids grow up with their parents and minister in this church side by side with their moms and their dads. What a great testimony that is. May each parent today understand the great responsibility that they have as moms and dads and husbands and wives. Father, take this today and use it for Your honor and glory. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for His sake, we ask it. Amen.

### III. The Question of Zacchaeus' Motivation

Let me ask you a question. Did you ever wonder for any moment of time what made Zacchaeus want to see Jesus so badly? Did you ever think about that? Things like that in the Bible. I am past the point in the Bible where I can just read it. There was a time in my life when I read through the Bible once every 33 days. There is no way I can do that anymore. I started out when I first got saved trying to read the Bible through three times a year. That is 10 chapters a day. I cannot get to that anymore either. It is impossible for me now, at 40-some years into the Bible, sadly to say, I have to work at myself getting through the Bible one time a year. The reason for that is every time I start going through it, I start reading something, seeing something, then I start asking myself all kinds of questions of why this is. Before I know it, I have read two verses and I have hung up now for three hours on one little thing trying to figure out what is going on.

I am the kind of guy that wants to know why things are the way they are. Many years ago, I looked at the story of Zacchaeus and I pondered that. Stop and think about it. Look at his circumstances. The Bible says he is chief among the publicans. He is a pretty high-up political

guy. A man of his position. He is a civil servant under Rome, yet a tax collector. When you look at who he was, his position, his political affiliation, his stature in the social world, the fact that he was very rich, what would make him climb up into a sycamore tree, basically make a fool out of himself, to see Jesus? What was it that aroused his curiosity so much that he wanted to see the Son of God so badly?

We invite people to come to church today and sit in comfortable chairs, heated in the winter and cool in the summer. We try to talk to them about Jesus and what He has done, and it is almost impossible. Why is it that way? What was it that caused Zacchaeus to have such a desire to see Jesus Christ?

#### IV. The Problem of a Powerless Church

Personally, I believe there were some events that happened in his life that caused him to have such a desire to see the Son of God. I also believe, and I talk with you about this all the time, that if things were happening in our lives today the way they ought to happen, instead of repelling people away from Jesus Christ, I believe we would draw more people to Christ.

Jesus said in John 12:32, a great verse:

*John 12:32*

*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

We always have excuses why we do not have an impact in people's lives. We always have our reasons for it, very calculated. "Well, you do not understand my job or my situation or this." The truth of the matter is, none of that really matters when it comes to being a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ because the Bible says, Jesus Himself said, if we just lift Him up, that He will draw all men unto Him.

I believe there is something wrong with us. There is certainly nothing wrong with Jesus. The Bible says that He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Little children still love Him. Have you ever noticed how little children just have an affinity for loving God? That is why the most tender time for your children to get them to love God is when they are young and they have not been told about the things of God that take away from them. That is why the wisest man that ever lived, Solomon, said in the book of Ecclesiastes:

*Ecclesiastes 12:1*

*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;*

Of course, that is so important with everything that we have here, and I believe that if things were happening in our lives, things would be different and we would totally have a better. The problem as I see it, really, is there are no miracles of God in our life. There is nothing that has really changed about our lives. We have lost the freshness, the newness of the day that God saved us. Unfortunately, we have gotten over the greatest day of our lives, and that is the day the Son of God, who the Bible says came to seek and to save that which was lost, came down.

Do you know why gossip is the biggest problem in churches today? Every church. The reason why people talk about other people and get caught up in the gossip is real simple. When you analyze it through the Bible, the reason why people gossip and talk about other people is because God is not doing anything in their life to talk about. So they have to talk about somebody else or something else. It is so simple. You young Christians who have just gotten saved in the last year or so, or maybe in the last couple of months, never lose that zeal that you have, that everybody sees the absolute change in your life.

I believe the problem today is there is no power of God in our life. We are not exalting the Lord Jesus Christ, and people are not drawn to that. A man said one time, "How do you build a church?" I remember this years ago, an old boy said to a young guy, he asked the question, "How do you build a church?" The old man simply said this: "If you want to build a church, you go into a town and get on fire for God, and then a whole town will come and watch you burn." There is some great wisdom in that.

I think one of the great examples in the Bible is back there in 2 Kings 12. We have talked about the great picture of the kings and what they represent. I think there is a man back there called Jehoash. When you go through the names in the Bible, Jehoash means "fire from Jehovah." When you study his life, he is a picture of so many of God's people today. He starts out on fire for God, starts out doing a lot of great things. Then something happens in his life, and finally, he winds up killing the priests and the sons of the priests and persecuting the men of God that he has put in his life. Finally, God has so much of it that God simply says, "You know what? I am going to change your name, and I am not going to call you Jehoash anymore, which means fire from Jehovah. I am going to take My name off your name and just call him Joash," which just means "fire." That is a great study and a great story because a lot of God's people start out on fire for God but wind up just being fire. The tragedy of that is taking that fire all the way to the end and at the judgment seat of Christ.

We go around and tell people what God will do for them. That is not witnessing. That is not witnessing at all. That is not witnessing when you go around telling other people what God will do for them. Real witnesses can tell other people what God has done for you. In a court of law, they will not allow secondhand witnesses. Secondhand witnesses are not permissible. Only firsthand witnesses. Yet in Bible Christianity, that is all we get all the time.

About nine or ten years, even longer than that, I was preaching at a Bible conference someplace, and the pastor's wife and I were talking, and she had some books with her. We started talking about the books that she had, and she laid out the fact that these books she was reading, and I looked at them and I thought, "Who are these people?" She says, "Oh, this is the greatest rage going on in Christianity today." I said, "What is that rage?" And she said, "This is called Christian fiction." They were writing books now about events, a man winning men and women to Christ and great things that they were doing that never really happened, and it became Christian fiction. Do you know why that was? It is because things are not happening in our lives today.

You go back to that bookstore back there, and you will find a book on Mary Slessor, Missionary to the Lepers. You will find a guy back there by the name of John Paton. His life reads like a Tarzan thriller. The men back then that were great men and women of God were doing things that were worth writing books about, and they inspired. I do not know, the diary of David Brainerd inspired some of the greatest preachers and the greatest missionaries. But today nothing is happening. So what do we do? We write Christian fiction. We are relegated to writing things that really did not happen. No, it is a changed life. That is what I think Zacchaeus saw firsthand through the lives of people.

## V. The Hypothetical Encounters: Zacchaeus' First Round

Now let me clarify something here. What I am going to say this morning and going to preach to you this morning, I cannot prove. I do not know if all the events happened the way I am going to present them. I certainly know they all happened because they are in the Bible. I do not know if they all involved Zacchaeus. But given his job and his close proximity to all these events, it certainly is a hypothetical situation for something happened that made him want to see Jesus so desperately that he was willing to make a fool out of himself to do it.

I told you earlier, now I am going to take a kid's story today and we are going to refashion it for your moms and dads and the adults that are here today. I have to tell you, we have had enough preaching and enough doctrine, we are just going to have a fun time today. I think of all the messages that I preach and all the years that I preach, this is my favorite message. I have preached this message for 35 plus years. It is a fun message, pure absolute fun. Some messages you have are hard to preach. You have to deal with issues or say things that you do not necessarily want to say, but they need to be said. Some messages give me a headache because I have to keep all this stuff in the right order and try to lay it out to you and figure out what I am doing, and it downright gives me a headache. But not this one. This is one simple little child's message, and yet the Bible says in Matthew chapter 18, verses 1 through 3, that when we come to Jesus, we are supposed to come as a little child.

*Matthew 18:1-3*

*1 At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?*

*2 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,*

*3 And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

So sit back today and relax and let me tell you a story of a man named Zacchaeus and what I think could have happened to make him want to see Jesus so desperately.

Now let me say, kids, this is where I need your help. As I start telling this story, I need some sound effects. So I want all the kids to get a hymnal. I see some of you are taking notes. That is so good. But I need to get a hymnal in the other hand because when we come down through here, we are going to try this out here so I know what we have. When I get to a point when I say, "and

he goes up and he knocks on the door," I want you to knock on the book like knocking on the door. (Knock on book) Yeah, there you go. Only loud. Okay, let's try it. Okay, I will just try it here. Zacchaeus comes up to the house and he knocks on the door. (Knock on book) Very good, very good. He did not knock that long. He just knocked a short time. That is good. For some of you who are really smarter than the average kid in this church, please do not go "ding-dong" because they did not have doorbells back then. Just trying to stay one step ahead of you. Now you did very good. Every time I tell the story and I say, "and Mr. Zacchaeus walked up and knocked on the door," you have to be smart now because it is going to come pretty fast here, so you have to stay with me. Okay, that is good.

Here we go. I want you to imagine with me, if you will, the road going down into Jericho. I want you to get an image in your mind of an old dusty cobblestone road. There is Mr. Zacchaeus, and he is going down to collect his taxes today. Now let's go along with him. He walks down those roads. He greets people as he goes, comes up to the first house and knocks on the door. (Knock on book) Very good. Very good.

As the door opens, a weeping woman comes to the door. Mr. Zacchaeus says, "Good morning, ma'am. It is tax time, and I am here to collect your taxes." The woman begins to tremble, begins to break down emotionally, and begins to weep. She says, "Oh, Mr. Zacchaeus, I know you have to collect my taxes. And I know you hear a lot of sad stories. But Mr. Zacchaeus, my son, my only son, died just the other day. We worked hard and tried to get enough money to keep our little selves together and have enough food and to pay for our little home and to pay our taxes. You know, Mr. Zacchaeus, I have always paid my taxes. But I do not know what happened. He just died the other day. And Mr. Zacchaeus, they are getting ready to bury him this very day, this afternoon. I want to pay my taxes, but I do not have any money."

Now Zacchaeus is a reasonable man who can certainly sympathize with a woman who has just lost her son. He says, "Well, ma'am, I am sorry for your loss. I will give you 30 days. I am really sorry for the tragedy, and I can see it has upset you very, very badly. Now I am going to give you 30 days, but I want you to know that I must collect your taxes."

He goes on his way. He goes down on the road, collects a few more taxes, goes to a few more homes, and comes to another home, and then he knocks on the door. (Knock on book) Very good. You guys have got that down.

A haggard-looking woman comes to the door. Pale, sickly-looking, very white, ashen complexion. She can hardly walk. Zacchaeus says, "Good afternoon, ma'am, I am here to collect your taxes." She says, "Oh, I know who you are, Mr. Zacchaeus, and I know you have to collect my taxes. And you know I have always been honest with you, and you have always been honest with me, and I have always paid my taxes. But Mr. Zacchaeus, I do not have any money. I want you to understand something. I am a very sick woman for many years, something in my blood. I have been to many doctors, and none of them can help me. I have spent all of my money trying to get healed. I am so weak. I cannot work. I cannot get a job. I want you to understand. I want to pay my taxes, but I just do not have any money."

Mr. Zacchaeus says, "Well, ma'am, I truly feel sorry for you. I really do, but you must understand. You must pay your taxes. I am a government official. I have bosses that I have to stay in good graces with. I can give you some time. You can find some friends or get a loan or borrow the money, but you must understand. You must pay your taxes." So on he goes.

A few more taxes, a few more homes. Then comes to another home. Knocks on the door. (Knock on book) Oh, very good.

A woman comes to the door. He says, "Hello, ma'am. I am Mr. Zacchaeus, and I am here to collect your taxes." The woman starts to tremble and begins to weep. She says, "Oh, Mr. Zacchaeus, I have always paid my taxes. My husband and I worked hard. We built this little home. We raised this little family. We have done the best we could, and I just do not have any money. And Mr. Zacchaeus, I am not just giving you a sad story. Look at my little kids. They do not have any shoes. They do not have any food. They do not have any clothes. We just do not have any money. You see, some time ago, my husband ran off. I do not know what happened. He went nuts. He came home one day, and he harmed our children. He brought shame to our family. He lost his job. And he has been gone now about a year. I do not know what to do. I cannot get a job. I have my children. Oh, Mr. Zacchaeus, can you help me? I need your help. I want to pay my taxes, but I just do not have the money."

Well, this is the third story that he has heard today. He is becoming a little calloused, yet he can understand. He says, "Now, ma'am, I am going to give you 30 days. I have given some others some time, but you must understand, this tax bill is not between me and you. I am a government official, and my job is to collect the taxes that you owe to the government. Now, you try to get the help you need. I do not know. I feel sorry for you, but this is not my problem. I am going to give you 30 days, and then I am going to be back to collect the taxes."

So he goes on down the road and collects a few more taxes. Finally, he comes to the last house on his ledger, and he knocks on the door. (Knock on book) You are going to have to order some new hymnals after this sermon.

He hears the tap, tap, tap of a cane as the man comes to the door, and this is the house of blind Bartimaeus. Not much of a house, just a little shack. Bartimaeus comes to the door. Mr. Zacchaeus says, "Bartimaeus, I know you are just a blind beggar, but I need to collect your tax money today, and it is tax day." Bartimaeus says, "Oh, Mr. Zacchaeus, I know what you have to do, and I know I need to pay my taxes. But I want you to know, I have had some real problems lately. You remember Mr. Jones that lived down the road here? Well, he used to pick me up on his way into work, and he used to take me down to the road that goes into Jericho, and there I would sit with my little tin cup, and people would come by, and they would put coins in my little cup, and I might get enough money to keep my body and soul together, to take care of my place and pay my taxes. But I do not know what happened. He has not been around for a while, for a couple of months, and I do not know where he is at. Some people said he moved away, or maybe he is sick, but I do not have anybody, Mr. Zacchaeus, to get me down to the road that goes into Jericho to beg. Oh, Mr. Zacchaeus, could you help me? Maybe with all the people that you know,

and all the inroads that you have in your position politically, you could get somebody to help me. I mean, I want to pay my taxes, but I just do not have any money."

Well, Mr. Zacchaeus, by this time, he is at the end of his patience. His patience today is gone. Four people, four different sad stories, and yet, he has not put on four taxes. Mr. Zacchaeus says, "Look, Bartimaeus, I do not care what you do. It is not my problem. Now, I have got to come back to collect some other taxes in 30 days, and I am going to give you a 30-day period of grace that you can get this money. But you better get the money, because you have to pay your taxes. I do not care if you are blind or not. There is nothing in the Roman law that says that you are handicapped does not mean you pay taxes. So you have got to do what you have got to do." Off he goes.

## VI. The Hypothetical Encounters: Zacchaeus' Second Round (Changed Lives)

Well, some time passes. Mr. Zacchaeus goes back to his little home, and he starts to work on his ledger, and 10 days pass. 20 days go by, and finally, the end of the month comes. 30 days have gone by. Old Zacchaeus looks at his books and says, "Now, I need to reconcile these tax records with the government." He heads out and starts to go out to collect those delinquent taxes.

He has got the first house on the list here. He goes down the road to collect those taxes, and he knocks on the door. (Knock on book) The door opens up, and a fine-looking woman, a fine-looking young man comes to the door. Mr. Zacchaeus says, "Hello, I am Mr. Zacchaeus, and I am here to collect the tax money." The boy says, "Well, sure, Mr. Zacchaeus, come right in, and I will go get my mother, and have a seat." The boy leaves to go get his mother. Old Zacchaeus says, "That woman lied to me. The last time I was here, she told me her only son was dead." But that time the woman comes in, she is smiling, and she is happy, and she says, "Well, Mr. Zacchaeus, I have got the money, and I am glad that you are here." She comes out, and how happy!

Mr. Zacchaeus says, "Wait a minute." He says, "The last time I was here, you told me your only son was dead. In fact, you told me they were burying him that day. Where did this son come from?" She smiles, and she says, "Well, Mr. Zacchaeus, did you not hear what happened? I thought the whole city had heard what happened that day." She says, "Mr. Zacchaeus, the day you were here, I thought I was going to die. My heart was so broken, I had lost my only son, and he is all I had in this world. And yes, that is true. That day, we were going down to bury him. My friends and my mourners were going on before me as that little funeral procession was going down to the road to a cemetery outside of Jericho. And as we went down that little road, there was a crowd of people coming, and there was a man named Jesus with them. Mr. Zacchaeus, He saw my plight. He saw my problem. And Mr. Zacchaeus, He commanded that funeral procession to stop. He walked over and put His hand on the casket, and He just spoke the words, 'Young man, arise.' And that casket flew open. My son came alive, and Jesus gave him back to me today. Amen. Amen. Amen."

Mr. Zacchaeus says, "I have heard a lot of excuses, and I paid your taxes." He says, "But that pretty much takes the cake." So he goes on down the road, comes to the next house, and knocks on the door. (Knock on book)

A fine, healthy woman comes to the door. The house is all immaculately clean, well kept. She looks strong and healthy, and downright beautiful. She says, "Hello, Mr. Zacchaeus. I have been expecting you. Have a seat. I will go get the money. I have got a job and do it just fine." She leaves and goes to get the money. Zacchaeus says, "I wonder what happened to her. Well, the last time I was here, she looked like death warmed over. I mean, she was absolutely a wreck. I mean, I do not know if the Avon lady has been around here or what, but man, I will tell you." She comes back in, and she gives him the money.

Old Zacchaeus says, "Ma'am, you know, I hate to ask you, but you know, the last time I was here, you looked terrible. I mean, I do not mean to say it bad, but I do not, how come you look so good today?" She says, "Well, Mr. Zacchaeus, I would just like to tell you about that. The day you were here, I was so weak, I thought I could not go on. Mr. Zacchaeus, I thought I was going to die. I could not make it. A friend of mine came over that day and said, 'You know, there is a man named Jesus around here. I think He can help you.' I said, 'Where is He at?' He said, 'He is in town.' Oh, Mr. Zacchaeus, I was so weak. I could hardly walk." She says, "I started to go down, and she said, Mr. Zacchaeus, I crawled the last distance into that city on my hands and my knees. I was so weak. I felt like water spilled out on the ground. And there He was, but there was a crowd all around Him, and I could not get close. I tried to stand up, and I tried to make my way in, and some man just knocked me down. People were stepping on me, and I could not get up. And I just looked around a man's leg, and I saw Him standing there. Oh, Mr. Zacchaeus, even His feet were beautiful. And for the last ounce of strength I had, I reached out and touched the hem of His garment, and I felt the strength come back into my body. And Jesus has made me whole today." She said, "The Son of God walked over and looked down, and He said, 'Daughter, thy faith has made me whole.'"

Mr. Zacchaeus was walking away. He said, "Now, I know that first lady lied to me, but this lady here, I saw the way she was. I saw the way she was before. I saw her actually how weak she was and how strong she is now." She said, "Oh, well, I have got the tax money. I guess that is all I need to worry about." So he goes on down the road, comes to the next house, and knocks on the door. (Knock on book)

A woman comes to the door smiling, happy, singing. You know, that is the way a Christian ought to be. You ought to live above the circumstances in life. That smiling woman comes to the door happy, and she comes down, "Oh, Mr. Zacchaeus, I see you are here to collect the tax money. Come on in. I will go get it. Oh, by the way, Mr. Zacchaeus, you have not met my husband, have you?"

Well, Zacchaeus was ready to head out the window. He had heard about this guy. Why, she herself said he was nuts. He had heard about the community. This guy just was not bipolar. He was North Polar, South Polar, and had the equator in the middle. The kids were afraid of him. The townspeople were afraid of him, and yet there was a fine-looking man sitting in the chair

saying this could be. All the children were around him and on his lap. They were not afraid. She introduced him as her husband. Zacchaeus said, "Well, I know this is none of my business, but is not he nuts?" She says, "Oh, Mr. Zacchaeus, do not worry about that. Did you not hear what happened? Well, let me tell you. No, no, no, wait. Now let my husband, honey, tell Mr. Zacchaeus what happened." You know, you give a real Christian a chance to testify, and he will take off on it.

He says, "Well, sure, sit down, Mr. Zacchaeus. Have I got a story to tell you?" Old Zacchaeus sat down in another amazement. He said, "Now, Mr. Zacchaeus, about a year ago, I do not know what happened. I guess the devil got a hold of me and took over my life. I came home one day. I beat my kids. I mistreated my wife. I shamed my family. I brought disgrace to our little community. And Mr. Zacchaeus, I just ran off into the country of the Gadarenes. I was living in a cemetery. Mr. Zacchaeus, I was living among the tombstones with dead people. People would come out to try to help me, and I would run out and take my clothes off and scare them. I would take sharp objects and cut my flesh that it would bleed. See, the scars are still here. I did not want to be with anybody. I did not want to see anybody. They would try to come out and bind me with chains. And I had some kind of superhuman strength that I would break those chains asunder. I did not want to see anybody. I did not want to be with anybody. My whole life was with dead people.

"Mr. Zacchaeus, then one day a little boat came into view, and some men got out. But Mr. Zacchaeus, one man was different than any man I had ever met in my life. His name was Jesus, Mr. Zacchaeus. Now, most people I would run down and try to scare them off. But this man was different. I ran down and I fell at His feet, and I worshipped Him. And He commanded the devil to come out of me, Mr. Zacchaeus, and legions of devils came out. But I was made whole. And I went up to Him. I said, 'Jesus, Jesus, I want to be with You. I want to follow You. I want to go everywhere You go. I want to be with You forever.' You know what He said, Mr. Zacchaeus? He says, 'No, son. I have got a job for you to do back home. I have got a job for you to go back home to your wife and your kids and your family and your neighbors and your town. And I want you to tell everybody what Jesus Christ has done for you.' And he says, Mr. Zacchaeus, that is what He has done. He made me sane. He gave me my wife back. He gave me my family back. I got my job back. I got everything. I got everybody what Jesus Christ has done for me."

You know what I think? I think about that time Mr. Zacchaeus wanted to give up tax collecting and go find Jesus. But he said, "I have got one more house to collect from to clear my tax record, and I am already down here on this side of the town. I will go down here and see if old blind Bartimaeus got his money." So he comes to the house and yes, he knocks on the door. (Knock on book)

Strange though, he does not hear the tap, tap, tap of the cane. The door opens up and there stands old Bartimaeus. He says, "Good morning, Mr. Zacchaeus. You are looking mighty fine today." He says, "You are a little bit shorter than I thought you were." He says, "Now Bartimaeus, quit fooling around. I know you are blind. I know you cannot see. You do not have the tax money. Now quit fooling around with me. You are not going to be a good man. You do not have the tax money. Now quit fooling around with me." Zacchaeus says, "Well, Mr. Zacchaeus, have you not

heard? I thought everybody around here heard what happened to me. Let me tell you what happened. I got a friend of mine to take me down to the road to Jericho after you were here to get my taxes and collect my money to pay you. And I was sitting down there on the road, and people were coming by and putting the little cups, money in my little tin cup, enough to get some money together to keep body and soul together. And I was sitting there and listening, and a crowd came down the road. And somebody said, 'Jesus is with them.'

"Oh, Mr. Zacchaeus, I had heard about Jesus. Somebody told me that He could unstop deaf ears and people could hear that were deaf. Somebody said that He took people who were lame and crippled and straightened their legs. Well, Mr. Zacchaeus, I even heard He raised dead people. And oh, Mr. Zacchaeus, I just knew that if He could do all that, He could open my blind eyes. So I sat there and I said, I waited until the crowd got close and I cried out, 'Jesus, thou Son of David!' People came by and told me to be quiet. But I cried out louder. And I said, 'Jesus, thou Son of David!' Mr. Zacchaeus, He stopped dead in His tracks. And He walked over to me and He said, 'Son, what do you want?' And I said, 'Oh dear Jesus, oh God, I might see.' And He said, 'Well, son, you can see. Just open your eyes.' Mr. Zacchaeus, He took the scales off my eyes and I opened my eyes and I saw, I saw the blue sky, I saw the little children, I saw the birds flying in the air. But oh, Mr. Zacchaeus, the first thing I saw was the face of Jesus." Ha, ha, ha.

## VII. The Power of Firsthand Testimony

Let me tell you something. Zacchaeus says, "That is it. I have got to see Him." That is it. Zacchaeus says, "Bartimaeus, where is He at?" Bartimaeus said, "He is in town but you better hurry. There is always a crowd where He is at." Oh, Zacchaeus ran down that road and into town and there He was. But the Bible says that he could not get close because of the crowd. And the Bible says that he was small of stature.

You know, some people when they have obstacles like that to get to Jesus in their life, they get so discouraged so easily. They get up and quit so quickly. But not Zacchaeus. No, no, no, no. Not after the firsthand testimonies that he had heard. Not after the changed lives that he had seen. He says, "I have got to see Him." Why, he scurried up that tree like a 10-year-old child. He hung like a monkey by his tail as he looked down there and Jesus came by.

Let me tell you something. The greatest testimony of this church, the greatest testimony that you can have as a child of God, is the power of God to reach out and touch people by what God is doing in your life today. Not last year, not a week ago, what God right now is doing in your life. I believe that the lack of miracles, the lack of the power of God in our lives, is what repels people. We have a Bible in one hand and a bottle of beer in the other. We try to spread both sides of the fence. Walk down the middle of the highway. Nobody is willing to take a stand.

Zacchaeus is a great picture. Because after the lives changed that he had seen and the firsthand testimonies that he heard, he says, "I have got to see Him." He climbed up that sycamore tree like a little kid. And oh, how surprised he was when Jesus looked up and knew his name. You know something today, folks? God knows your name this morning. He knows your name this morning.

My Bible says in John chapter 3, verse 16:

*John 3:16*

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

He died on that cross for you. Just like Zacchaeus, who had everything in life, he was rich. He had everything that he wanted, everything that he could possibly imagine, except the number one ingredient that fulfilled his life. And that was the Lord Jesus Christ. He went out his day that day just like any other day. And yet God had put in his life the changed lives of people who had experienced the power of God firsthand that were so excited about what God did that they could not keep from telling him.

## VIII. The Call to Salvation

I am telling you this morning, the Bible says God is not willing that any should perish. The Bible says in the last great verse in chapter 19, verse 10:

*Luke 19:10*

*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

That is you and me. Sitting here this morning, if you believe the testimony of a widowed mother who lost her son and then gets him back. Do you know what that is a picture of? That is a picture of an unsaved man. Dead people in the Bible are a picture of unsaved people. Because if you are here this morning and you are not saved, you are dead in trespasses of sin. You are just as dead as any person in that cemetery, only you are dead spiritually. You have no power with God. You have no ability to reason with God. You have nothing with God. It says:

*John 8:44*

*Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.*

But if you believe the testimony of a widowed mother who lost her son and he was dead and Jesus touched him and brought him back, God will save you this morning. If you believe in a dying woman who was healed, a picture of something wrong with her blood, the flesh that you and I have that kills us and the blood poisoning that we have because the life of the flesh is in the blood. If you believe the story of a dying woman who had an issue of blood, who God healed, God will save you this morning.

If you believe the story of a bipolar maniac who lost his family, who lost everything he had, who was demon possessed and goes all through life. And if you believe that a picture of losing your mind to this world, that God has the power to heal that, put your family back together, put your life back together, give you your wife again and make that thing glorious to God, God will save you this morning.

If you believe the story of an old blind man named Bartimaeus who received his eyesight, a picture of spiritual blindness, we sing the song "Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I am found, was blind but now I see." God will save you this morning. You see, if you believe those firsthand testimonies and how that God changed the lives of men and women who God has put into their lives, God will save you this morning.

Every head bowed and every eye closed.