

**Outcasts: The Eyes of Jesus**  
**Sermon 7-16-17**  
**By Pastor Curtis Dehmey**

**Luke 19:1-10**

*He entered Jericho and was passing through it. <sup>2</sup>A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. <sup>3</sup>He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. <sup>4</sup>So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. <sup>5</sup>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 down and was happy to welcome him. <sup>7</sup>All who saw it began to grumble and said, “He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.” <sup>8</sup>Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” <sup>9</sup>Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup>For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”*

**Message:**

(Play video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oJdRnksTiY>) The poor bear. Thank goodness Jesus didn't get Zacchaeus down from that tree in this way. But there are those in the crowd around us that go unnoticed. People that want to see Jesus, but cannot break-out of their outcast status to get a good view of Jesus. Or maybe they've built walls around themselves with their wealth. Or maybe they are so imprisoned by their circumstances or past decisions, that they cannot get a good view of Jesus. Let's be honest. Some outcasts are more challenging than others to welcome and love. Some don't have very good social skills or etiquette. Some may use curse words in every sentence. Some may be disheveled and have bad hygiene. Some may have a bad reputation in the community. These outcasts may be hard to love and to shine the light of Jesus.

Tax collectors in Jesus' day were hard to love too. In order to understand the depth of this story, we need to understand the tax system. In Roman culture, they would contract with local entrepreneurs. These local business men, of a given region, would purchase or pay for the taxes for a given region. So the Roman empire got their tax money from the business person. On the empire end, taxes were paid. This business person, or middle man, was then the tax collector. He would go around to each person in his given region and collect the taxes from the

people. Now, here is the genius of the Roman empire. The tax collector has the right to charge more than the original tax as a means of making money. So let's say the tax was \$10, the tax collector paid that \$10 to the Roman empire. But the tax collector may go to the average village person and charge \$20. So it's not just a duty on part of the citizens to pay these taxes. They are also paying for this business person to make a living. This is the genius on part of the Roman empire because who do you think is then hated? The Roman empire or the tax collector? The people resent the tax collector first and foremost. Not the Roman empire. Would you like to be friends with the guy who comes around and takes more than his fair share of your money? We complain about our tax system today, but we often forget that it can be so much worse.

“<sup>2</sup>A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich.” In other words, Zacchaeus was the business owner of this tax enterprise for this region. “<sup>3</sup>He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. <sup>4</sup>So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way.” There a lot of cultural and societal pieces at play here that have a great impact on this scene. Zacchaeus is short and therefore cannot see this famous Rabbi in Jesus. I can also imagine that if Zacchaeus is despised by the crowd, that they would not have mercy on him to let him get into a position to see Jesus. They would have blocked his attempts. They wouldn't move out of the way to give Zacchaeus the honor of seeing and meeting Jesus. Instead of continuing to battle his reputation through battling the crowd to see Jesus, Zacchaeus does the undignified things. Remember from last week that for an adult man to run was an undignified act. Running to the tree was embarrassment one. By climbing the tree was embarrassment two because he was admitting to his short stature. What does this say about Zacchaeus? What does Jesus see as he looks at Zacchaeus in the tree?

I believe Jesus saw a man who was willing to engage in these culturally shameful acts just to see Him. How many of us are willing to buck social norms to see more of Jesus? To be willing to embarrass ourselves to see Jesus? I think Jesus saw that this was a man looking and hoping to make a change in his life. He just needed someone to be willing to take a chance on him. He may have had a rough exterior in his tax collections, but deep down he longed for love and relationship. “<sup>5</sup>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.’” Scandalous! Jesus wants to go to HIS house!?!?! He is not worthy of such an honor. “<sup>6</sup>So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. <sup>7</sup>All who saw it began to grumble and said, ‘He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.’” Remember this grumbling from our passage last week. This directly ties-in. For a well-known holy Rabbi to invite himself to someone's house was not an act of

intrusion. It was an honor. So the crowd can't believe that Jesus would want to go to HIS house. That despicable and swindling tax collector. Notice that the crowd isn't described as Pharisees or Sadducees. So we have to assume the people in this crowd are regular everyday people. Jesus isn't drawing our attention to the sins of people in authority, but of sins of the everyday person. You and me.

<sup>8</sup>“Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, ‘Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.’” Zacchaeus doesn't say these words in the privacy of his home. If he did, one could question if his words were genuine. But Zacchaeus makes this promise in front of the crowd. Meaning that he has a whole host of people who heard and therefore a whole host of people who will hold him accountable to his promise. Zacchaeus is serious about what he is saying. And Jesus recognizes the sincerity of Zacchaeus' promise. <sup>9</sup>“Then Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup>For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.’” Remember what Jesus says in Matthew 19:23-24, <sup>23</sup>“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. <sup>24</sup>Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’” So for Zacchaeus to come to salvation is a monumental feat that only Jesus can achieve. The Kingdom of God happened in that moment.

There seems to be something miraculous and awe-inspiring when a new person comes to Jesus. We experience the Kingdom of God here on earth. Some of you may have experienced that a few weeks ago when we baptized Sam and Anna. It was wonderful to witness their public display of faith. It reminds many of us of our baptisms and our own coming to faith in Jesus. Luke's telling of this story tells us that deliverance, hope, love, forgiveness, grace and salvation, are not beliefs of yesterday. They are not in some bygone past. The witness of God's Kingdom is here and now. People are being transformed into Christ's likeness today. When Jesus acknowledges Zacchaeus, he isn't acknowledging his richness, he is acknowledging the change that has occurred in him. Jesus is celebrating that this man that was once lost in his riches, is now alive in Christ. Even the rich can see the light of Jesus Christ. Even though it may be harder than most.

But it does raise this question, who are we missing that wants to see Jesus? In our passage, Jesus seems to have this way of seeing through Zacchaeus to the condition of his heart. And it leads Jesus to have compassion. If Jesus is in us. In the salvation that we proclaim in Him, who are we missing that needs that same compassion? And I'm sure its people who have been cast aside in our society. It could be the rich guy who lives in the luxury gated neighborhood. It could be the beggar on the street. It could be the handicapped. It could be the diseased. It

could be the ex-convict or the rapist. Where are these broken-hearted people in our community that want to see Jesus, but just need a little compassion? That need us to see beyond their exteriors. To see the condition of their heart. To see that they need the salvation of Jesus Christ.

One such person comes from Missouri. I'll be reading an article from ABC News written by Kevin Dolak on September 5, 2013, "A Missouri man has been arrested and charged with 'reckless exposure to HIV' after he admitted to having unprotected sex with up to 300 people without disclosing his HIV status, triggering alarm among health officials.

David Lee Mangum, 36, was arrested in Dexter, Mo., on Aug. 27 after his former live-in lover came forward to Dexter police to file a complaint that Mangum had knowingly infected him with HIV. The alleged victim, 28, identified in the complaint as D.B., said that he tested positive for HIV in July of this year, according to a probable cause affidavit filed in Stoddard County court by Det. Cory Mills.

Mangum could face a life sentence if convicted. A public defender appointed to Mangum's case did not immediately return calls placed by ABCNews.com.

... 'Essentially our primary focus in this case is to get it onto the public view,' [Prosecuting Attorney Russell] Oliver said. 'Our concern is for public health. Any individual who may have come into contact with this man, or through Craigslist, if you met a man in Stoddard County and engaged in sex, we'd urge you to get tested and cease all sexual activity. Better safe than sorry.'

Mangum and his former boyfriend met via a men-seeking-men ad on Craigslist in October 2012 and engaged in unprotected oral and anal sex, according to the complaint. The two moved in together on Nov. 9, 2012, but the relationship ended in June when D.B. discovered that Mangum had been cheating on him, the complaint states.

The victim also told police that a former female roommate of Mangum had disclosed to her that he had been HIV positive since 2003, and that he has had over 300 sexual partners since he tested positive.

Dexter police were able to interview Mangum on Aug. 26, during which he waived each of his rights and admitted to having unprotected sex with the victim without disclosing his HIV status, and provided authorities with his records from the

Stoddard County Health Center, Detective Mills wrote in the probable cause affidavit.

Mangum also admitted to police that he had over 300 sexual partners since testing positive in 2003, and that between 50 and 60 were in Stoddard County, according to the complaint.

When asked why he did not disclose his HIV status to his partners, Mangum said, ‘fear of rejection.’”

Why did he avoid disclosing his HIV status? He was afraid of rejection. In other words, he assumed that if he disclosed this information he would no longer be loved or experience love. It’s sad when we live in a world where people engage in heinous acts because they are desperate for love. This underscores the need for us, Jesus in us, to see the Zacchaeus’ in our community. That we need to pray for Jesus to show us those who need an extra dose of compassion. To see that they are searching for the gift of salvation in Jesus Christ. Whether you agree with Mangum’s sexual orientation or not, that’s not the point I’m trying to make today. Mangum could have easily been involved with 300 women in this way. But he felt that he had to withhold information in order to be loved. Not thinking of how he put all these other people’s lives in possible jeopardy. I’m sure our first instinct was disgust. But what if our first instinct was compassion? To see that Mangum needed Jesus in his life. He was longing for something, but was looking in all the wrong places.

Folks, this world is aching to see Jesus. This world is aching for compassion. This world is aching for us to see their true hearts. Not what they show on their exterior. They want us to see their heart. To see that they need Jesus. I want to speak on behalf of Christ and on behalf of Providence Church for a second. Whether you’re sitting here today or listening to this sermon across the world, I want to say that I’m sorry. I’m sorry that if you are infected with HIV and don’t feel welcome in Christ’s kingdom. I’m sorry that we haven’t invited you to come down from that tree. I’m sorry that if you are a sexual abuser that we don’t know how to love you and reconcile you back with the church. I’m sorry that if you have a mental illness that can’t be controlled, that we have not shown you mercy. I’m sorry that if you are an ex-convict that we have not been active in reconciling you with the kingdom of God. I’m sorry if you are rich, that we have written you off as someone who doesn’t need Jesus. I’m sorry that if you are someone who curses, smokes, drinks, has tattoos, is socially awkward and has been sexually promiscuous that we have not loved you. I’m sorry that we have not invited you to come down from that tree. To come down from that tree to see and experience Jesus. That, although many of us humans may be faulty in our love,

that Jesus is the true lover and the true salvation. There are probably many more that I could apologize for. I'm sorry that we have failed see your heart and have compassion upon you. I'm sorry that we have failed to exemplify Jesus' way and heart. I hope that in the future, through the grace of Jesus Christ, that we can see with the eyes of Jesus. That we can see those who need his love. That more can be changed as they see and experience Jesus. Lord, help us to see the outcasts or Zacchaeus' among us. Amen.