

10222023 an Exception to the RuleEarlier Jesus had made an astounding statement about a rich your ruler...who could not give up his way of life including his wealth ...to follow Jesus...even though the trade would be return so much greater reward...

NLT Luke 18:22 When Jesus heard his answer, he said, “There is still one thing you haven’t done. Sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, **and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.**” ²³ But when the man heard this he became very sad, for he **was very rich.** ²⁴ When Jesus saw this, he said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God! ²⁵ In fact, 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!” ²⁶ Those who heard this said, “Then who in the world can be saved?” ²⁷ He replied, “What is impossible for people is possible with God.”

Today we will examine the impossibility of a Rich man entering the kingdom of God.....you know like a camel being able to go through the eye of a needle...But does because what is humanly impossible with man is easily possible to God...

This man’s name is Zacchaeus, Before we tell his story...get some back story on him ...because there is always the story before the story...of Jesus touching a life...

This is his background, circumstances and location....For Jesus always meets us in our somewhere, in our circumstances and knows our history...

NLT Luke 19:1 Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. ² There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich.

First....Jesus was passing through Jericho on His way to Jerusalem, where the events of Holy Week would soon unfold.

The circumstances....

- **Jericho was a gateway into Roman-controlled territory and a major tax collection site, which is why Zacchaeus was so wealthy.**
- **He collected taxes for the Romans, overseeing the customs charges on the trade routes through Jericho and levying taxes on individual citizens in that area.**
- **Though Zacchaeus was a Jew he is a picture of a shrewd earthly business man...he secured a position as a tax collector moving up the ranks to a chief tax collector... **General tax collector** who would set up on key road intersections or in the market places. Local taxes A chief Tax Collector got a piece of the action of the general Tax collectors**
- **He had much opportunity to abuse the system that funded the occupying Roman army.**
- **Not only would he charge the going roman land use tax...but could charge whatever he would want on top of that pocketing it for himself.**
- **He could tax...for toll (use of the road) load(how many axles your cart had) any mail. Not to mention sales tax on good, produce and meat products...**
- **Used roman thugs to enforce the tax or confiscation of good if deemed necessary. All under the approval of the roman**

government.

- Many Thousands of Jews from Galilee were passing through Jericho that day on their way to observe Passover in Jerusalem.
- So The Passover tax season... with all the people using the roads... was very busy and extremely lucrative...

The man: Zacchaeus as a Jew would arguably be considered the greatest sinner of his day...the lowest of the low... hated by the populace, rejected by the religious and **literally banned from the synagogue ...considered a traitor by his own nation...** a sell out to the occupying Roman government...

- He would bring great shame to his family and most likely be estranged to the point of being considered dead to them.
- As a Jew he would also be considered completely and irrevocably rejected by God.
- In Fact Religiously speaking A tax collector was considered lower than a prostitute...And this is why... **a prostitute only sells her body...A Jewish tax collector sold himself to the Romans and than would rape financially the people for his own enrichment...**

So the question is What happened to him???...why would a Jewish man take such a hated job? Probably like many of us who do disreputable things...pain and hurt and resentment...

1. How wounded must one be...to step out and choose a profession and lifestyle that rejects his people, religion, his family, his honor...his place in society...took a lot of courage
2. To choose money, pleasure and power were his high ambition... as he had to have thrown off almost every constraint he had been raised with.

3. Perhaps at a early age he was disillusioned by the discrepancies and hypocrisy between what was written and taught and what was practiced and most likely in his home...
4. Since he was also small in stature, probably bullied...
5. But it is obvious he tried to fix his disillusionment, hurt and perhaps hate with people and faith that rejecting it all seemed like a positive coping mechanism....
6. Fix the inside by getting and acquiring all he could on the outside...by any means necessary....was a way to overcome his hurt and prove he was somebody!!

But Something was still amiss, he was still left wanting.....How so? he left his job at the busiest and most lucrative time of the year ...to see this man, maybe a prophet? Maybe a Messiah?...but certainly someone different then most Rabbis ..!

So he wants to check him out

NLT Luke 19: ³ He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.

- **Being Jewish...he had at least heard of the Messiah growing up...but for his own reasons rejected the faith of his family and his people...and affiliated himself with the Romans...**

and then this happens...

NLT Luke 19: 5 When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. “Zacchaeus!” he said. “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.” ⁶ Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy.

- **Jesus passed by under the exact tree he was in...what a coincidence... the exact spot!!**
- The fact this rabbi would actually speak to him is crazy...No religious person would give him the time of Day...
- And this one knows his name...which means he knows his profession...but Jesus treats him as a person of value..._and invites himself to have a meal at his house.....
- Well he would not invite him to synagogue ... Since he was not allowed in... and probably would not want to go to the synagogue anyway..
- I cant believe you want to eat with me...a sign of belonging...
- Absolutely lets do it!!!
- And of course everyone was glad....to see Jesus wanting to eat with such a well known sinner...

⁷ But the people were displeased. “He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” they grumbled.

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- **Reaching out to this man....Jesus is spoken against by the people ... And that is the greatest sickness and lostness of the self righteous ... they are the most lost...often the most sick**
- **Why? because they are sick and lost and don't know it!! And therefore don't feel like they need any help! and sadly don't help those who admit sickness and are lost**

⁸ *Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, “I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!”*

- **IF JESUS IS WILLING TO CHOSE ME, I CHOSE HIM..**
- **He did not TO DO RIGHT NOW.. FOR RELIGION Sake BUT FOR JESUS..."LOOK LORD"**
- His riches are now to be made a means of grace, enabling him, in the first place, liberally to make restitution to all wronged ones; and secondly, to dedicate largely to the poor.

And listen....You see when you reach someone....you reach their sphere of influence...he will make amends to those he took advantage of...

- **Often their people in similarly messy situations...the up and out hang with the up and out...same as the down and out...ever think that before you started coming to church you did not hang with church going folk!!!**

⁹ *Jesus responded, “Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham.*

HE WAS SAVED AND WELCOMED INTO THE FAMILY OF FAITH...THROUGH JESUS!

But Jesus interposes and reinstates him in his position of privilege. He declares before the guests that Zacchaeus has been saved by his visit to his house, and that this salvation-visit is because the publican is also a son of Abraham. In this beautiful way the selecting love of God in Christ is set before the people and the assurance of Abrahamic sonship

conveyed to the new convert. It is thus the Lord comforts those who trust in him.

NLT Gal 3:5.....It is because you believe the message you heard about Christ. ⁶ In the same way, “Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith.”^[a] ⁷ The real children of Abraham, then, are those who put their faith in God.

- **EXACTLY WHO JESUS CAME TO FIND!! THAT RELIGION REJECTS!**

NLT Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”

It takes one found person to impact many for the Kingdom of God...

His Ministry was starting...

Jesus saw in Zacchaeus...that which Zacchaeus did not see in himself. Though his sphere of influence ...create an avenue for people to meet Jesus...

Starting with a dinner...

We don't know the rest of his story , but this we do know ...He was going to lose the life he knew to find the life he had never experienced... but always wanted... and in it he will find his purpose... as an ambassador of the Kingdom of God...

You are on that path also!

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