

## What's Blocking Your View?

Luke 19:1-10

### Introduction

**Heroes:** Who are your heroes? Love Star Wars! 6-year-old Jackson got to meet Kylo Ren at Disney World. Maybe he knew it was an actor, but it looked and sounded like the real guy. The actor stays in character, and it's pretty terrifying. It seemed like a good idea to meet him until we were standing there.

- There's a popular cliché that says *never meet your heroes*. We build them up to be something they're not. "When I was 9, I messaged Ariana Grande on Facebook and she called me stupid."
- We see them as superheroes in movies, but they're not in real life (ask Jeremy Renner). E.g., illusion of authenticity in podcasts, but they know it's a recording; IG isn't real life (watch someone craft a selfie; Photoshop fails; pole is bent).
- "The people who know me the best are the least impressed with me" (youth pastor vs. camp pastor joke).
- *In today's story, we see a man who heard about Jesus and wanted to see him.*

**Jesus is the only hero who won't disappoint.** "The people who knew Jesus best were the first to worship him."

- "He is all he said he would be." "He is tenderness without weakness, strength without harshness, humility without lack of confidence, authority without self-absorption, power without insensitivity, enthusiasm without fanaticism, holiness without Pharisaism, passion without prejudice. Nothing he does falls short. In fact, he's always surprising you and taking your breath away because he's so incomparably better than you could imagine yourself" (Tim Keller).
- Eternity will not reveal a defect in Christ (he won't slip up). As time passes, his beauty and glory will shine brighter and brighter, and we will grow in our amazement and love of him.

Today, we see the story of a man whose life was completely transformed by an encounter with Jesus.

<sup>1</sup> He entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. <sup>3</sup> And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. <sup>4</sup> So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. <sup>5</sup> And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." <sup>6</sup> So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. <sup>7</sup> And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." <sup>8</sup> And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." <sup>9</sup> And Jesus

said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”<sup>1</sup>

**Popular Preacher:** <sup>1</sup> He (Jesus) entered Jericho and was passing through.

- Jesus wasn’t just strolling through Jericho unnoticed; he was a **popular preacher** at the height of his **public ministry**. Crowds pressed in to hear him because his teaching carried an **authority** they’d never heard before, and his **miracles** changed lives right in front of their eyes. Jesus was a big deal!
- But here’s the problem: most people wanted the **spectacle** without the **surrender**. They were **curious** but not **committed**. They wanted a **show**, not a **Savior**. That’s why the same crowds that shouted “Hosanna!” on Palm Sunday were nowhere to be found at the cross. The call of transformation requires you to “take up their cross and follow Jesus.”
- To turn from your sin and trust Jesus.

**Zacchaeus:** <sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. <sup>3</sup> And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature.

- We don’t really know why Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus. **Curious? Serious? Entertainment? Repentance?** It doesn’t really matter because he met Jesus.
- **Who cares why he came?** I just care **that** he came and **how** he responded. **I don’t know why you came, but I’m glad you’re here and hope you see Jesus and respond accordingly.**
  - (1) Rich, (2) Short, (3) Despised
- **(1) Rich** was rich Jericho is the wealthy part of Israel. All the bougie wealth is there.
  - Tax collectors are notoriously wealthy. Tax collectors in the rich part of town are going to be even more wealthy. If you get a %, then the more money people make, the more you make (Tiger Woods' caddy made more than \$1 million/year; teachers in wealthy school districts).
  - He’s the *chief* tax collector. If you’re the chief tax collector in the Beverly Hills of Israel, you are rich, rich (millionaire vs. billionaire in seconds, 12 days vs 31 years; go to space instead of solving world hunger?!).
- **(2) Short** he could not, because he was small in stature Famously, a “wee little man.” The original short king.
  - I am not vertically blessed, but we have to think this guy is probably less than 5’ tall. I scored -1 points in two years of JJV basketball (true story), and I’d still block this dude’s shot like Dikembe Mutumbo.
  - He’s *rich*, rich and *short*, short.

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> Καὶ εἰσελθὼν διήρχετο τὴν Ἱεριχώ. <sup>2</sup> καὶ ἰδοὺ ἀνὴρ ὀνόματι καλούμενος Ζακχαῖος, καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν ἀρχιτελώνης καὶ αὐτὸς πλούσιος. <sup>3</sup> καὶ ἐζήτηε ἰδεῖν τὸν Ἰησοῦν τίς ἐστίν καὶ οὐκ ἠδύνατο ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄχλου, ὅτι τῆ ἡλικία μικρὸς ἦν. <sup>4</sup> καὶ προδραμῶν εἰς τὸ ἔμπροσθεν ἀνέβη ἐπὶ συκομορέαν ἵνα ἴδῃ αὐτὸν ὅτι ἐκείνης ἡμελλεν διέρχεσθαι. <sup>5</sup> καὶ ὡς ἦλθεν ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον, ἀναβλέψας ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτόν, Ζακχαῖε, σπεύσας κατέβηθι, σήμερον γὰρ ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ σου δεῖ με μένειν. <sup>6</sup> καὶ σπεύσας κατέβη καὶ ὑπεδέξατο αὐτὸν χαίρων. <sup>7</sup> καὶ ἰδόντες πάντες διεγόγγυζον λέγοντες ὅτι Παρὰ ἀμαρτωλῶ ἀνδρὶ εἰσῆλθεν καταλύσαι. <sup>8</sup> σταθεὶς δὲ Ζακχαῖος εἶπεν πρὸς τὸν κύριον, Ἰδοὺ τὰ ἡμίσιά μου τῶν ὑπαρχόντων, κύριε, τοῖς πτωχοῖς διδῶμι, καὶ εἴ τινός τι ἐσυκοφάνησα ἀποδίδωμι τετραπλοῦν. <sup>9</sup> εἶπεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι Σήμερον σωτηρία τῷ οἴκῳ τούτῳ ἐγένετο, καθότι καὶ αὐτὸς υἱὸς Ἀβραάμ ἐστίν. <sup>10</sup> ἦλθεν γὰρ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ζητῆσαι καὶ σῶσαι τὸ ἀπολωλός.

- **(3) Despised** chief tax collector Tax collectors were *hated* in ancient Israel.
  - Nobody likes to pay taxes (some of you got your first jobs and you look at that paycheck and wonder who FICA is and why they're robbing you; "Nothing is certain except death and taxes," but Congress doesn't meet every year to make death worse).
  - However, tax collectors in Israel weren't just obnoxious; they were **corrupt traitors**. They were collecting taxes for the **Roman Government** (i.e., foreign occupiers) from their own countrymen.
  - They were using their **insider knowledge** of who had money and where they kept it to pay off the evil empire occupying their land.
  - They were using **Roman muscle** to enforce their extortion.
  - They were famously taking more than they were supposed to take to **pad their own pockets!**
  - Ancient Rabbis said, despite one of the Top Ten rules being (essentially), don't lie, it was ethical and permissible to lie to tax collectors (also said you could lie to cats; this speaks to me because cats are evil; they would kill you if they were bigger).
  - Calling someone a "tax collector" was synonymous with calling them the worst sinner imaginable. I.e., "Tax collectors and prostitutes" (Matt 21:31, 32); "Gentile and tax collector" (Matt 18:17); "Tax collectors and sinners" (Matt 9:10, 11; 11:19).
- **He's rich enough to afford a front-row seat, but hated too much for the crowd to let him.**

**See Jesus:** Zacchaeus is trying to "see Jesus."

- Looking is not the same thing as *seeing*. Just like hearing is not the same thing as listening.
- Scripture says, that apart from God's work, people have eyes but do not see, ears but do not hear.<sup>2</sup> I can't hear the baby cry (come to my side of the bed). **It's not that I don't listen, I don't hear.**
- You can look right at Jesus and still miss him.
  - How many people hear the gospel and miss salvation?
  - How many people read the Bible and remain apathetic?
- We need God to give us faith-filled sight that leads to true life. We need God to open our eyes to see Jesus as he really is, not just as we want him to be.<sup>3</sup>
  - Can you see Jesus for who he really is (not just what you want him to be)?
  - Can you hear what he's really saying (not just what you want to hear)?
- **The crowd saw Jesus pass by, but Zacchaeus saw Jesus for who he really was. And the craziest part?** The least likely man in Jericho is the one who receives salvation. **How?** As one of my favorite pastors said, **he climbed the tree, got over the crowd, and took Jesus home.**<sup>4</sup> How do you get that salvation?
  - **(1) Climb the Tree**

<sup>2</sup> Ps 115:5, Matt 13:13

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Bronze serpent (look and live) in Num 21:8-9

<sup>4</sup> HT Tim Keller

- (2) *Get Over the Crowd*
- (3) *Take Jesus Home*

**1. Climb the Tree** <sup>4</sup> So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way.

**Practical Barrier (Height):** The most obvious and practical barrier is height. He can't pretend he's tall enough to see Jesus.

- He's not tall enough (can't make himself taller). E.g., There is actually a leg lengthening operation (i.e., break bone, insert rod, let it heal). Not worth it, then you look like a T-rex.
- No shame, he is as tall as he is (like making fun of me for being bald; cf. Elisha bears, 2 Kgs 2).
- Why are we bothered when someone mocks our height? Can't help it. **Zaccheus must accept the reality of his limitations.**
- Many of us struggle to acknowledge the reality of our situation. If you can't be honest with yourself about your shortcomings (e.g., true self, false self), then you'll never experience the grace of God in those places.
- Two things you need to change (1) God (power), and (2) honesty. You can't change what you won't admit.

**Bigger Barrier (Pride):** It's really *pride* that would stop Zacchaeus from seeing Jesus.

- He had to admit he was short and he had to **climb the tree** (embarrassing him in front of everybody).
- Climbing trees is something that children do (not rich guys). Which is why we are told to come to Jesus like a child. It's a very **undignified** activity (hike up your tunic). Grease poles in Philly (no one is thinking, Fortune 500 CEO).
- You cannot have Jesus until you're willing to do whatever it takes to have him, including looking silly (i.e., boy missed out on swimming because of the fear that people would find out he's not a good swimmer at camp).
- In **2 Kings 5**, there's a story of a Hebrew slave girl and a powerful and important Syrian army general, **Naaman**. He contracted leprosy and, in his distress, was looking for a cure. Here's how *The Jesus Storybook Bible* paints the scene and summarizes the story: The little slave girl who worked for Naaman told him of a prophet in Israel named Elisha who could heal him. Naaman loaded up his wagons, put on his armor, took a lot of money, and went to the *King* of Israel demanding, "My healing, please!" The Israelite king fearfully replied, "I can do lots of things, but only God can heal." Meanwhile, the prophet Elisha knew what was happening and sent word to the king, telling him to send Naaman to him. So Naaman hurried off to Elisha's house. But Elisha didn't even come out and greet him, he just sent out a servant. "Doesn't Elisha realize who I am?," Naaman thought. But what the servant said next made him even more angry. "Wash in there!" he said. "Just wash?" Naaman laughed, "In that slimy, stinky river?" Was this some kind of joke? It wasn't. "Any person can wash in a river!" he thought. "I am Naaman. I am important. I should do something important so God will heal me!" And he rode off in a rage (of course, you and I both know, that's not how God does things; **all**

**Naaman needed was nothing, it was the one thing Naaman didn't have).** God knew that Naaman was even sicker on the inside than he was on the outside. Naaman was proud. He thought he didn't need God.

- Jesus did not come for the healthy, but the sick. Jesus is not available to the powerful but to the weak. “Jesus loves all the wrong people. People who can offer him nothing. People who cannot love him the way he loves them” (Jared Wilson).
- Jesus doesn't need you to get your act together and figure it all out before you come to him, in fact, in your weakness he is calling you to **abandon all pretense of self-righteousness and self-sufficiency and depend completely on him.**

Zacchaeus had to get past whatever image he was trying to protect. He couldn't worry that people would see him looking foolish. Climbing the tree meant getting over himself, admitting his inadequacy and inability. A lot of following Jesus is getting over yourself. And once you get over yourself, you can get over the crowd.

**2. Get Over the Crowd** <sup>7</sup> And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.”

**Hypocrites:** What is blocking Zacchaeus? The crowd (<sup>3</sup> And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not). *They thought he didn't deserve to see Jesus.*

- Ironical that they wouldn't let through the person they all would agree needed God the most. They saw Zacchaeus as a sinner **who didn't deserve Jesus.**
- They are self-righteous (their “sin” don't stink, as it were).
- The gospel is not meant to be gatekept. We are trying to invite as many people in as possible, not keep as many people out.
- There's not a limited supply of grace.
  - *In thinking themselves righteous, they prove their unrighteousness.*
- No one is righteous. The only difference is whether you will deny your sin (like many of the religious hypocrites) or admit it (like Zacchaeus and many other “sinners” in the gospels). “The people we will most marvel to see in heaven, I suspect, will be ourselves” (Wilson).
  - If the gospel is to flourish, we must be a community of honesty, not hypocrisy. We have to be good at confessing and bad at faking.
  - We should not be surprised by our own sin, nor the sins of others.
  - We don't need to be good at *looking* like a Christian. Looking good isn't the same as being good, and part of being good is being honest about our bad!
  - We should be the kind of community that freely admits our sin and quickly extends the grace of Jesus, rather than pretending we have it all together.

**Sorry for the Church:** If you get mad at self-righteousness, good! So does Jesus!

- This sort of self-righteous hypocrisy could have been enough to cause Zacchaeus to turn around and go home.
- I see this often in churches. We see pastors who fail, or “Christians” who are not much like Christ, and we let that keep us from Christ and his body.

- If you go do karaoke and someone does a horrible version of “I Want it That Way”, you don’t blame The Backstreet Boys.<sup>5</sup>
- If someone is a horrible representation of Christ, we don’t blame Jesus, and we don’t use it as an excuse to opt out of his church or his mission. *We can get over the crowd without losing sight of Christ!*
- **If you’re going to find Jesus, and serve Jesus, and love Jesus, then you have to keep your eyes on Jesus and not on anyone else.**
  - You not only have to climb the tree to get over yourself, but you also have to get over the opinions, the approval, and the shortcomings of others.

But looking at Jesus from the crowd is not the same thing as welcoming him through the front door. The gospel has not transformed you until you take Jesus home.

**3. Take Jesus Home** <sup>5</sup> And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” <sup>6</sup> So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully.

**He Chooses Us:** Jesus invites *himself* to Zacchaeus' house.

- In a shocking turn of events, Jesus sees Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus went looking for Jesus, and lo and behold, Jesus found Zacchaeus.
  - Jesus sees you. You might be ignored in every room and group you’re in. But Jesus sees you through the crowd.
- **The story of Zacchaeus is not just a lesson on how people find Jesus, but more importantly, a reminder that Jesus finds us** (i.e., left the 99 for the 1, seeks and saves the lost). Jesus chose you.<sup>6</sup>

**Welcome with Joy:** Zacchaeus responded to Jesus’ invitation with joy. He didn’t go clean his house up first by hiding the junk in the junk drawer (or closet); he welcomed Jesus immediately to his house.

- Jesus came to **stay** at his house. He went to live with Zacchaeus. He participated in his life.
- He saw how Zacchaeus acted not just in public but in his house (e.g., son the student of the month, why not at home; at home, we see the unfiltered, real you). There’s nowhere to hide. When you live with someone, there is no part of their life that is hidden from you.
- Many want Jesus in their church life, or social media life, or public life, but the hidden and private areas of their hearts remain off-limits.
- When Jesus comes into your life, every nook and cranny is affected by his presence. **He changes everything!** E.g., who you date, what you desire, how you spend your time, how you treat your friends, work, school, sports, entertainment, and money!

**Transformation:**

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<sup>5</sup> “I Will Always Love You,” Whitney Housto.,,n

<sup>6</sup> Jn 15:16

- One of the things I notice (to my joy and my frustration) is that my kids act like me. They say things I say (some I wish they wouldn't repeat). My daughter prays with her dolls like we pray with her. They imitate. We imitate! We reflect, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, what we see in others.
  - Many in school are doing their best to fit in with everyone around them. Just watch how there's an **unofficial uniform**.
- At the core of our beings, we are imaging creatures. We either reflect Jesus or something else.
  - That is why it is essential that Jesus becomes integral to every part of your life.
  - When I implore you to read your Bible, share your faith, gather with your church, worship your Savior, it is not because I want to impose obligations for you to be a better Christian. **These are invitations, not obligations.** These are invitations to commune with, learn from, see clearly, and become like Christ!
- As Zacchaeus dines with, lives with, and sees Jesus, he starts to act like Christ, rather than the person he had been for most of his adult life. He becomes what he beholds.
- Zacchaeus was a man removed from others due to his physical condition and personal decisions. Jesus initiated a relationship with him, and when Jesus came into his life, everything changed.

**Order of Grace:** There's an order of grace, a path of transformation. The presence of Jesus in Zacchaeus' life is the dynamic that produces change. **It's not Zacchaeus' behavior that's changed; it's Zacchaeus that's changed.**

- Zacchaeus knows what he is supposed to do; the gospel changes his heart, so he wants to do it.
- The commands of Scripture are like **railroad tracks**, pointing us in the right direction but powerless to move the train; the gospel is the power that moves the train down the tracks.
- Scripture commands us to act like Christ and reveals we are unwilling and unable; the gospel transforms us to be like him so we obey his commands from our heart

**Evidence of Transformation:** <sup>8</sup> And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold."

- The man who robbed so many is now compelled to give his wealth away (*not as a prerequisite to salvation but a sign of salvation*). *His restitution is extravagant.*
  - The command of Scripture says to give away a % of your wealth (maybe 10%), Zacchaeus gives away 50%!<sup>7</sup>
  - The OT commands repayment of a debt plus 20%. He repays his transgression plus 400%. Extravagant restoration.<sup>8</sup>
- The gospel works toward joyful justice. The people Zacchaeus wronged (sinned against) and Zacchaeus (sinner) receive the grace and blessings of transformation.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Lev 27:30, Num 18:21, Deut 14:28-29, Deut 26:12

<sup>8</sup> Lev 6:5, Num 5:7

**Salvation as Sons** <sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

- The worst of sinners, an outsider to polite Jewish society (considered a Gentile), is now welcomed into the family of God as a **son**.
- Rather than ignoring, running from, or fighting against Jesus’ rule and reign in your life, he offers you and me the gracious opportunity to be welcomed, loved, and adopted into God’s family. You do not get into the family of God by birth, only by rebirth through saving faith in Jesus.
- “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, **he gave the right to become children of God**, who were **born, not of blood** nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, **but of God**” (Jn 1:12-13). “He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will” (Eph 1:5).
- My **adopted sons** (Joshua, Adam) have all the rights and affection of my biological children (Jackson, Abigail). In spiritual adoption, the moment undeserving sinners are adopted by their heavenly Father as His children, their entire status is eternally changed, and they receive all the rights and affection of Jesus, the son of God.

## Conclusion

**Have Everything:** Zacchaeus had it all and realized he didn’t have the only thing that mattered, the love of the Savior who made him.

- The only thing to reveal the emptiness of money in Zacchaeus’ life was the glory and love of Jesus. **How do you break the spell of sin in your heart?** You see the value of Christ (e.g., bride/groom not eating at a wedding reception because the joy of the moment is greater than food).
  - “If you can’t see the sun, you will be impressed with a street light. If you’ve never felt thunder and lightning, you’ll be impressed with fireworks. And if you turn your back on the greatness and majesty of God, you’ll fall in love with a world of shadows and short-lived pleasures” (Piper).
- You have a Savior who loves you when nobody else will. The problem is not that your sinful desires are too strong; it’s that your desire and joy in Christ is too weak.
  - When you **taste and see that the Lord is good,**<sup>9</sup> sin loses its flavor. **The things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.**

## Invitation

- (1) If you want the joy and love that Zacchaeus has in Christ, you have to **climb the tree**, get over yourself, and admit your sin. Admit your need.
- (2) **You have to get past the crowd.** Get over what other people think. Stop worrying about how others act or behave.
- (3) **Then you have to take it home.** Surrender every part of your life to Jesus.

Who would say?

- “I’m tired of trying to do it on my own.”

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<sup>9</sup> Ps 34:8

- “I’m tired of caring what people think.”
- “I’m tired of not measuring up to the world.”
- “I’m tired of holding back my life from Christ.”
  - I’m ready to get over myself, get over everyone else, and invite Jesus to transform every part of my life.

He came to seek and save you and to come into every part of your life. What is blocking your view of Jesus? Get it out of the way. Jesus sees you in that tree and is inviting himself into your life. Will you joyfully receive him?