

Message Summary

In the context of the children (Lk. 18:15-17) and rich young ruler coming to Jesus (vv. 18-30) come three more encounters with Jesus: the disciples (vv. 31-34), the blind beggar (vv. 35-43), and Zacchaeus (19:1-10). Each of these stories illustrate what happens when the infinitely sinful and the infinitely holy Jesus meet.

Jesus discloses to his disciples the purpose of their journey toward Jerusalem: for “the Son of Man” (v. 31, referring to Jesus) to be spit on, flogged, killed, and resurrected (vv. 31-34). Spitting was among the highest levels of disrespect that could be given. Jesus was teaching his disciples that though all His physical healings were important, an even greater purpose characterized His ministry: to take the shaming and death our sin deserved on Himself, so that we could be healed from the disease of sin through His substitution on our behalf.

Such pursuit of sinners includes someone the world would have viewed as least significant: a poor blind beggar, unable to work and dependent on others for mercy (vv. 35-43). Despite the crowd’s best efforts to silence him, this blind beggar came to Jesus screaming for the mercy as Jesus neared Jericho. Jesus alone, not the surrounding crowds, could provide physical healing. But his physical state as a blind beggar signified his spiritual state as a man condemned under his sin. In the midst of many crowds, Jesus stopped and brought the beggar to himself, extending forgiveness and healing to even the least of these (Mt. 25:46).

Jesus ministered also to the rich. As Jesus entered Jericho, a man named Zacchaeus was desperate to see who He was (v. 3). Zacchaeus collected taxes for the hated Roman empire, and his status as a “chief tax collector” (v. 2) indicates he had practiced for some time. Further, he charged his fellow Jews taxes at whatever rate he wanted, thereby becoming “rich” (v. 2). Though the streets were lined with people far more upright, Jesus looked up at Zacchaeus and insisted on eating at his house. Jesus’ grace was extended to this, the worst of sinners, who in receiving salvation gave half his money to the poor and returned defrauded money fourfold (vv. 8-10). But some grumbled. They assumed that their righteousness exceeded Zacchaeus’, and they deserved more of Jesus’ attention. Jesus, for his part, delights in such humble and repentant hearts as Zacchaeus (cf. Jm. 4:6), for he came “to seek and to save the lost” (v. 10).

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

Why was it so difficult for the disciples to grasp Jesus’ purpose in going to Jerusalem (vv. 31-34)? Is it still easy today to view Jesus as a good Man, righteous Teacher, accurate Prophet, but not as the crucified and resurrected Christ?

Daniel pointed out that though Isaiah bowed before the Lord and proclaimed himself unworthy at the sight of His presence, and though Moses’ face shone upon seeing a glimpse of God’s glory, this sinful Zacchaeus wanted to meet Jesus. How did Jesus make this possible? Why, in the crowd full of people more righteous than Zacchaeus, did Jesus choose Zacchaeus to eat with?

Why did some grumble at Jesus’ mercy to Zacchaeus? Could this same attitudes still prevent us from welcoming others as Christ has welcomed them?

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to examine what the sermon and its text mean, to apply the Word to your life, and to guide how you pray. Please note that you don’t have to use all of the questions. These are just options (along with the digging deeper section) to help you frame the family/small group discussion.

1. Do you see God's grace, mercy, and love as more than sufficient for you, or do you feel you are too far gone for God's grace to reach?
2. Do you desperately cry to God alone for mercy and healing in salvation, or are you more prone to ask for mercy from the crowds around you?
3. Do you remember the power of Jesus' name to heal the most sinful around you (cf. Hb. 1:1-4; Col. 1:15)? Do you consider some around you beyond the reach of God's grace?
4. Do you grumble when God shows mercy to others you feel are less worthy than you? Are you bitter when He shows favor to worse sinners than you, who trust in in your own righteousness and feel you deserve better?
5. Do you actively welcome sinners around you? What can you do this week to make Christ Fellowship a more welcoming place for sinners?
6. Like Zacchaeus restoring stolen wealth, are there any particular areas of repentance you should pursue this week in view of God's mercy to you?

Prayer

- Pray for Our Church:
 - Thank God for the pursuing and welcoming sinners, no matter how far our sin has taken us.
 - Pray that God would protect CFC from self-righteous grumbling, and that CFC would be a church where sinners like Zacchaeus can come and embrace the love of God for them.
- Pray for Our Community:
 - Pray for the Lord's blessing on Daniel Sheshi and Hermann Anaba as they begin at Beeson this fall, that the Lord would further their character, conviction, and ministry skills as they study to show themselves approved, workers who have no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the Word of truth (2 Tm. 2:15).
 - Pray for opportunities to extend God's blessing to the entire community around us: rich and poor, self-righteous and pagan, and among all ethnicities and nations, even as Jesus' ministry showed.
- Pray for Our World:
 - Pray for the Ezelle's upcoming class on evangelism, that the Lord would use this class to equip many to share the gospel in word and deed, and provide many opportunities to put these skills into practice.