

Transformation (Luke 19:1-9)

David Yeh, 19 Nov 2017

Who was Zacchaeus? He was a tax collector. A tax collector is someone who collects money from the Jews on behalf of Roman government. At that time the Jews were conquered by Rome, although they had some freedom in religious, day to day life, but under subject of Roman Empire.

So people were not paying taxes to their own king that would be used for their countryman, but the money goes to Rome their enemy. The money was used to construct extravagant Roman city, the luxurious buildings and places of entertainment. The money probably used to subdue them or used to conquer other nations and make them subject of Rome like they were. At time people were treated badly, there is no justice, if the people couldn't pay the tax they could simply confiscated your property, your family and sell them as slave.

Jews hated Romans and Romans used the Jewish tax collectors to collect the tax for them, they did the dirty work for them. Often the tax collector would require to give a certain tax to Roman government in a year, he would go to people and require them to pay tax, anything more he had received, it goes into his pocket, so these tax collectors demanded more tax from the people than is required. They would use the force of Rome to back up their claim. So tax collectors were considered as traitor.

1) know who Jesus is v1-v4

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector. He would organize the other tax collectors and collect healthy commissions, so he was that big boss of traitors. He was corrupt and rich, yet he wanted to see who Jesus was. In people's eyes he doesn't deserve to meet Jesus.

I wondered, why did Zacchaeus wanted so much to see Jesus that he gathered his toga around his little legs and climbed up a tree? This was hardly a dignified thing for one of the most prominent men of the city of Jericho to do. What motivated Zacchaeus to see Jesus? Well, maybe curiosity. Jesus' reputation as a teacher who drew crowds and a miraculous healer proceeded him. And Jesus was also highly controversial.

Was Zacchaeus just curious, wanting to see for himself? Maybe, but I don't think that was enough to motivate his action. Is it possible there was some great need in his life that drove him up that tree. Something within him desperately hoped that seeing Jesus would make a difference in his life. Hungry enough not care about his reputation of being short. He didn't care of his reputation for climbing up a tree.

Those who want to see Jesus would need to pay the cost to see him. We need to be hungry to want to know who he is. Your action will show how much you care of meeting him and Jesus reveal to those who seek him. "If you seek me you will find me."

Some of us come on Sunday but don't meet Jesus, maybe because we don't have the hunger to meet him. Jesus will pass us by because we are too short in spiritual sense, come short of the desire to meet him. We could end up hiding behind the crowd or someone's back and Jesus will just pass us by. I don't want to see you pass your time without getting anything while you are here. I pray that we will have that hunger to meet Jesus. Come and be prepared to meet him. If you don't have that hunger, pray to God to have that hunger in you.

Prepare Ahead

Lk 19:4 "So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way."

He was there early to prepare for Jesus' arrival, so he won't miss him.

We need to come to church early to prepare ourselves. If we are not ready, when Jesus comes by, we might miss him. When Jesus speaks to us we don't catch it, because our mind and heart are so occupied with the things in our life and we miss what he was going to tell us, and we think the message does not apply to us because we failed to seek earnestly what God is speaking to us. But if we come early prepare our life to meet Him, God can speak to us, even if it sounds hard to understand.

This was my attitude in my old church in NZ when I became a Christian at 13 years old. The pastors used scriptures after scriptures, hardly any illustration or story, less to say a joke. From 10 years old all the children were required to attend the morning service with their parent. Not 30~40 min sermon but 1-hour sermon of scripture teaching. But I would take note and go home to review through them at night before I went to bed, and God spoke to me through those notes and scriptures.

So you need to take a sermon script or take note of sermon regardless if you think you already know it or don't understand it. Just because Zacchaeus was short it did not stop him to see Jesus, he removed whatever problem he had to see Jesus. What are your problems, difficulty, or hinderance of meeting Jesus? Could it be late night? Could it be your attitude? Could it be things in your mind? Could it be the way you arrange your life? I know there are things that can't be helped but we can pray that those things will not be our hindrance, and remove them with all we can.

2) Jesus sees you v5-v6

Lk 19:5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."

If you are serious of meeting Jesus he will find you. He knows your heart and your hardship, your struggle, your desire.

Perhaps Zacchaeus had thought about getting his life in right order before, but he might have thought "How could he maintain his style of living if he did that? What about his retirement plan?" Would people think he'd gone soft and he'd lose his professional effectiveness? Maybe he longed for a new and different life, but lacked the power to change. It could have been longing for change that drove him up the tree the day Jesus passed through Jericho.

What are the things that grasp your life, grasp your time, wasting your time and life away. What are the things that you know you shouldn't be doing, you know you need to stop doing it because it makes you feel bad or shameful and awful.

Young people, you know that you should not treat your parents the way you treat them, you get annoyed with them easily and respond to them negatively, say something that hurt them, say things that you regret.

Jesus sees you and will call out to you.

Jesus have a way of seeing straight to the heart. He can see the sin, but he looks beyond the fault and see the need and your struggle.

I believe God is saying "I see your situation, I know the things you are doing, I know your struggle, I know how guilty you feel, I know how you are being disliked by others."

Come down! Come out of your misery; come out of your sin and guilt. Come out of your low self-esteem.

To know Jesus, we need to experience who Jesus is personally. Knowing is not just knowledge but experience him. You have heard what your family said about Jesus, but have you met him personally. No longer remain in the knowing of Jesus through what other people says but have you experienced him personally?

Luke 19:6 (NIV) So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

He didn't wait or say I will think about it, but "At once" it just shows how glad he was to hear Jesus willing to come to him. He welcomed Jesus, this is the heart attitude we need to have towards Jesus. Welcome him to our heart, to our life and to our home.

3) Jesus transform those who truly met him v7-v9

Someone who welcome Jesus into his life will have transformation in his life. It's really interesting that Luke records this story of Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus just shortly after he had the encounter with another rich man. You can go back just a few verses in your Bible from the Zacchaeus story to Luke 18:18-27. You'll find this story of the ruler who came to Jesus and asked, "Good teacher what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus told him, "Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and come, follow me."

As Jesus watches the back of the rich man walking away sorrowfully he says, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."

Then Luke records this story of another rich man, Zacchaeus, who demonstrates what is possible with God!

Zacchaeus was affirmed by Jesus. Zacchaeus was disliked by people, the friends that he had probably only wanted to associate with his money or taking advantage of him. But Jesus accepted him for who he is. He was being loved and that love of Jesus set him free. He started to feel I don't need money to be accepted, I don't need money to be respected, I don't need money to be loved.

He was freed from greed to live generously; he was delivered from perpetrating injustice to promoting justice; he was lifted from the path that leads to destruction and led on the path of eternal life. What is the difference in these two rich men? Both men sought Jesus. Both demonstrated the first step toward new life: seeking Jesus.

If we really want the power to change, we need to devote time and energy to get closer to Jesus. What is it that helps you go deeper in your relationship with Christ? Do we spend time in the scriptures, spending time in prayer, reaching out to meet the needs of others in his name? Our first step is to make growing in Christ a priority in our lives. It's out of that relationship that the power for change comes. It's his Holy Spirit living in us that is the power. Let Jesus' love touch us.

A Wise Mother And Christ's Picture: A mother visited her boy at college. Upon entering his bed room where he lived, her eye swept across the walls, which were covered with more than a dozen

suggestive pictures. Her heart was grieved, but she said nothing. Several days later, the mailman delivered a package to the young man. It was a gift from his mother—a beautifully framed picture of the head of Christ.

Proudly the boy hung the picture on the wall above his desk. That night, before he went to bed, he removed the pin-up picture which hung closest to the face of Christ. The next day another picture was consigned to the wastebasket. Day after day the pictures began to disappear from the walls until only one remained—the picture of the Saviour.

That's a tremendous example of the incredible work that God wants to do in your life. Will you let that transformation begin this morning? I pray that you will.

The second step is to prayerfully listen for direction. In faith, we do the thing Jesus tells us to do. Remove things that hinder us to come to him, make adjustment to your daily schedule.

What does salvation mean? Some Christians would immediately say, "It means going to heaven after you die." According to the Gospels, salvation is so much more than going to heaven when you die. There is that precious promise of eternal life that gives us assurance for how we will spend eternity. But salvation is also a reality for this life.

The Greek word Jesus uses here for "save" and "salvation" in verse 9 means to rescue, save from harm, heal, make whole. Salvation is the continuing change Jesus brings into our lives now. Jesus brings a new power to live in right relationship with God and others right now. Jesus brings wholeness to our brokenness now. Jesus brings new purpose as he invites us to join him in his mission of seeking and saving the lost now.

The ongoing change that Jesus continually brings into our lives affects others around us and brings wholeness to their lives. Salvation is not just an individual matter. God's work in our lives moves out in concentric circles of wholeness. After Zacchaeus' declaration of how his life will be different, Jesus didn't say to Zacchaeus, "Congratulations, you can go to heaven when you die." He said, "Today salvation has come to this house." Zacchaeus' new life will bring new life to everyone in his household — starting today!

Luke 19:8 (NIV) But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

His changes bring changes to others, he was willing to give half of his wealth, and pay back 4 times of those he has cheated. And even today his story is being told even to today effecting millions of people for 2000 years.

Jesus is looking for you, are you looking for Jesus? When we meet Jesus personally, our life will be transformed, we would be willing to get rid of things that hinder us to meet Jesus. Our heart would be satisfied, and our life would become a blessing to others.