

Sermon Series: “Sharing the Good News—A Way of Life”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—2/8/2009
Title: “An Unlikely Seeker”
Text: Luke 19: 1-10
Intro.: *Illus.: Twice Mine*
Theme: If we can think of someone who is not redeemable, that is someone for whom Jesus died, someone he desires to be in his kingdom, and someone to whom he wants to deliver his good news invitation through us.

Why we fall into the trap of labeling someone “unredeemable”

- Without even thinking we evaluate, assess, and assign people as outside of our reach
- 1. Zaccheus was a “Publican/tax collector”—a chief one at that (**vs. 2**) and so good Jews steered clear of him
 - a. **Illus.: Jesus, a Publican, because he went to Zacchaeus’ house (humor)**
 - b. Hated instrument and symbol of Roman rule
 - c. Despised as cheat and thief because “wealth” came at expense of fellow citizens (or so was thought)
- 2. What professions (car salesperson, IRS agent), backgrounds (illegal immigrant, gang), social stigmas (Gay, Hispanic) do we assign assumptions and unredeemable labels to?
- Making it hard if not impossible for others to find and see Jesus
- 1. **“Because of the crowd” vs. 3** — Zaccheus’ short stature easy excuse of the righteous/religious to elbow him out
- 2. We can validate and justify the barriers (worship/culture/programmatic) to keep others at safe distance
- Grumbling when God is generous and gracious with the undeserving
- 1. **Illus.: Jesus Parable of the Owner’s Vineyard — Print Matt 20: 11-15**
- 2. *When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, “He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” vs. 7*
- 3. God is most offended when we grumble at his generosity (example O.T. Israelites and manna)

Caution — God at work (make a construction diamond shape on slide and put words inside)

- Divinely appointed grace moments all around us
- 1. Don’t believe for a moment that Jesus spotting Zaccheus in the tree was by chance and circumstance (**vs. 5**)
- 2. *You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. John 15:16*
- 3. When we understand our own selection to be saved, we understand God’s heart for every lost child
 - a. **Illus.: Redeemed**
 - b. The cashier, the clerk in the shipping department, the overbearing department head, the demanding teacher, the drugged up friend—all are children of God in bondage for whom Jesus came into this world to free
 - c. *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, Because the LORD has anointed me To bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to captives And freedom to prisoners; Isaiah 61:1*
- Birthdays of believers happening right in front of us (**vss. 6 and 8**)
- 1. Don’t miss the faith moment that was happening for Zaccheus
 - a. joy = word associated with faith
 - b. Zaccheus moved by Spirit to reconcile on a 400% basis rather than the Levitically required 25% basis
- 2. Sometimes, we are so busy trying to clean ourselves and others up that we miss the washing God has already done
 - a. *He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, Titus 3:5*
- 3. Do you want to be invited to the party?---- Look around you! It is happening all around you!
 - a. *There is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Luke 15:10*
- Refocusing and reordering the way that we look at the world around us
- 1. Jesus always saw life and people and salvation in terms of God’s Kingdom and Family
- 2. **verse 9**
- 3. Jesus wants us, his saved children, to have his same heart for the unsaved children which he has
- 4. ***So are you seeking to save those who are lost?***
 - a. **Illus.: What Christianity cannot be**

Twice Mine

Tom carried his new boat to the edge of the river. He carefully placed it in the water and slowly let out the string. How smoothly the boat sailed! Tom sat in the warm sunshine, admiring the little boat that he had built. Suddenly a strong current caught the boat. Tom tried to pull it back to shore, but the string broke. The little boat raced downstream. Tom ran along the sandy shore as fast as he could. But his little boat soon slipped out of sight. All afternoon he searched for the boat. Finally, when it was too dark to look any longer, Tom sadly went home. A few days later, on the way home from school, Tom spotted a boat just like his in a store window. When he got closer, he could see -- sure enough -- it was his! Tom hurried to the store manager: "Sir, that's my boat in your window! I made it!" "Sorry, son, but someone else brought it in this morning. If you want it, you'll have to buy it for one dollar." Tom ran home and counted all his money. Exactly one dollar! When he reached the store, he rushed to the counter. "Here's the money for my boat." As he left the store, Tom hugged his boat and said, "Now you're twice mine. First, I made you and now I bought you." **Good News Publishers, Westchester, IL**

Redeemed

Once a pastor of a church in Boston met a young boy in front of the sanctuary carrying a rusty cage in which several birds fluttered nervously. Gordon inquired, "Son, where did you get those birds?" The boy replied, "I trapped them out in the field." "What are you going to do with them?" "I'm going to play with them, and then I guess I'll just feed them to an old cat we have at home." When Gordon offered to buy them, the lad exclaimed, "Mister, you don't want them, they're just little old wild birds and can't sing very well." Gordon replied, "I'll give you \$2 for the cage and the birds." "Okay, it's a deal, but you're making a bad bargain." The exchange was made and the boy went away whistling, happy with his shiny coins. Gordon walked around to the back of the church property, opened the door of the small wire coop, and let the struggling creatures soar into the blue. The next Sunday he took the empty cage into the pulpit and used it to illustrate his sermon about Christ's coming to seek and to save the lost -- paying for them with His own precious blood. "That boy told me the birds were not songsters," said Gordon, "but when I released them and they winged their way heavenward, it seemed to me they were singing, 'Redeemed, redeemed, redeemed!' You and I have been held captive to sin, but Christ has purchased our pardon and set us at liberty. When a person has this life-changing experience, he will want to sing, 'Redeemed, redeemed, redeemed!'" **Our Daily Bread.**

What Christianity Cannot Be

"Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important." **C. S. Lewis** "C. S. Lewis," **Christian History (65.19.1), p. 27**

Luke 19:1-11

¹He entered Jericho and was passing through. ²And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. ³Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. ⁴So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way.

⁵When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." ⁶And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. ⁷When they saw it, they all *began* to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." ⁸Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."

⁹And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." [NASB]

Matthew 20:11-15

When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. 'These men who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.' "But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?'