

LUKE 19

JESUS VISITS ZACCHAEUS' HOME

Jesus “entered and was passing through Jericho,” a city that was famous for both faith and unbelief – the latter to be shown by multitudes, and the former by one man named Zacchaeus (verses 1-10). This name means “holiness,” but it was a poor designation of the man! Those who knew him best called him a “sinner,” and they very likely had good reason for doing so; for “he was a chief publican, and he was rich.” Theoretically, a man might be a publican and be honest; but if that was the case, he would probably be poor. Zacchaeus’ occupation was that of a tax-gatherer; and when we remember that these officials made their wealth by extortion and dishonesty, it was certainly very suspicious when a tax-gatherer was rich. Nevertheless, Zacchaeus “sought to see Jesus who he was.” It may have been mere curiosity, but there was a certain eagerness in his desire. It is very possible that he had heard of this Man Who was so kind in His treatment of publicans and sinners. However, he could not see Jesus “for the crowd, because he was little of stature.” Obstacles often arise in the way of those whose attention is turned toward Christ. However, if they are earnest in their desires, they are certain to learn more of Him. The earnestness of Zacchaeus was shown as “he ran on before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him.” There was something undignified in the action of this little man of wealth, but his eagerness received an unexpected reward; for “when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house!” This is the only time, as far as we know, that Jesus invited Himself to be a guest; but we are certain that He is always ready to abide with those whose hearts are open to receive Him.

It has been said that Zacchaeus was already converted before he had even reached the ground. There can be no doubt that a great change came into his heart as he realized how fully Jesus knew him, and as he anticipated what the Savior could do for him; and his faith and hope were manifest at once – for “he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully.” But what did the crowd say as they beheld all this? Exactly what the world always says when a person is turning to Christ and seeking to begin a new life! Men always call to mind the dark past from which the rescued man is turning. “They all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner.” And what did Zacchaeus say? He said the same thing that every person says, who has found the grace which Jesus bestows, and who realizes that a new life can only begin with repentance and resolution. “Behold, Lord,” said he, “the half of my goods I give to the

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ *Jesus visits Zacchaeus’ house and brings salvation there – verses 1-10*
- ❖ *The parable of the nobleman and his servants – verses 11-27*
- ❖ *The Savior’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem – verses 28-40*
- ❖ *Christ’s lament over Jerusalem – verses 41-48*

poor.” Thus he determined, as a Christian, to do far more than was required by the Jewish law; for that law required a tenth, but Zacchaeus promised that half of all his income would be used in the service of the Lord! “And if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man,” he continued, “I restore fourfold.” There can be little doubt that any publican would find large opportunities for such restoration, and nothing more surely indicates true repentance than the desire to make amends for the past.

What did Jesus say? This is most important of all! “Today is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.” By his faith, the publican of Jericho showed himself to be a true spiritual son of Abraham – the “father of the faithful.” His trust in Christ secured for him that salvation which is offered to all – even to the lowest, the most hopeless, and the despised; “for the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost!”

Jesus felt it necessary to deliver the parable of the nobleman entrusting money to his servants (verses 11-27) because of the mistaken belief among the crowds that upon His arrival in Jerusalem, He would establish an earthly Kingdom. He knew very well that He was to be rejected and crucified, and that a long interval of time would elapse before His second return in triumph. In this parable, He clearly predicted this rejection, and He warned the unbelieving Jews of their peril. On the other hand, He encouraged his disciples to wait patiently for His second coming, to watch for His return, and to be engaged diligently in His service – promising abundant and gracious rewards to those who are faithful.

This parable should be studied in connection with the parables of the unprofitable servant (chapter 17:7-10), the laborers in the vineyard, (Matt. 20:1-16), and the talents (Matt. 25:14-30). The first teaches that no reward can be claimed as a matter of merit; for in light of all that the Master has given us – even pouring out His life for our redemption – we could never begin, even by the most faithful service, to pay the debt we owe. Even the most loyal devotion would be no grounds for claiming a reward. The parable of the laborers in the vineyard likewise warns us against a mercenary spirit, in which we might attempt to serve the Master for the sake of a reward – bargaining for so much labor for so much pay; and being jealous of those who may receive as much as ourselves, even though we believe that they deserve less. However, while no reward may be deserved, and while the hope of reward should not be the motive for service; the Master has assured us that, in absolute grace and with perfect justice, rewards will be granted to those who are found faithful when He returns.

The parable of the talents teaches us that while opportunities and abilities for the service of Christ may differ, those who are equally faithful will receive equal rewards. And here, the parable of the nobleman’s pounds (that is, a unit of money) tells us that when opportunities are the same, greater faithfulness will

receive greater reward. This latter parable was delivered, as Luke tells us, because Jesus “was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear.” The Savior, therefore, compared Himself with a nobleman who went into a far country, “to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.” He was always indicating the fact that there would be a long delay after His Ascension, before He would return; and that meanwhile, His followers should be faithful to the opportunities granted them for serving their Master. In this parable, Jesus pictured these opportunities under the figure of pounds – that is, certain sums of money. And when the nobleman returned, the reward of his servants was in proportion to the degree of faithfulness that was exercised by each of them during the time of his absence. For example, one who had used his pound in such a manner as to gain ten pounds was made the ruler over ten cities, and one who had gained five was appointed over five cities. Faithfulness in that which is very small is a preparation for larger responsibilities and more glorious tasks. This is true in the present, and the principle will be the same in the future as well.



One man was found, however, who had made absolutely no use of his pound. He had kept it “laid up in a napkin.” His excuse was that he feared his master; and he said, almost boastfully, that he had not lost what had been entrusted to him. He was giving back that which he had been given. The nobleman, however, properly rebuked this unfaithful servant in the very terms which he himself had used. If the master was known to be so strict, the servant should have been prepared to give a better account of his stewardship. It is true that one cause for unfaithfulness in Christ’s service is an ignorance of the true nature of our Lord. Some are really afraid to undertake Christian service because they do not know something that this parable could not indicate – namely, that He who entrusts us with opportunities and abilities will also give us grace to make use of the little which we have, if we seek to do our best with a real desire to advance the interests of our Lord. Thus the nobleman rebuked the unfaithful servant for not having done the least which was possible. He could have placed the money in the bank; and then, if nothing else, the master could have at least received the interest on the loan. There is always something which every servant of Christ can do for Him. There is never any real excuse for idleness, inactivity, and failure to achieve something for the cause of the Savior.

The parable closes with a solemn warning to those who reject Christ. It is not only perilous to be unfaithful in His service, but it is also pitiful to be found

among the number of those who refuse to acknowledge Him as Lord. In these last words, Jesus not only describes the destruction of Jerusalem; but also the penalty of all who share in rejecting His rule.

The narratives in Luke's Gospel never lack in human interest; but no scene is more suffused with sentiment, or more vivid with color, than that which pictures Jesus entering Jerusalem in triumph! (verses 29-48) We see our Lord mounted as a King, surrounded by acclaiming multitudes, and sweeping over the brow of Olivet; while His attending disciples spread their garments in the street, and hail Him as the Messiah. We also see Him lamenting over the doomed city, and we hear the harsh tones of the rulers who are plotting His death. With all these shouts of joy and sobs of grief and mutterings of malice, surely no scene is so full of emotion; and none can illustrate more strikingly the relationship between religious feeling and religious faith.

However, religious feeling is not to be confused with religious faith, for emotion is no substitute for conviction. Jesus was not deceived. As He caught sight of the sacred city, and as He heard the bitter criticism of the Pharisees; He was well aware of the stubborn unbelief which He was about to encounter. He saw his rejection and death, and the consequent destruction of Jerusalem; and He pronounced His sorrowful lament: "If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace!" He predicted the ghastly horrors of the coming siege, and the desolation of Zion; and He declared that they were all due to the people's refusal to see that He had come as the Messiah and the Savior, and that His ministry had been a gracious visitation which had the potential to result in repentance and continued life for the nation. His words are a sad, sad lament for what might have been.

After His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus went into the Temple and rebuked the rulers for allowing the house of God to be desecrated by all the commerce that was going on there. As the chapter closes, we see Jesus standing in the center of the scene – with the rulers plotting against His life, on the one hand; and the multitudes hanging admiringly upon His words, on the other. Within just a few short days, the rulers would be persuading the crowds to cry out for His crucifixion; and thus we are reminded that religious feeling, when it is unaccompanied by real conviction, may soon be chilled into indifference and hate. However, there were some persons – like the disciples – who never forgot this scene of triumph. Its fuller meaning was appreciated in later years; and as their trust in Christ strengthened, they looked back with ever-deeper emotions upon the experiences of that memorable day – for it is true that faith will indeed produce a sense of religious feeling that is lasting.

Lord Jesus, we pray for grace to lift up our voices in giving glory to You, so that we may prevent the necessity of the stones crying out in praise to You. Give us strength to break forth into sacred song, and to bless the majesty of the Most High – spending all our days glorifying You, our Shepherd and Cornerstone! Amen.