

INTRO: The God of the Bible is a saving God. He rescues people from their sins. The whole concept of sin is considered passé today, but our consciences will not cooperate with our social agenda. We cannot unburden ourselves from the weight of guilt and the fear of judgment that comes with disobedience to God's moral law. The fabric of our universe is inescapably moral. We cannot escape the reality of right and wrong. Our innate sense of moral outrage at international war crimes, at gross abuses of human rights, and especially at offenses committed against ourselves, betrays and negates our sophisticated relativism. Sin doesn't matter...until it's committed against us. Then it's a big deal, and we cry out for a penalty to be paid by the offender. But if sin is real, and there is a real moral law, then there is a moral law-giver...and what about His rights? Doesn't He have the ultimate right to seek justice against those who offend Him? After all, it's His law we've broken. And if so, how can we be saved from His justice? Are there some people who are impossible to save? Is it easier for some people to be saved than for others? And if so, is there anything I can do to make it more likely that God might save me from the penalty of my own disobedience to Him?

Please turn with me in your Bibles if you will to Luke 18:9-19:10. The central question of our text this morning is "who can be saved?" But we see some surprising answers. The dishonest tax collector goes away justified, rather than the squeaky-clean Pharisee. Obscure children are welcomed into God's kingdom, while rich people find it hard to enter. A blind beggar is saved, even though Jesus' own disciples rebuke him for bothering Jesus. And Zacchaeus is saved even though everyone complains that Jesus goes and eats with him. All the way through, the people who think they should be saved are not, and the people who think they cannot be saved are. The essential answer to "who can be saved" is, only those who trust in the mercy of God in Christ and repent of both their sin and their self-righteousness. And this in turn is impossible except for the power of God. The whole passage is an illustrative collage of the gospel and the necessary response to it, and right in the middle of it all, Jesus foretells his saving death in vv.31-34. **Who can be saved?** The **humble sinner** can be saved (18:9-17). The **wealth worshipper** can be saved...with difficulty (18:18-34). The **believing beggar** can be saved (18:35-43). The **repentant rich** can be saved (19:1-10). All kinds of people can be saved, if...

1. THE HUMBLE SINNER CAN BE SAVED (LUKE 18:9-17)

Jesus tells this parable to people who "*trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt.*" The audience gives away the point – trusting in a self-made morality that compares itself favorably to others does not save. It's a study in contrast. The first thing Jesus shows us is the Pharisee's posture in prayer. In v.11 he's "*standing by himself.*" He thinks he's better than others, and thankfully so. But Christian character doesn't hold itself aloof from other sinners, especially not in the church. Christian character loves company.

False Humility (vv.11-12). Of course, the Pharisee maintains a vener of humility. "*God, I thank you...*" He starts his prayer with God, and he thanks God. He credits God for who he has become. But in his thanks, he refers to himself in the first person no fewer than five times in two verses (Bock)! So even though he's thanking God, he is impressed with himself. "*I am not like other men.*" And what are those other men like? Well, for one thing, they're extortioners. They wring the money out of people's pockets. Not the Pharisee. He's an honest businessman. For another thing, they're unjust, immoral, they don't obey God's law. Not the Pharisee. He's no nominal Jew. He takes God's Law seriously. For another thing, they're adulterers. They're not faithful to their wives. Not the Pharisee. He's a family man with conservative values. And praise be to God, the Pharisee prays, "*I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.*" The Jewish law only required fasting once a year, on the Day of Atonement. So this man is not just moral, he is deeply religious. He considers himself to have gone above and beyond the call of duty in his devotion. His attitude is, "*Wow, praise God for me.*" That's how the human heart prays when it believes righteousness is relative.

Today's self-esteem gospel sounds a lot like this Pharisee's prayer, doesn't it? It encourages us to thank God for all that makes us unique and special. Yea, Jesus calls that self-righteousness. Luke calls it trusting in ourselves and treating others with contempt. The self-esteem gospel is easy on the ears, but it makes you pray like this; it turns you into a Pharisee. And some of us will fall into this very trap even as we listen to this sermon. We'll

think, “man, I’m glad I don’t believe that self-esteem nonsense. How can people fall for that tripe? Thank God I’m not like that” There’s a Pharisee in your heart, Christian. Don’t listen to him, and don’t let him pray.

By contrast, the tax collector is “*standing far off*,” and it reminds you of Jesus’ counsel to his fellow dinner guests in 14:10 “*When you are invited, go and sit at the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’*” The stated moral of both stories is the same (14:11; 18:14) “*For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.*” God humbles the proud and exalts the humble. This is why the tax collector’s prayer is the better model. “*God be merciful to me, a sinner!*” Both prayers start with God, but they diverge radically from there. *Be merciful* is literally “Be propitiated to me” (‘*ilasqe,ti moi*). In other words, make the sacrifices of the temple effective to cleanse me of my sin. Cover my sin with sacrificial blood.” The Pharisee said “I am not like other men because I do religious things. I’m a righteous man with merit.” The tax collector says “I am not like God because I sin. I’m a sinner in need of a blood sacrifice to atone for my sin.” No reference to sin or need for atonement in the Pharisee.

The irony is, people like the Pharisees thank God that they’re not like the tax collectors, but it’s the tax collectors who end up saved, not the Pharisees. “*This man went down to his house justified, rather than the other.*” The Pharisee did not go down justified (BAGD, 611). Everyone would have thought that the Pharisee was righteous because of his morality and religious devotion; not Jesus (Snodgrass, *Stories*, 474). **Self-righteousness is self-deception.** The Pharisee will not just have to quit looking down on the tax collector. The Pharisee will have to become like the tax collector. The Pharisee in all of us has to humble himself and believe he is a sinner no better than any other, regardless of morality or religious devotion. Jesus requires us all to admit our moral bankruptcy before Him, no matter who we thought we were (Goppelt, *Theology* 2:282).

One theologian said this, “The modern-day counterpart of the Pharisee would be welcomed into any respectable community, religious or social, and given a responsible position. It is surprising how much egotism... will be tolerated if a person is just..., clean-living and gives of his substance” (Snodgrass, 475). We should note that this is the kind of passage that made the Apostle Paul think about justification the way he did. Paul preached the same gospel as Jesus – the gospel of justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone to God’s glory alone. It’s the good news that made Paul ask in Romans 3:27-28 “*Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded.*” “The passive verbs in v.14...are divine passives” (Snodgrass, 474).

Verses 15-17 belong with the parable by way of contrast. The Pharisee trusts in himself, that he is righteous. But receiving the kingdom means receiving it in child-like trust that looks away from self to the help of the parent. Children are not skeptical. They believe easily. And children in the 1st century were among the least valued people of society. So when they’re brought to Jesus, the disciples rebuke the parents, probably because they think that children are not worth Jesus’ time or concern. So when Jesus says “*for to such belongs the kingdom of God,*” part of what he’s saying is that God’s kingdom is for the lowly and helpless. Children and tax collectors get in; Pharisees do not.... But it’s reading too much into v.16 to say that “*let the children come to me, and do not hinder them,*” means, in context, that Jesus wants us all to baptize our infants, or even our 5 year-old children as soon as they say they believe in Jesus. There is nothing about baptism here. Jesus is welcoming them to lay hands on them and bless them, which is not a saving action. And Jesus does not say “*to them belongs the kingdom of God,*” but “*to such (toiou,twn) belongs the kingdom of God.*” He’s is not making an objective statement about children themselves (bre,foj, unborn child, embryo; baby, infant, BAGD, 147; not nh,pio,j [Gal 4:1] or pai/j [Luke 8:54]). He’s making a comparative statement, which He explains in v.17 as a simile. You have to receive the kingdom of God like a child in order to enter it. That’s what he says in v.17 “*Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child (paidi,on) shall not enter it.*” He’s talking about the child-like attitude of trusting dependence that anyone must have toward Jesus in order to be saved from their own sin. And he may be implying that we must be born again, like in John 3. “*Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*”

2. THE WEALTH WORSHIPPER CAN BE SAVED...BUT NOT EASILY (LUKE 18:18-34)

A Jewish ruler asks Jesus from the crowd, *“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”* This is the same question that the lawyer asked Jesus in 10:25 where the answer was the parable of the Good Samaritan. It’s a confused question. You don’t do something to inherit something. You simply have to be family, appointed as an heir. And he calls Jesus “Good Teacher,” which was thoughtless. No one ever called any rabbi “good,” because the rabbi’s believed that only God was truly good. To call a rabbi “Good Teacher” was either flattery or outright stupidity. But Jesus uses it as a teaching moment in v.19 *“Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.”* Jesus is not saying that he’s unworthy of the title. He’s trying to get the ruler to trace his statement out to its logical conclusion. Only God is good. I called Jesus good. Therefore, I called Jesus God. Is that what I meant? And if not, then what did I mean? It’s not that Jesus is refusing to be identified with God. It’s the opposite. Jesus wants the man to own that if Jesus really is good, then He really is God.

In v.20, Jesus answers the ruler’s question with the law. You want to do something to inherit eternal life? Obey the law. But he only lists the second table commandments about loving neighbor. This is the flip side of his answer to the same question when it was posed by the lawyer in Luke 10. In chapter 10, the lawyer assumed he had loved God with all his mind, heart, soul, and strength, and he was looking for a loophole in the law to excuse him from loving some of his neighbors. Jesus told him the parable of the Good Samaritan, and the question turned from “who is my neighbor” to “Am I a good neighbor?” Here in chapter 18, the situation is reversed. Here, the ruler assumes he has loved all his neighbors from his youth up – *These things I have kept from my youth* – and Jesus challenges to him to obey the first 4 commandments, v.22 *“One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”* This would be the test of discipleship for this ruler. It illustrates the demand of Luke 14:25-33. You can’t be Jesus’ disciple unless you count the cost, leave everything that competes with loyalty to Jesus, and follow Him, trusting that He will meet all your needs. Your love for Jesus has to make everything else look like hatred. Otherwise, you’re an idolater. And the ruler trips over the wire. Look there in v.23.

“But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.” In first-century Judaism, wealth was considered the reward for righteousness; it was seen as the guarantee of spiritual acceptance with God. This is the cultural assumption that made Jesus’ words in vv.24-25 almost unbearable, that it’s difficult for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. And that’s why they ask in v.26 *“Then who can be saved?”* And that question is the driving question of this whole passage. Luke 18:9-19:10 is all about answering that one question: *“If the Pharisee didn’t go down from the temple justified, and if it’s hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven, then who in the world can enter, and how?”* You can’t look at your wealth as a reward for your righteousness. You cannot look at a bank account and say, *“Well, I must be doin’ something right.”* That mentality will send you to hell.

The issue here is idolatry – loving money more than Jesus. The “one thing” that the man still lacks is pretty big. It’s obedience to the first four of the Ten Commandments. Money is his idol. It’s what he trusts. It’s what he’s unwilling to give up for the sake of loyalty and discipleship to Jesus. In verse 9, the audience for the parable trusted in themselves, that they were righteous. Here, the rich man trusts his money more than He trusts Jesus. Now we might look at this and say, *“I don’t love and trust money like that.”* Then what do you love like that? Is it your public reputation, career advancement, sex, power, influence, friendships, family? Your attitude toward all of that should look like hatred compared to your love for Jesus.

The man’s heart was invested in his money, and so when Jesus invites him into discipleship, he can’t meet the conditions, which prompts Jesus to say in v.24 *“How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”* If there was any other way to take that statement than the way it sounds, then the disciples would not have responded the way they did. Jesus makes it sound impossible for the rich to enter the kingdom. And if it’s impossible for the rich, then what about everyone else? So Jesus say in v.27 that the

only way for anyone to enter God's kingdom is by God's power. "*What is impossible with men is possible with God.*" Pharisees can enter. Rich men can enter. But not by their own moral effort, and not by assuming that their wealth is a recompense for their righteousness. It is impossible for the rich and self-righteous to repent – humanly speaking. There are plenty of rich rulers out here in the suburbs, and our tendency is to think, "they'll never repent." But with God, all things are possible, which is why we should pray for our rich friends to repent.

Did you notice too that Jesus commanded the rich ruler to repent, knowing he was unable to repent? Jesus commanded him to do something Jesus later says is impossible to do. And so our natural inclination is to ask, "What is this, some kind of sick joke? How can Jesus command someone to do something, later say it's impossible, yet still find fault with him? That can't be fair." But look at it from God's perspective. "*God made man upright, and they have sought out many schemes*" (Eccl 7:29). Moral inability does not absolve us of moral responsibility. Jesus is not wrong to command us to do things we're not able to do. The reason is that our own slavery to our own sin (and self-righteousness) is our own fault. Is it wrong for a therapist to tell a serial killer to stop killing people? No. He should stop, even though he can't. And we all should stop hating and lusting and envying and slandering and gossiping and idolizing money, even though we can't stop those things in our own power. Jesus is right to command my repentance, even though I'm not able to offer it in my own power, because I'm the one responsible for my own moral inability. It's my fault that I enslaved myself to my own sin. I indulged my own predilections and appetites so much that it's natural for me to sin. The rich man acted in accord with his voluntary slavery to his sin, and he's responsible for that.

The rich ruler was exactly the kind of guy who could have catapulted Jesus' ministry into the limelight. He was extremely moral, extremely rich, and he was a ruler. He could have been a celebrity evangelist. Yet Jesus does not chase after him when he walks away. Nor does Jesus lighten the demands of discipleship, or hide the costs and front the benefits, much less does Jesus let the guy flatter him with the thoughtless comment that Jesus is a Good Teacher. Jesus just lets him walk away. And we think, 'Jesus, That guy could have bank-rolled your ministry for years, and not only that – he was a ruler, he could have pulled some strings, called in some favors!'

In v.28, Peter looks at what the disciples have given up to follow Jesus – boats, careers, hearth and home, wife and kids (for the time). So he asks, "What about us? We've left everything to follow you. So what's in it for us?" And this is the gospel promise. "*There is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who will not receive many times more in this time, and in the age to come, eternal life.*" Jesus will reward gospel sacrifice. Gospel sacrifice is not just necessary; it's worth it. It is worth it to give up everything in this life to follow Jesus into the next. We get a whole new family in the church and in discipling friendships. We get all our physical needs met in this life. And in the age to come, we get eternity with Jesus in the new heavens and the new earth. Money is not true wealth. Jesus is true wealth.

As Jesus speaks of the cost and rewards of discipleship, in vv.31-35 he reflects on the ultimate cost of the gospel that He Himself would soon incur. "*Everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.*" Yet there is nothing in the prophets about the Son of Man being delivered over to the Gentiles and mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon and killed. So why does Jesus say that? He says it because he's combining the Son of Man theme from Dan 7:13 with Isaiah's Suffering Servant theme in Isa 53. Jesus, as the Son of Man from Dan 7, had come to fulfill all that was written of the Suffering Servant in Isaiah. The Servant and the Son are One in the same; they converge in Jesus (Goppelt, *Typos*, 90-97).

But Jesus also seems to think that His resurrection on the third day was also foretold by the prophets. In v.31, Jesus says "everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished." The next sentence in v.32 starts with the word "For," explaining what the prophets had written. And In v.33, his death and his resurrection on the third day are drawn out as part of what the prophets had written. And that makes us ask, where is He getting this stuff? Where did the prophets say that the Son of Man would rise, specifically, on the third day? Well, there are two places Jesus could be talking about in the prophets. One is **Jonah 1:17** where

Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Jesus has already said in Luke 11:30 “as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.” Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, and then came back to life as it were, so Jesus would die and be buried and on the third day rise from the dead. There’s one more place in the prophets, **Hosea 6:1-2**, where Hosea is preaching to Israel and says “*Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before Him*” (France, *Jesus*, 53-55). Now that’s big for how we read our Bibles. Jesus took a passage whose original context was the restoration of national Israel, and He applied it to His own bodily resurrection from the dead. What that means is that the resurrection of Jesus is the restoration of Israel. I can’t put it any better than R.T. France did in his book *Jesus and the Old Testament*:

*The assumption is that in Jesus the destiny of Israel finds its completion, and in His resurrection the hopes of Israel’s restoration are to be fulfilled. ‘The resurrection of Christ is the resurrection of Israel of which the prophet spoke’ [quoting C.H. Dodd, *Scriptures*]. It is not so much that Israel was a type of Jesus, but Jesus is Israel..., and in His resurrection Israel’s destiny is fulfilled” (*Jesus & the OT*, 55).*

That is how Jesus read His Old Testament, and that’s how we should read ours as well. The restoration of national Israel, according to Jesus Himself, finds its completion in the resurrection of the Son of Man. [To hope for another national restoration of Israel in history is to disparage the significance of Jesus’ resurrection.] Humble sinners can be saved, and even wealth worshippers can be saved, because Jesus Christ Himself was delivered over to the Gentiles, mocked, shamefully treated, spit upon, flogged, crucified as the substitute penalty for our sins, and then on the third day, rose from the dead, just as it was written in Jonah and Hosea.

3. THE BELIEVING BEGGAR CAN BE SAVED (LUKE 18:35-43)

The scene changes in v.35, and as Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem to die and rise again, he passes through Jericho. And a blind beggar hears the crowd passing along with Jesus and asks what all the commotion is all about. And they tell him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” And immediately the blind man cries out “*Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.*” It recalls the cry of the tax collector in v.13, “*God be merciful to me a sinner!*” He even calls Jesus “*Son of David,*” which is a confession of faith in Jesus as Messiah. This blind beggar is more confident than anyone that Jesus is the promised Son of David from **2Sam 7** whose kingdom would be established forever, the promised king of God’s kingdom; the one whom God *raised up for David as a Righteous Branch who would reign as king and deal wisely, and execute justice and righteousness in the land, and would be called ‘The Lord our Righteousness,’* just like **Jeremiah 23:5** announced.

Now again, this story is dripping with irony. In v.39, the disciples rebuked the blind man. They basically tell him to shut his trap. They don’t want him bothering Jesus. But that doesn’t stop him. He says the same thing again in v.39. “*Son of David, have mercy on me!*” And let’s not forget that in v.34, when Jesus predicted his death and resurrection, the disciples “*understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.*” They were blind to the significance of Jesus. But the blind man saw it. A blind man sees Jesus more clearly than the Pharisee in the parable, or the rich ruler, or even the disciples themselves, who understood neither Jesus’ prediction nor his affinity for children and blind beggars.

And sure enough, in v.41, Jesus stops for him, brings him to Himself, and asks him “*What do you want me to do for you?*” But doesn’t Jesus already know? Why didn’t Jesus just heal him without asking, based on his perfect knowledge of what the man wanted before he said it? The question is an invitation to exercise the faith that he’s already articulated. He’s already admitted that Jesus is the Son of David. OK then. What are you gonna do about it? Or better yet, what are you going to ask Him to do for you? Big faith asks big things, and so he asks to recover his sight, and he gets his sight back and a whole lot more. Jesus says to him in v.42 “*Recover your sight. Your faith has made you well.*” But that last phrase is literally “*your faith has saved you*” (se,swke,n se). It’s the same thing we saw back in 17:19 when the one leper came back to thank Jesus and he says “Rise and go

your way; your faith has made you well.” The verb there was saved, just like it is here. The blind beggar didn’t just receive his sight. He was saved, justified. And v.43 confirms that got both his sight and his salvation when it says “he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God.” He became a disciple of Jesus. **This is one answer to the disciples’ question in v.26 “who can be saved?” Even a blind beggar can be saved** – if he believes in Jesus as the coming Son of David, King of God’s coming Kingdom.

4. THE REPENTANT RICH CAN BE SAVED (LUKE 19:1-10)

But Jesus isn’t just interested in blind beggars. Even rich tax collectors can be saved, which is what Zacchaeus was. Zacchaeus was not just a run of the mill tax collector like we saw in the temple in chapter 18. He was a chief tax collector. If it were a pyramid scheme, he’d be the pinnacle. He wasn’t just making money off his own collections. He was making money off of all the collections of his underlings. He was rich, just like the ruler in chapter 18. And he was so short that he couldn’t see Jesus. It’s almost like Luke is remixing the three previous stories all in one man. Zacchaeus is a tax collector who is both rich and unable to see who Jesus was.

He’s a little guy, and so he climbs a tree to see over the crowds as Jesus comes his way. But notice, it’s not Zacchaeus who initiates with Jesus; Jesus initiates with him. He doesn’t knock on the door of Zacchaeus’ heart or wait for an invitation from Zacchaeus; –He just invites Himself over and lets Himself in the front door. Look there in v.5 “*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.’*” Jesus is the one who sees Zacchaeus. And look at Zacchaeus’ response there in v.6. “*So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully*” – No criticism. No skepticism, just total, joyful obedience – like a child. The verbs from Jesus’ commands in v.5 are even repeated in Zacchaeus’ obedience in v.6. He did exactly what Jesus said, and he did it with joy.

But not everyone was happy. In v.7 “*when they saw it they all grumbled, ‘He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner’*” (diagoggu,zw, cf. 15:2). But who are the “they”? The most logical answer contextually would be from v.3, the crowd. But it might also be the people in 18:39, “*those who were in front rebuked*” the blind beggar who was calling out for Jesus to have mercy on him. In other words, the “they” may well be people who are following along with Jesus. They’re disciples who are still self-righteous.

But in v.8, the sinner becomes a saint. Zacchaeus stands up in front of everyone his house and carries through on the repentance that the rich ruler couldn’t stomach. “Behold, Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” His repentance involved restitution, and it was voluntary. The OT law of restitution for property only required that you restore what was lost plus a fifth of its value (Lev 6:5; Num 5:7). Zacchaeus was voluntarily doing what the law required in cases of theft that involved murder (Ex 22:1; 2Sam 12:6; Morris, *TNTC* 289). And he’s doing it joyfully. This...this is repentance. This is what it looks like for a rich man to repent. And when Jesus sees it, he says “*Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.*” There’s that word again, salvation. Zacchaeus is the very kind of man that the Pharisee had thanked God that he was not. A chief tax collector would have been known as a chief extortionist, and a Jewish chief tax collector would have been known as a chief traitor, a sell-out to the Romans. Yet Zacchaeus is the one who ends up entering the kingdom of God.

But wait a minute. Wasn’t Zacchaeus already a Jew? Wasn’t he already a son of Abraham? Jesus talks about Zacchaeus being a son of Abraham like it’s some new status. So is Jesus saying that salvation has come to Zacchaeus’ house because he’s a Jew, or is there something more to it than that? There is something more, isn’t there? John the Baptist had preached in Luke 3:8 “*Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, We have Abraham as our father. For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.*” And in that same scene, he had told tax collectors to “*collect no more than they had been authorized to do.*” Zacchaeus had just brought forth fruits in keeping with repentance. He had proven himself to be a son of Abraham not just by blood, but by the faith that repents. It is the faith of Abraham, evidenced by repentance and restitution, that makes you a son of Abraham; not physical descent. Gal 3:7 “*Know*

then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.” And that faith is a repentant faith, which repents toward Jesus, personally. “If you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”

And in v.10 the ultimate reason Zacchaeus is saved is not because he was seeking to see who Jesus was. It’s that Jesus was seeking him, *‘For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.’* Lost people – people who have been running away from God all their lives, people who don’t know where they are spiritually – that’s who can be saved. Luke has just shown us at the end of chapter 18 the blind beggar calling Jesus Son of David. Here, Luke shows us Jesus saying that he came to seek and save the lost. Those two ideas go together. Jesus, as the Son of David, is the ultimate Shepherd of Israel, and he has come to gather the lost sheep of Israel back into one fold with one Shepherd (Goppelt, *Typos*, 88-89). God had said in Ezekiel 34:12, while his people were scattered in exile for their sin, *“As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness...I Myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will make them lie down, declares the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed....”* And here Jesus is, doing the work that God had promised to do Himself. Here is God, in the flesh, seeking the lost.

CONCLUSION

Who can be saved? The answer is, no one can be saved without the power and mercy of God. But with God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, all kinds of people can be saved. Extortionists can be saved. Rich people can be saved. Even self-righteous people can be saved. Blind beggars can be saved. Lost people can be saved. And the reason is that *“what is impossible with men is possible with God.”* All kinds of people can be saved. What about you?