

At the Gates of Jericho

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 June 2013

Preacher: Tobin Miller

[0 : 0 0] This morning, Tobin continues our journey of the Gospel of Luke, and we're going to be looking at chapters 18 and 19 this morning. It's listed in your bulletin if you'd like to follow along as I read.

As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging. Now hearing a crowd going by, he began to inquire what this was.

And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he called out saying, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet.

But he kept crying out all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus stopped and commanded that he brought to him. When he came near, he questioned him, what do you want me to do for you?

And he said, Lord, I want to regain my sight. And Jesus said to him, receive your sight. Your faith has made you well.

[1 : 0 6] Immediately, he regained his sight and began following him, glorifying God. And when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God. Later, he entered into Jericho and was passing through.

And there was a man called by the name of Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. Zacchaeus was trying to see who Jesus was and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature.

So 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. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, hurry, come down.

For today I must stay at your house. And he hurried and came down and received him gladly. When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.

Zacchaeus 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.

[2 : 1 7] And Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save, that which was lost.

This is God's word. How are you guys doing? Good. Yeah. As the sweat rolls down my brow, that's a great way to integrate real life experiences with scripture, isn't it?

Like, wow, that's good. He's going to be preaching next week. Better than me. Wow. Well, it's good to be back from Israel.

We took 26 people there. And I realized that I'm getting older because it just got over jet lag last week.

So we've been back about a week and I got over jet lag. And I think it's one of those age things, right? I was reminded of my age last night. We're sitting around eating dinner at the table and kids are talking about how big they're getting.

- [3 : 27] And all of our kids, we measure them twice a year on a little door pane in our room. And so we're about to measure them going into June. And the kids are talking about how big they're going to grow. And one's saying, I'll still grow a couple more inches.
- And one says, I'll grow, I hope I'll grow a couple more inches. And then my 10-year-old son says, I'm going to get as big as dad. I'm going to be 6'6".
- And the kids go, oh, come on. You're not going to be 6'6". No, you're not going to get that big. He goes, yes, I'm going to get bigger than dad because it's a known fact. So this is my 10-year-old, right? It's a known fact that when people get older, they start to slouch.
- At what time I'm sitting there at the table, I'm like... And so I have that going for me. So I'm told I'm getting older and I'm about to slouch.
- So that's interesting. But Israel is an interesting place. We encourage you to go with us next time we go. It's a paradox. It's an amazing place where joy, incredible joy, and incredible sadness kind of gather together.
- [4 : 29] And history is kind of layered on top of each other. Old Testament and New Testament. And today, and they love to tell jokes. And so every day, I got ran into by a joke, a Texas joke.
- The Israelis, for some reason, they just like to make fun of Texans and Asians. And they didn't make fun of Australians. I tried to introduce that to them, but they hadn't got there yet.
- So hopefully, by the next time we go back, they'll have some Australian jokes. But they just love joking. And so every day, they get these jokes. And so the story goes is that the Jewish guy had heard that maybe his heritage was from this lost tribe.
- When Babylon comes and they destroy Jerusalem, they take everybody to Babylon. And so then about 400 years later, Nebuchadnezzar releases them.
- And all the tribes go back into the Holy Land, except for tradition says this one tribe, it just kind of disappeared. It's called the Lost Tribe. And this guy thought that he was part of this lost tribe.
- [5 : 28] And he heard that there were a lot of Jews in China. And so he's thinking, maybe this is where my ancestry went. And so he got the ability, saved up some money, and he went on a trip to do some exploring of his genealogy.
- And he landed in China and he was meeting people and talking to people. And he made his friend and he was talking to the guy and he goes, I heard that there's a lot of Jews in China, but I haven't seen any of them.
- And the Chinese guy goes, oh, ton of Jews, ton of Jews, Jews everywhere. And the guy goes, really? He goes, yeah, we have orange juice and apple juice and grape juice. Think about it, okay?
- Anyway, so that was kind of the things that we experienced every day. It was a great time. But then you also, we have many of those. You'll come back with a portfolio of jokes about Texans.
- But it's also a place of incredible sadness. And you talk to the people and you see the history and you see the archaeology and you see the evidence, but they don't see Jesus.
- [6 : 37] And it's so evident, it's so clear when you walk to these places, but they don't see Christ. I was talking to this guy.
- If you go on a trip, you learn that I just like to talk to people because I want to hear their story and what's going on in their life and where they're at in this journey. And I talked to this Jewish guy and I said, so tell me, we're talking and I thought, you know, maybe he had some kind of faith because most Jews are agnostic at least in Israel.

And he goes, I said, so tell me where you are in your journey. And he said, well, you know, I'm in the darkness. I'm like, wow, we use that a lot in church and we talk about that, but I've never heard a Jew say that.

I've heard it once at a Jewish funeral. So what do you mean when you're in the darkness? And he goes, well, we're still waiting for the Messiah. And until he comes to free us and to release us and to put us back as God's chosen people, I walk in darkness.

And I sat there. I said, what if I could tell you that the Messiah has already come? Would that be something that you'd be interested in?

[7 : 56] The story today is one of my favorite stories in the sense that if you're a young kid, you've heard this story over and over and over again. Now, you've sung it.

It's chapter 18 and chapter 19, and you realize that when you study the Bible, you have to study it in context. You can't just take a story and say, what does this story mean for us? But the story of the scripture is the overarching story of God's story.

And then there's an Old Testament story and a New Testament story that fit within that. And then there are stories that fit within that. And each book has a story that is a part of God's story. And when you come to a passage like Luke 18 and 19, you realize that, you know that the chapters weren't added until hundreds, you know, maybe about 200 years ago, right?

So the chapters and the Bible verses, they're not inspired. They were things that people added 200 years ago to help us, you and me, study scripture. So sometimes they break chapters up in bad places because the theme and the story continues into the next chapter.

But they just broke chapters up to help us learn them and to memorize them so that we could act prideful, we know, John 3.16. But in Jesus' day, there wasn't a John 3.16.

[9 : 06] It was just for God so loved the world. And so when we come to chapter 18 and 19, we realize it's a part of a bigger story. There's actually four stories and the stories are this.

There's a Pharisee and a tax collector praying in the temple. And the Pharisee prays out loud, Dear God, I'm so thankful I'm not like this tax collector.

I'm so thankful I'm righteous. I'm so thankful I'm good. I'm so thankful that you've come to me as God's chosen people. I'm so thankful I'm not like that guy. And the tax collector is sitting there and he's saying, Dear Lord, have mercy on me.

A sinner. I need you desperately. The next story Jesus tells us he meets this rich young ruler. And the rich young ruler wants to follow Jesus and Jesus sees his heart and he says, I've done everything.

I've done everything to follow the law. I can follow you. And Jesus said, You've missed one thing. I want you to take everything that you have and go sell it and follow me.

[10 : 15] And the passage says that the young ruler walked away very sad because he was very wealthy. We said, and we did this sermon, that we're all very wealthy here in Hong Kong compared to the rest of the world.

And the disciples looked at Jesus and Jesus said, It's very hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they go, Well, who else? Then who can be saved? How is it going to be possible? If you say it's harder for a camel to go through an eye of a needle, then how can we be saved?

And Jesus says, With man, it's impossible. But with God, all things are possible. The third story is that Jesus takes his disciples aside and he tells them what's going to happen in Jerusalem one week from now.

He says, We're going to go up to Jerusalem and they're going to take me and they're going to deliver me to the Gentiles. They're going to mock me. They're going to mistreat me. They're going to spit upon me. And after they've scourged me, they're going to kill me. And on the third day, I'm going to rise again.

1834 says, And they understood none of these things. So Jesus tells them what's going to happen, but the disciples understood none of these things. And these things were hidden from them and they could not comprehend the things that were said.

[11 : 29] And then we get to the story of today. Jesus is walking to Jericho and Jericho is an ancient city. We want to go, we got a chance to go there.

Jericho, its name means perfumed city and archaeologists and historians will tell you that it's the oldest city in the world. It was destroyed and rebuilt and destroyed and rebuilt and destroyed and rebuilt 24 times.

And by the time that Jesus walks into it, it was already 9,000 years old. It was an amazing city. It was 17 miles to the east of Jerusalem.

It was on the trade route. It was in the valley. It was an oasis. All the trade routes walked through this city. If you needed to get to Jerusalem from the east, you had to go through Jericho.

We're told that it was full of palm trees and balsam trees and the smell was amazing. It was the first thing that the people of Israel saw when they left Egypt. Remember? Moses takes them out and they're disobedient and they're walking through this land and it's hotter than it is here because they're in the desert and all of a sudden for 40 years because they're disobedient and then they cross the river, the Galilee and they cross it and then they look up and they see Jericho and it's this oasis.

[12 : 50] It's amazing. It's the land flowing with milk and honey. We're told that there's this massive garden of roses that were planted in there by the rulers and so it just had this incredible fragrant aroma.

Josephus, the historian, said that in all of Palestine if you wanted to live someplace, you lived in Jericho because it was the best of Israel. It was the best Israel had to offer. It was one of the four main trade centers and tax centers.

So if you had to be taxed, you either got taxed in Jericho, Jerusalem, Capernaum and Caesarea by the sea.

So when the Romans exacted their tax, those were the four cities that your taxes were going from and so it was very wealthy and rich. It was also a city of priests because it's 17 miles to Jerusalem and you always walked up to Jerusalem and for 17 miles so whenever you had to serve in the temple as a priest, you would go to Jericho and wait your turn and then when your turn was drawn by lot, you would take your lot and you would go up to the temple in Jerusalem.

You would serve for one day and then you would walk back to your hometown. That's all you had to do is you served for one day so it was full of priests and on this day, there's a blind man.

[14 : 09] In Mark's gospel, we're told his name. His name is Bartimaeus and he wakes up every day like he's always woken up to gather his stuff to go to the gate of the city to beg because everyone had to walk through the gate.

It's where the elders sat. It's where information was exchanged. It's where all business happened and so he sits at the gate of the city every day of his life as a blind person and he cries out, give to God.

Worship God. Blessings. Mercy. These are the things that he would yell out at the top of his lungs but this day, this blind man goes there and he sits in the place that he's always set to get the best business from people coming in and something different happens.

He hears this noise, this incredible noise and it's this kind of almost like a rock stadium happening. We're told that Jesus' following is massive. Thousands of people are following him.

Now remember, Jesus is going to Jerusalem. He's going to get crucified in one week and so there's this huge parade and noise and it's just this huge commotion and it's the Passover. The Passover is the most important holiday in Jewish history and in our calendar.

[15 : 28] It's a day that they celebrate when God freed the people out of Egypt. It's a day that they took a lamb and they killed it and they took the blood and they painted it on their door and that night the angel of death passed through Egypt and whoever had faith, whoever trusted the Lord, whoever painted that door with the blood, the angel passed over them and so everybody goes to Jerusalem for the Passover to celebrate it and on this day historians tell us that over 3 million people go to worship because something special is happening.

There's this new rabbi who's come forward and he's spoken and taught and done miracles in ways that no one else has ever experienced and they hear these rumors that he's going to bring the kingdom and when the kingdom come it means power and position and freedom and authority and we're no longer going to be slaves, we're no longer going to be in bondage and so they are following Jesus in this huge crowd and the blind man is going, what's going on?

what's going on? And he asks the question and he says, well Jesus of Nazareth is coming by. Well this blind man, he's been sitting at the gate his whole life, he's heard information exchanged, he's heard these stories about Jesus, he's heard these miracles, he's told in Isaiah that when the Messiah comes he will make the blind see and he's heard that Jesus makes the blind see and so as he sits there day after day for 3 years of Jesus' ministry hearing these stories, he wonders, is he the Messiah?

he has to be the Messiah. Maybe he's the Messiah. Yes, he's the Messiah. Now remember, he hears a noise so he can't weave his way through the crowd and so he just yells out in Greek, he just yells out, Jesus, son of David, have mercy upon me.

It's a very interesting thing that he reads out because up until that point when we read those stories, no one knew that Jesus was the son of David. I mean, he kept telling them over and over and over all the people with sight heard these things over and over and over, his disciples, but none of them understood.

[17 : 48] But now this blind man, a blind man, he sees who Jesus really is and so he yells out, Jesus, son of David, Messiah, I need you, have mercy on me.

Verse 39, we're told, the crowd, shh, who's the crowd? The crowd's us.

The crowd's the churchgoers. The crowd's the religious people who are following Jesus because they want to see a new kingdom coming. I mean, the people who aren't religious, they're not going to follow Jesus because they don't care what's going on, but the crowd, the religious people who are following Jesus were told that they sternly rebuke him.

What do you do if you're a blind person? And everybody around you is saying, shut up. Be quiet. Don't make a scene.

I remember reading this story about Helen Keller. If you don't know her, she is an amazing woman. She was born in America in the 1800s. She's very famous. She's born blind and deaf.

[19 : 06] She's the first person ever to graduate from the university. She graduated from Radcliffe College with a degree. And she became a writer and an advocate. She helped start the ACLU for civil liberties and rights.

But she was blind and deaf almost her whole life. It happened when she was really young. And one time a reporter asked her, he said, isn't it terrible being blind? Well, she couldn't answer, right?

So she has to respond and she could read lips by touching people's lips. And you can go to YouTube, Google it. There's actually some YouTubes of her speaking, which is amazing because she learned how to speak. Isn't it terrible being blind?

And she responded, no, it's better to be blind and see with your heart than to have two good eyes and see nothing.

I guess there are worse things than being blind. And what the scripture says is that thing is being blind and not knowing that you're blind.

[20 : 09] Blind to your sin, blind to your hopelessness, blind to your selfishness, blind to your self-righteousness. But the blind man believes, he knows that Jesus is the Messiah.

He knows that Jesus can heal him. And in verse 39, it says in the Greek that he screams out like an animal. Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

Save me. There's a massive sense of urgency. Though no one else sees that Jesus is the Messiah, he sees and he knows that he cannot let this opportunity pass him by because if the Messiah passes him by, his life will always stay the same.

We're told in verse 40 that Jesus stops. Now remember, he's going to Jerusalem and for him to stop, a holy man would have been totally unculturally unthinkable because the blind man was unclean.

Because everybody in the culture would have thought he's unclean because of his sins, that's why he's blind. And a holy person would never touch an unclean person because the minute he did that, he would be unclean. And remember, Jesus is busy.

[21 : 22] In one week, he's going to Jerusalem and he's going to be crucified in one week. But the scripture says that no matter how busy Jesus is, he always has time for people like the blind man, like you and me.

So Jesus calls for the crowd to bring him to Jesus, which is what they should have done in the first place. And Jesus asks the question, what do you want me to do for you?

You see how he answers that? I want my sight to be restored. The Greek and the words say that he knows that Jesus is going to do that.

He knows that Jesus is the Messiah. He doesn't ask for merit. He doesn't say, well, I've been walking with you all this time. I've been waiting for you this whole time. I've been wondering when you're going to do this for me. I really need for you to come through for this.

All he says is he asks for mercy. He wants to be healed in verse 42, we're told that his faith healed him and then immediately his sight was restored. Immediately he follows Jesus.

[22 : 29] Immediately he glorifies God. And we realize that a blind man sees what no one else could see. He responds in faith.

I wonder if we were there, what would we ask Jesus to do for us today?

If you came home tonight and you met Christ and you knew it was him and he asked you, what do you want me to do for you? What would you ask him to do for you? Would we understand our need enough?

Would we understand who he is enough? Would we ask the right things? Or would they be selfish things, things that we'd want to spend on ourselves? Jesus enters into Jericho and he's passing through and we're told there's a man there by the name of Zacchaeus.

He was a chief tax collector. He was rich. And you know, being a tax collector was good in some ways and it was terrible in other ways. I mean, tax collectors were the social outcasts of Jesus' time.

[23 : 41] They were worse than the blind person. They were thought of as the Jews. They were a Jewish person who went to the Roman occupiers and said, hey, I will help collect tax from my people.

And so they contracted with the Jews. It was almost like a pyramid scheme. And so the tax collector knew how much the Romans wanted. No one else knew. And they went out and they taxed the people of God for what the Romans needed.

Always at a higher rate. So you bring your donkey and your cart and the guy goes, well, I think that's worth about \$300. You need to pay 1% on \$300. What?

It's only \$100. What are you talking about? No, it's \$300. His word was law and so you paid \$300. Then he'd write a note to the Roman officials and he said, I taxed a donkey in a golf cart today or cart \$100.

Here's a tax on \$100. So that was very, very, very common. So everyone knew that tax collectors were corrupt. And Zacchaeus was extremely wealthy. He was extremely powerful.

[24 : 48] He was kind of like at the top. He had hundreds of tax collectors underneath him and so he actually got a percentage of everything that they also siphoned off of people. He was so hated that tax collectors had to be given bodyguards by the Romans because they realized that if they didn't have a bodyguard they would be killed because they were so despised and such outcast.

Verse 3 says that Zacchaeus is curious. He wants to see who Jesus is. Maybe he had heard the stories too. Maybe he had heard about one of his fellow tax collectors Matthew in Capernaum who left tax collecting to follow Jesus.

Maybe Matthew was his best guy. I don't know but he had heard the stories because tax collectors tend to gather and talk about tax things and things like that because I guess because they're the only friends they have.

No one else wants to be a friend of a tax collector in Jesus' day. I don't know what it's like today but they did that and so Zacchaeus wants to find out who Jesus is but we're told in the passage that he can't because he's short and he can't look over the crowd.

The crowd again is keeping him from seeing Jesus and he's afraid to go into the crowd because he realizes that yeah they'll let him in but as he's walking through the crowd someone's just going to knife him and the crowd's going to separate and he's dead because everybody wants him dead so he doesn't know what to do so in verse 4 he does something amazing he says he ran ahead now no one in Jewish culture as a grown man would ever do this I mean it was something that you read all the rules and all the laws grown men never run because you wear this robe and to run you have to tuck your robe under there and you're like this and it looks totally stupid doesn't it?

[26 : 36] No grown man ever ran that's why the story of the prodigal son is so amazing because when the son comes after stealing all the money and spending all the money the dad it says runs to him the dad was wealthy and he's powerful in Hebrew culture says it especially powerful and wealthy men never run but Zacchaeus does it and he runs and then we're told something even more astounding if you had seen this and you told your friends that day after Jesus passed no one would believe it if you said I saw Zacchaeus running and all of a sudden he climbed up into a sycamore tree again culturally men would never climb into a sycamore tree it would be unheard of it would be something that they would never ever do it would be something that children would do powerful rich men or anybody who's older would never do that I have a picture of the sycamore tree on the back of your bulletin it's in Jericho we were there ten days ago we took a picture of it it's a big leafy tree it's short trunk it's easy to crawl up into it's easy to hide you can see that you know one time the U.S. ambassador to Egypt was outside in his compound and his wife was having a birthday party and he got up into the tree and he hung lights for his wife's birthday party and his servants and helpers and the neighbors saw him do that and it caused such a disruption in the culture that the president of Egypt had to call him into his office and he said

I have to ask you something because I know that it's impossible it's unreasonable you would never do that but somebody told me they saw you climbing up a sycamore tree and hanging and doing work and the ambassador was he didn't know the culture he didn't understand things and he said yes my wife's birthday blaming on the wife I did that you know and I didn't realize it caused such an international fuss and the president of Egypt said to him you know men don't climb trees especially powerful enrich men never climb trees so Zacchaeus is hiding in this tree and he's hoping that no one's going to see him and in verse 5 Jesus gets to the bottom and he looks up and he draws the attention of everyone to Zacchaeus it'd be like your worst moment right you don't want anybody to see you you didn't do your hair you didn't brush your teeth you went out shopping you're saying no one's going to see me they're not going to recognize me and all of a sudden the most important people in your world see you they recognize you and that's what happens and Jesus looks up and says Zacchaeus

I have a lot of questions like how did he even know his name he's God you wonder what the crowd is thinking right then they're like good you're going to get him bring him down criticize him rebuke him he's terrible he's a sinner let's go after him but instead the passage says that Jesus says hurry come down I mean it's a sense of imperative and it's a necessity I have to do this I need to come to your house again culturally it would have been unheard of everybody watching this would have been in shock because Zacchaeus is a sinner and for Jesus to go into his house it means that he takes on his sin in verse 7 it says that the culture in the crowd mumbles and grumbles and they're like wow this is really bad because if Jesus walks in there that means he's accepting this man and we hate him if Jesus walks in there that means he's putting in grace and blessing and forgiveness into this guy's life and into his house that's terrible because we don't want that to happen because this man is a sinner if Jesus walks in there

Jesus is going to become a sinner he's going to eat this guy's food and that guy's sin is going to fall on him and Jesus then cannot be the Messiah that we're hoping for because he's tainted with sin so the crowd does not want this the crowd is appalled and they don't want this thing to happen at all then in verse 8 we're told that sometime in the night we're not sure when it happened but Zacchaeus probably threw a party for Jesus and had other tax collectors there and in this party he stands up and he says something that's again so counter cultural and so other worldly that no one would ever believe after you told them he's responding to Jesus' grace of Christ of Christ coming into his life and into his world and treating him like a normal person which no one else ever did he's responding to the gospel that was given to him and immediately what he says is this I'm going to give 50% of everything that I own to the poor people now the Bible only says you give 10% or if you're really generous you give 20% but Zacchaeus is so touched by grace so touched by mercy so touched by Jesus' love that he gives 50% and then he goes on and he says

I'm going to repay anybody I cheated it says that in your text but in the Greek it basically says I've cheated a lot of people and so whoever I've cheated I'm going to repay them 400% in the Bible in Leviticus it says if you cheat somebody you only pay them 20% more so Zacchaeus is paying back 400% again it's this it's this public confession he's saying it to everybody this is what Christ has done for me this is how it's impacted my life these things used to be idols in my life they're no longer there I'm giving them away I'm making retributions I'm making things right and in verse 9 Jesus said today salvation has come it's in the passive it means that Zacchaeus didn't grab it it means that Jesus brought it God brought it into his world he brought it into his life he showed him grace he showed him love he showed him acceptance he showed him mercy and Jesus took it and because of that mercy and grace and love in his life he responded he paid back he made things right he made restitution all these things point to a heart change in his life all these things point to what happened because he met Jesus

[33 : 05] I wonder what would have happened if Zacchaeus said I believe but like a lot of us nothing ever changed in his life he didn't make restitution he didn't change his practices he wasn't a different person he said I believe but the community and the crowd who looked at him saw that there was nothing really different do you think people would believe him in Jesus' day that was unheard of because if you believe and you meet grace and mercy your life is changed then in verse 10 Jesus makes his purpose statement I bolded it for you it is the purpose statement of why Jesus came will you read it with me let's read it together for the son of man came to seek and save that which was lost one more time for the son of man came to see save that which was lost okay that's the story it's a pretty amazing story isn't it

I have a couple things I want to share with you as I sweat up here also I'm probably sweating more than you so you can feel good about that there's a couple observations that are true about these men and I think they're true about you and I the first one is that they're both blind one is physically and one is spiritually but the Bible says that you and I are also spiritually blind both men are outcast I mean both men are deemed unworthy in their society there's no reason why a holy person would talk to them there's no reason why God should talk to them or come into their world the Jewish culture would not accept that but both of these men were outcast and they had no value both of these men had to fight the crowd you notice that I mean both of these men had to fight the crowd because the crowd was trying to keep them from seeing Jesus in verse 39 they said shut up be quiet you're nothing you're an outcast in verse 7 you're a sinful person this cannot be happening the Messiah cannot go to you who's the crowd the crowd's us the crowd's the religious people the crowd's the people who are following Jesus the crowd are the pilgrims the crowd are the older brothers the crowd are the people who know what's going on in their life the crowd are the people who are perfect the crowd are the people who know scripture they can quote it backward and forward but it doesn't change their life and when I ask that question

I have to ask us the question is that us? am I the crowd?

am I keeping people from seeing Jesus? you know often I talk to people who are not Christ followers I mean I talk to a lot of people in the business world and other places and I ask them the question why aren't you a Christ follower and almost always they tell me Christians are hypocrites Christians say one thing but they do another thing Christians are self-serving Christians are dishonest Christians are more dishonest in business sometimes than non-Christians and the bad thing is that the Christians expect you to believe them because they're Christians but often they cheat us just as worse as the non-Christians do sometimes I talk to Christians who feel radically called by God to do something different in their life and they feel like God's calling them to step out take a step of faith and do something different but then religious people come into their world and say don't do that that's too radical that's unwise

I mean I know it says to trust God but maybe you shouldn't really trust Him that much don't act foolishly don't act recklessly I talked to a guy who was walking with the Lord and he said I feel like God's calling me to do this and I really want to do this and when I talked to my friends my friends looked at me and said wait until you have five million dollars saved in the bank and then if you have five million dollars saved in the bank then then you can really follow God you ever said that to somebody each one of them had to fight the crowd often it's just amazing to me because Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus had to fight through the crowd they had to fight through the religious people they had to fight through the hypocrites they had to fight through the people who said I follow Christ but their lives are not changed and the Bible says that Jesus fought those people also the Bible says that Jesus was angry he hated hypocrites he was talking about them all the time he confronted the religious people the people who said this is what I do this is what I do

[38 : 31] I'm really religious I go to church I do all these things but inwardly their heart is not different and Jesus says he despises those people they're the Pharisees if you're here and you're one of those two people you're a non-believer trying to see Jesus but the crowd is stopping you or you're a Christian and you want to follow Jesus and the crowd is stopping you wow air conditioner came on didn't it if you're one of those two people I beg you I beg you do not let the crowd stop you from following God the blind man had to yell out like an animal Zacchaeus had to run and climb up into a tree to see Jesus but they would not allow the crowd to stop them from seeing God today what you do is you go home you read the Bible you read the Gospels you read what's going on and if you do that you're going to meet Christ not as people say he should be or how you should be but you're going to meet Jesus and my prayer is that you would do that and you would see who he is and how he is and what he's called you to do and that you would trust him both of these men acted in crazy ways getting to Jesus and then after they found Jesus both of these men's lives changed radically both of these men's showed you that grace hit them and they understood that grace was costly what Jesus was going to do and what he has done and it changed everything in verse 43 when Bartimaeus regained his sight it says he followed Jesus he continued to pray he continued to worship and the history books tell us that Bartimaeus followed Jesus all the way to the cross he saw him crucified he saw him resurrected he was a part of the early church and he became one of the most influential lay leaders as a business person in the church of Jerusalem his life was totally changed it was totally radical

Zacchaeus when he met Jesus when Jesus came into his life his household was changed in Hebrew there's a sense that when someone walks into your house they change every part of your house and Zacchaeus we see that everything in his life was changed everything had different meaning he went on to be a pastor of a church in Caesarea Philippi and his life was radically changed after meeting Christ the question is this has everything changed in your life?

I mean if people look at you now since you became a Christian has your life radically changed? is it radically different? has the gospel and grace impacted everything about you?

I mean is your language different? are your values different? are your priorities different?

how you spend your money is that different? how we parent is that different? how we date and what we do on our dates is that different now that we've met Christ and he's changed us?

[42 : 09] how we view our jobs and why we even do jobs is that different? how we spend our time I mean has grace in the gospel affected everything in your life?

not me either I realize that sometimes I just forget how costly grace is I realize that sometimes I just forget how costly Christ's love was for us I realize that I need friends in my life gospeling me speaking the truth to me especially when I go astray I realize that sometimes I hold grace in the gospel and Jesus' love and his sacrifice and his blood too lightly sometimes I think that just coming to Christ is a one time event but I don't realize like Zacchaeus and Bartimaeus and everybody else in the Bible that it's an event that affects all the rest of my life everything else I do has to be impacted by Christ's love and sacrifice for me last thing and I've been thinking about this in both of these men's lives

Jesus had to come to them Jesus had to call them out I mean Jesus was on his mission and his mission is to seek and save lost people and some of us are still blind some of us are still hanging in trees looking and peering and this passage says to you that Christ is calling your name and he's good and he's in control and he wants to give you even more than you expect and he's begging you don't let the crowd keep you from him and the question of Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus in this passage and in the Bible is will we come down to the tree will we come down and meet

Jesus face to face will we allow him into our house for some of us we've already come into the family but we need to ask ourselves the question over and over again are we the crowd I mean have we forgotten Jesus mission statement because either we're a part of the mission he's trying to save us or we're on schedule with the mission and we're being a part of saving other people but there's only two options as Christ followers and the option as a Christ follower is that we need to be a part of the mission do we feel like we're here because we're good do we feel like we're here because we're intelligent we're hard working and we read the Bible is that why we think we're here and if we are then it means that we've lost grace we've lost understanding what it means to follow

God and my prayer for us is that we would confess that and we'd repent and we'd follow him all of us need to realize this one thing that all of us were outcast all of us were outsiders and the only reason we were able to get inside and become an insider is because Jesus who was the ultimate insider became an outsider for us and because Jesus came an outsider for us he became an outcast he was beat he was scourged he was crucified he died for us because the ultimate insider became the ultimate outsider now you and I who are the outsiders can become an insider does that make sense that's what this passage is all about Jesus the ultimate insider became the ultimate outsider and outcast so that you and I who are the outsiders become insiders back to the father and the question is do we want it do we want it that's the message of the gospel

[47 : 23] God is coming to us he's not asking us to change Bartimaeus didn't change before he met Jesus he had faith and he walked there and Jesus changed him I think sometimes in our life we're going well God if you're really true do this do this do this do this and then I'll believe you but that's not how it works in the Bible the Bible says we believe him we trust him and as we walk with him in faith he does things in our lives the Bible is more God centered and we're more me centered this passage is all about Jesus how much he loves us father we just thank you for this day we thank you for these two men who will know their names for history will know their names forever these two men that are changed I pray for those of us here right now Lord pray for those of us who are still in the tree or those who are asking questions that we would not allow the crowd and our doubts and our fears to blind you and take you from our eyes pray that they would walk in faith they would trust you they would ask questions they would realize that you are good and that you're calling their name and that you want to go on a journey with them father I pray for the rest of us who are here and we've been lost we now are your children but sometimes we just we lose sight of grace we lose sight of mercy we lose sight of why we're here

Lord we just come to you and we just repent we ask your forgiveness we ask for brothers and sisters in our life to come alongside of us and to show us that we're not an insider because we're cool and good and wealthy and all these things but we're an insider because you became an outsider to bring us in and that's mercy and that's grace and that's the gospel so Lord we come before you as needy people and we just worship you as a good God we pray these things in your holy name amen