

Intro: Our nation has been captivated by another tragic story this week that has turned into reason for celebration on the west side of Cleveland. Many of you have been following the account of Amanda Berry, Gina DeJesus and Nancy Ruiz. These three women were abducted, tortured, and treated in the most inhumane ways our minds can imagine by a despicable man named, Ariel Castro. Thankfully, these women who were once lost and presumed dead, broke free from their prison house, and have now been reconciled with their families. And while we could address many aspects of this story, it is appropriate to remember the mothers of these three women. Listen to the words of Joanna Connors, a staff writer for Cleveland's Plain Dealer:

"We need to remember Amanda's mother, Louwana Miller, strong and mad..., yelling at reporters and the police, year after year, demanding that they keep looking for her daughter, keep writing about her, and then dying without knowing that she was right. Amanda was still alive. We need to remember Gina DeJesus' mother, Nancy Ruiz, keeping vigil year after year, telling a TV reporter six years after her daughter disappeared: "Now, I'm fighting. I'm coming out. Somebody's out there; somebody knows something. I need them to step up to the plate and start speaking. Tell me where my baby's at so I can bring her home. We need to remember Michelle Knight's mother, Barbara, never giving up on finding her daughter, even when the police and the FBI seemed to have given up."

These mothers refused to believe their daughters were beyond rescue. And this is another example of how mothers display the heart of God to the world.

### **"The Rescue Mission of Jesus" Luke 19:1-10**

Sometime we reduce Zacchaeus to a "cute children's story," or a children's song: "Zacchaeus was a wee-little man, and a wee-little man was he... he climbed up in the Sycamore tree for the Lord he wanted to see." But what we'll come to realize is that it is one of the most important stories in the Bible. In a very compact form, this story weaves together the most prominent themes of Luke's Gospel about the mission of Jesus. That is **why we're only taking these 10 verses** this morning. *Read 1-10.*

**The Point: Join the powerful mission of Jesus who came to seek and save the lost.**

Today, I want to give you five truths about the mission of Jesus with five.

#### **I. The Mission of Jesus is a Mission for all People!**

- Luke gives us a couple of incredibly important details in verse 2. There we discover that Zacchaeus was "a chief tax collector & was rich." Contextually, we have to read Luke 19 in light of Luke 18 that just told us of a tax collector and a rich man. To miss this is to totally miss the force of this story. Every time Luke mentions tax collectors he presents them favorably (with an accompanied response by the religious leaders of disgust and grumbling. (3:12, 5:27, 7:29, 15:1, 18:10)
- Tax collectors were despised because they often swindled and robbed others as they "collected" the taxes. A chief tax collector probably oversaw the work of other collectors who served under him. It's possible that Zacchaeus would have been responsible for a broader region.
- This is why Mark Strauss says, "This episode is a fitting conclusion to a section that has been called 'The Gospel to the Outcast.'" Zacchaeus is the ultimate outcast because he is not just a hated tax collector, but a "chief tax collector" & he was rich.
- So when Jesus says in verse 9 that Zacchaeus is also "a son of Abraham," he wants to highlight for the people how his mission is a mission for all. "Tax collectors were viewed as having forfeited their rights as Abraham's offspring." But Jesus wants everyone to understand that neither his vocation nor his sinful practices revoke his opportunity for God's salvation. In fact, this is precisely the kind of person Jesus came to save.
- Remember, Luke has already described Jesus as a friend of sinners. Not just an acquaintance. Friend. Luke 7:34: **"The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'" (Luke 7:34)**
- And why was this a hallmark of Christ's ministry? It was not only because he loved all people, but because irreligious people were the ones who could see their need. Those who thought they were righteous, thought they could be good enough did not want to listen to Jesus.
- **"And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?' And Jesus answered them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'" (Luke 5:29-32)**
- Just as Jesus did with Levi, he does again with Zacchaeus. In fact, Jesus invites himself over to his house. To go in and be the guest of someone and to dine with them was a sign of social acceptance and friendship. It held much deeper significance than our dinner parties today.
- Hospitality: Invite people into your life and the life of our church...
- Lost People... Apart from grace, we're all lost. Period. "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10)
- Hit lostness... Statistically speaking NE/Boston/World... under 3% of the population attends evangelical churches who preach the gospel of grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. How many of your co-workers are Christians?
- What's worse than being lost? Being lost and having no one looking for you.
- But there is not one person in Medford and Greater Boston that is not on the heart of God! The Mission of God is a mission for all people

## II. The Mission of Jesus is a Mission of Grace

### Story:

- Picture Jericho as Jesus rolls into town. Of course, we should not be surprised, there was already a crowd gathering around Jesus in Luke 18:36. The healing of the blind man would have only increased the buzz surrounding Jesus and the number of people pressing into see him, hear him, touch him. This is Zacchaeus' first great challenge to seeing Jesus. His second great challenge is not circumstantial but physical. Zacchaeus was short!
- On a side note, and a very personal note, I love all people who are vertically challenged. I plan to adopt one day... the baby must be in the 85% for height... ☺ [That's Zacchaeus. What about Jesus?]
- [I know some of you may have the paparazzi following you around the moment you walk out your front door, but most of us don't have people, short people at that, climbing trees to catch a glimpse of how we roll.]
- So Zacchaeus runs ahead to a strategic spot and finds a sycamore tree to climb up to get a bird's eye view. A sycamore tree would have had a shorter stump and wide branches, making it easy to climb.
- He was, at some level, seeking... It seems that his driving force is curiosity. He had probably heard reports about Jesus and wanted to find out for himself who he was and what he was about.
- Perhaps you are like Zacchaeus, you have significant spiritual curiosity. My hope is that you, like Zacchaeus, will hang around Jesus long enough to hear of the awesome salvation he can bring to your life.
- Zacchaeus is pumped "So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully."
- Verse 3 tells us Zacchaeus was "seeking to see who Jesus was . . ." BUT there is another seeker in this story...
- Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, but not as much as Jesus wanted to see him. I love the irony here: **the one seems to seeking is really being sought.**
- Jesus is the ultimate seeker in this passage. He is on the greater quest. Once again, on his journey, Jesus stops to make time for someone who desperately needs him.
- A lot of times we are tempted to put more emphasis on our seeking after God, but he is the one who has come after us. This should do two things for us: 1) It should make us humble. 2) It should make us feel more loved. To think that the God of the universe has set his eyes on us to pursue us and win us back is an incredibly powerful and liberating narrative.
- And when they heard, they grumbled... Just like the Pharisee and scribes grumbling... Always grumbling... (depict this...) chatter... moans... this is how they expressed their displeasure with Jesus.
- The crowd grumbled... We've seen this again and again. Jesus often faced disapproval and criticism from those around him concerning his ministry. But did he let this stop him? Jesus was determined to share the good news with Zacchaeus.
- Grumbling... Outrageous Grace... Scandalous Grace... (amazed.. Marveled... shocked by his actions. The love of God throws us off balance. It goes beyond our expectation and exceeds our level of comfort.
- Jesus was determined to love those no one else desired to love.
- If God did not seek us through the person of Christ, all of our seeking would be a joke.
- Jesus went to Zacchaeus. I must stay at your house today. "Musts" in the gospel of Luke....
  - I must be in my Father's house (2:49) It was a necessity for Jesus.
  - "I must preach the good news of the kingdom . . . for I was sent for this purpose" (4:43)
  - I must go on my way and go to Jerusalem. (13:33)
  - "I must stay at house today." (19:5)
- So how does Jesus deal with Zacchaeus? Does he guilt him into salvation by exposing his sins before all people?
- The Mission of Jesus is a Mission of Grace, and this teaches us that

## III. The Mission of Jesus is a Mission of Salvation

### 1) Salvation always comes through faith in Jesus.

- Verse 10 serves as the key verse of Luke because it summarizes and epitomizes his gospel. Zacchaeus encountered salvation in the person of Christ.
- There must be a crossover.
- "The Kingdom Must Come in the Hearts of Men" (Wilcock)
- Luke 15... Lost sheep, lost coin, lost son
- Prodigal Father depicting the Prodigal God "It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found" (15:32)

### 2) Salvation always brings transformation...

- Look back at *verse 8*: I'll give away half of my possessions to the poor. This was no small commitment. On top of that, he says he is willing to pay what have been the maximum penalty of the law, four or five times of the value of that which was taken.
- There is a radical change of character. This sinful man who once cheated others is totally different after meeting Jesus. Zacchaeus moves from taking advantage of people and stealing from them to serving people and extending generosity to them. This is the transformation the gospel brings.
- When God works his miracle of new life into a person's heart, it will necessarily be evidenced to those around them.
- Restitution... pay it back... Not just, "I'm sorry. But action, movement... to the injured." He wanted to right his wrongs.
- When the gospel grabs hold of someone's life, everything begins to change.
- Mothers become even more loving, more patient,

- “The gospel changes people, and people change the world.”
- How has the gospel changed you?

#### IV. The Mission of Jesus is a Mission of Power.

- Read 18:25-27... What does this narrative tell us? That Zacchaeus is a case of impossibility! He is an example of a rich person who is threaded by the grace of God through the eye of the needle. God saves the impossible.
- And there is not a person we know beyond the rich of God’s grace!
- You don’t know my husband. You don’t know my friend.. no, no, no, “You don’t my God!” God delights to save unlikely people.
- Do you not think that Peter, James, and John, and the other apostles thought back to this event? When we see them doing their thing in Acts, filled with the power of the Spirit, their faith had to be strengthened by moments like these.
- Past grace stirs future faith.
- When we start to see this happen... look out!! We have seen it. Remember what Christ has done for us.. and go in his power.
- He empowers us by his Spirit.

#### V. The Mission of Jesus is our Mission.

- Where do we see this in these 10 verses? On the one hand, we don’t. But on the other hand, they are all over these words. How?
- “Follow me...”
- **John 20:21 “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”**
- **“Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:46-49)**
- “Those who love God will share his passion to bring his wondrous salvation to a lost world.”
- Mercedes-Benz commercial... (Some things are too important not to share.)

#### Five Missional Tips:

- 1) **Love.** This is mission with the proper motive. Compel them to come in... 2 Cor 5:14. Our rescue mission is driven by love! Donna’s testimony: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” People can argue with a lot of things, but it’s hard to argue with love. We do this as we go... (Jonathan Dodson says, “You don’t need to add missional to your schedule. You need to make your schedule mission. Intersection, not addition.”)
- 2) **Listen.** Ask questions: Do you have any spiritual beliefs? Who is Jesus to you? What do you think happens when we die? Can I share my story with you?
- 3) **Share.** Testimony. Gospel. “We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” “We must obey God rather than man.” You and I are hear because someone shared with us! “Don’t you think you should patent your product? Some things are too important not to share.”
- 4) **Jesus.** Talk about Jesus & Show them Jesus. The greatest apologetic of our day is authenticity. (A changed life!” People could see Zacchaeus was a changed man.”)
- 5) **Together.** The chase of suspect #2... 5,000 cops descend on Watertown looking for one guy. Be missional at RHC. Connecting Events (Memorial Day Cookout, Students, Children’s, Men’s, Women, even our Serve Efforts are great ways to get unchurched and nonbelieving friends introduced to Christ and our church). Mission is always better in community. Pray together, Go hang together (park, dinner, games \_\_\_\_ ) We search people out with our words. The more people hear the gospel the brighter the search light becomes.

Love, Listen and Share Jesus Together.

#### Conclusion:

#### The Mission of Jesus Demands a Response! Is a Mission that Forces Decision.

- **PLACEMENT** The sense of urgency, compulsion, and necessity (Today... immediately, Must stay..)
- Grace: Effectual Call... Human response is prominent.

#### What kind of commitment will you make to be about the mission of Jesus?

Who will commit to regularly sharing your faith this summer? Who will commit to joining our connecting events and bringing friend there and with you to church? Today I want to invite you to see the impossible. Who in your life is impossible?"

Some of you might say, “Before today, I did not realize that I could have a real, vibrant relationship with God through placing my faith in Jesus and what he did for me in his life, death, and resurrection.” I want to get in with Jesus and be about his mission.

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