

October 30, 2022  
Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost  
St. Timothy Lutheran Church – Huber Heights, OH  
Pastor Joel Sutton

Luke 19:1-10 (Isaiah 1:10-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12)

THE SON OF MAN CAME TO SEEK AND SAVE THE LOST.

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

Our text for meditation today comes from the Gospel according to St Luke, the 19th chapter, with particular focus on verse 10 where Jesus says:

***“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*** (Luke 19:10)

There are many methods of disciplining children. Each parent has their own approach. My mother would discipline by giving extra work details, taking away privileges, and of course spanking. Her most effective tool of discipline was when she would say: *“Wait until your dad gets home.”* Sometimes it was an idle threat to get my attention. Other times, it was too late. I would have to wait for dad.

Dad only had one approach to discipline. He was a firm believer in Proverbs 13:24, which paraphrased says: *“Spare the rod, spoil the child.”* There was no spoilage in the Sutton household growing up. Just the thought of dad’s wrath was enough to make my blood run cold and my body tremble in fear. Right, wrong, or indifferent, dad’s judgment was swift and severe. To put it in biblical terms, dad ruled with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. (cf: Ezekiel 20:33) I do not say these things to criticize my parents. I likely deserved ***much more*** discipline than I ever received. So, too, it is for all who trust and believe in Christ Jesus for forgiveness.

On this side of heaven there are no perfect children and there are definitely no perfect parents. Because of the fall of our original parents, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, you and me and all mankind have lost the perfect image of our Creator and suffer from the terminal effects of sin. Our holy God alone is the righteous Parent, the righteous Judge. It is difficult for sinners such as you and me to understand the righteous judgment of a holy God who, on one hand, hates all evil, yet, on the other hand, loves the evildoers enough to provide a way of salvation from sin. God’s divine wrath is the necessary reaction of a holy God who hates all that is contrary to His righteous nature. But His divine love first appears before His divine wrath. Divine love is the very essence of God and His righteous nature. Rather than leave mankind powerless in their sin, in divine love He provided a way that sinners might be made holy and blameless in His sight. (cf: Ephesians 1:3–10) We see this in our Old Testament lesson this morning. (cf: Isaiah 1:10-18)

The name Isaiah means ***“Yahweh is deliverance.”*** (Lessing, Isaiah 40–55, Concordia Commentary, 1) God was not making idle threats when He sent His prophet Isaiah to call His people to repentance and faith lest they suffer His righteous judgment at the hands of the

Babylonians. He tells them to “**give ear,**” (cf: Isaiah 1:10) to listen up, chiding them as rulers of Sodom and people of Gomorrah, to get their attention. Although the people regularly made sacrifices to God and claimed to worship Him, their worship was hypocritical, and they continually violated His laws. A time of righteous discipline and judgement was soon coming when God would hide His eyes and close His ears to their prayers. (cf: Isaiah 1:15)

And while righteous judgement is God’s privilege, He is long-suffering, patient, and merciful – desiring all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (cf: 1 Timothy 2:4) Instead of complete annihilation, Isaiah proclaims God’s gracious deliverance, calling them to repentance, to cease doing evil and learn to do good, saying:

*“<sup>16</sup> Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, <sup>17</sup> learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause. <sup>18</sup> “Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.” (Isaiah 1:16–18)*

The Righteous Judge proposes a full pardon for all who trust in Him for forgiveness and salvation, pointing forward to the One who was promised in the Garden of Eden to crush the skull of the serpent to defeat sin, death, and the devil. (cf: Genesis 3:15) God’s own Son who would leave heaven and take on human flesh to seek and save the lost by shedding His blood on Calvary’s cross. It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins, (cf: Hebrews 10:4-10) so Jesus, the Lamb of God, became the perfect once for all sacrifice on the altar of the cross. By His sacrificial death on your behalf, your scarlet, red, and crimson sins are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. (cf: Revelation 7:14)

While it sounds like Isaiah is suggesting works righteousness, that is, if you do these things, then God will relent and deliver you – that is not the case. Repentance is God’s work. He alone works repentance and faith. He moves first as the Holy Spirit shows you your sin in the mirror of the Law so that you sorrow and despair over your sin – that by contrition and repentance you then cease doing evil, learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression, bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause. How do you do it? By the power of the Holy Spirit, trusting in the righteous God who lovingly provides a way of salvation from your sins. That is what happened to Zacchaeus.

The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost, even a filthy sinner like Zacchaeus. In our Gospel text, Jesus was passing through Jericho just 8 days before He would be put to death on cross. Zacchaeus, a tax collector, heard that Jesus was coming and he was seeking to see who Jesus was. Tax collectors were despised. They were renowned for greed and corruption, over-taxing the people. That is why the Bible usually lumps tax collectors and sinners together. Zacchaeus was not only a tax collector. He was a **chief** tax collector – meaning he had other tax collectors working under him from whom he likely extorted. Everyone in town knew him and despised him. He was corrupt and he was **rich**. And he was no different than God’s people in our Old Testament text and he was no different than you and me.

Of course, you are not from the Kingdom of Judah, and maybe you are not rich tax collector, but tax collectors and sinners are two sides of the same coin. You and me – tax collectors and sinners. We are all rich in our sin. I know my sins and transgressions. Only God in heaven and you knows yours. Examine yourself for what you and done and have left undone according to the Ten Commandments so that the Holy Spirit can drive you to contrition and repentance. Go to your Small Catechism or turn to page 326 in your hymnal and follow Luther’s method. He says:

***“Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you been hot tempered, rude or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds? Have stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm? (SC V)***

Examine yourself and repent. Repent for your false and hypocritical worship. Repent for trusting in false gods and idols above all things. Repent for ignoring how God desires you live before Him, bearing fruits of repentance and faith, performing works and deeds that God has prepared in advance for you. (cf: Ephesians 2:10)

Scripture does not explicitly tell us why Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus. But St Luke likely gives us a clue when he records that Zacchaeus:

***“... was seeking to see who Jesus was...”*** (Luke 19:3)

Who is this Jesus? Is He John the Baptist or Elijah or one of the other prophets of old risen from the dead. Or is He the Christ, the Son of the living God? (cf: Matthew 16:14–16) Apparently, Zacchaeus had heard the Gospel message of forgiveness of sins and salvation through Jesus. Why else would this locally well-known and despised tax collector trade in his pride and shamelessly climb up a tree like a child, hoping to catch a glimpse of Jesus? He had a troubled conscience. He was a sinner and longed for forgiveness.

In His omniscience, Jesus knew Zacchaeus was in the tree. He knew Zacchaeus’ name. He knew his occupation, and his reputation, his sins, and his heart – and He invited Himself over to the house of this chief sinner to deliver forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. St Luke records:

***“<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.”*** (Luke 19:5–6)

Jesus surprises everyone. Zacchaeus only wanted a glimpse of Jesus, but it was Jesus who came to seek and to save the lost Zacchaeus. At Jesus’ call, Zacchaeus came to faith. He knew that Jesus had full knowledge of his sin and guilt, so he hurried down the tree and joyfully received Him, longing for forgiveness. The people, on the other hand, muttered and grumbled that Jesus would be the guest of a man who is an open sinner, much like you and I who grumble when someone we deem to be a despised open sinner comes to faith in the preaching of the Gospel.

Zacchaeus makes his confession of faith. Because of the love shown him by Jesus, Zacchaeus speaks of ceasing to do evil and learning to do good, bearing fruits of faith, the promise of love to the poor and richly providing restitution to anyone he had defrauded.

The Son of God became flesh and dwells among us today seeking and saving the lost. This does not mean that life on this side of heaven will always be easy. There will be trials and tribulations. You will suffer persecution and affliction for your confessions of faith. Our heavenly Father is a righteous Judge who works all things according to His will and for your salvation. (cf: Romans 8:28) Sometimes it is His perfect will that you be lovingly disciplined as any parent disciplines their child.

Only a righteous remnant from the Kingdom of Judah would survive the Babylonian conquest and one day return home. (cf: Isaiah 10:20–21) Unless Zacchaeus took up a different occupation, he would always be a despised tax collector even though he bore fruits of repentance and faith. So you and I would do best not to question God's divine foreknowledge and discipline of His children but endure suffering by trusting in His divine love. St Paul says your persecutions and afflictions are:

***"... evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering..."*** (2

Thessalonians 1:5)

Know that while you deserve much worse discipline even unto eternal death, Christ Jesus has endured God's entire righteous wrath against your sins. By His sacrificial death on your behalf, your scarlet, red, and crimson sins are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb. (cf: Revelation 7:14) For the sake of Jesus, you are forgiven of all your sins: your sins of false and hypocritical worship, for trusting in false gods and idols, and for ignoring how God desires you live before Him.

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. By means of Word and Sacrament, salvation has come to this household of faith. It is poured out in Jesus' body and blood at this altar, poured out in the washing of water with the Word at this font, and is proclaimed in the Gospel in this pulpit. By the power of the Holy Spirit planted in you in Baptism He:

***"... make(s) you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, <sup>12</sup> so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ."*** (2 Thessalonians 1:11–12)

Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understand, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus,  
Amen.