

What a blessing to be with you this morning. Let's go one more time, go to the Lord in prayer. Father in the name of Jesus, we glorify you and we thank you for your presence in this place. I pray today Father that my brothers and sisters will see very little of Luther but Father all of thee, help me to decrease that you might increase, hiding behind the foot of your cross and know in our ears that we might hear your voice and know in our hands and our feet that we might not be just hearers of this word but God doers of this word. And thirdly we will give you all the praise, the honor and the glory for it is in Jesus name we pray. Amen

Luke Chapter 19 beginning with verse 1. You'll find these words written and he entered into a passing through Jericho and behold there was a man called Zacchaeus and he was a tax gatherer and he was rich and he was trying to see who Jesus was and he was unable because of the crowd for he was small in stature. And he ran on ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree in order to see him. He was about to pass that way and when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house." And he returned and came down and received him gladly and when they saw it they 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, "half of all my possessions, I give to the poor and if I have defaulted anyone, of anything, I will give back four times as much." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house. Because he, too, is the son of Abraham, for the son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Amen.

About a month or so ago, Pastor Kelly had asked me to come and to be a guest today and I looked forward to it. I remember him sharing with me the topic of this time together. It would be finding characters in the bible in who you could preach about, he opened it up. And right off the bat, I rattled off Zacchaeus and lo and behold I had no idea why Zacchaeus. Maybe I had a childhood moment of my Sunday School teacher speaking to me about Zacchaeus. I mean, honestly, truthfully, my brothers and sisters, there could have been a lot of people I could have talked about. I mean, my passion for Elijah, my love for Jeremiah, my interest in Bartimaeus. There were just plenty of folks I could have preached about and yet the Lord lead me to Zacchaeus. Every time I talk about Zacchaeus, I would always recall in my mind, a record in my mind, would hear the voice of my Sunday School teacher talking about this wee little man who wanted to see Jesus. And yet the more I started studying Zacchaeus, the more I found this brother to be rather fascinating because yet God uses him and comes into his life in a most powerful way. It is that encounter that transformed Zacchaeus of that single encounter with the Savior. I mean his name alone stands interesting to me. His name means righteous one and when you think about that, I mean if you were to interview the people of Jericho, if you would talk to the religious affluent, if you were to talk to some of the Jewish brothers at that time, they would say to you, you've got to be joking. There is no

way you could be talking about Zacchaeus as a righteous one because at that time, the tax collectors were considered renegades to the religious affluent at that time, to the Jewish people. I mean the idea that these were folks who made their money, who acquired their wealth by hustling others. They would overcharge their clients and pocket the rest for themselves. They made a living out of manipulating people. The Jewish nation considered him a renegade for the simple fact he was someone who has aligned himself with Gentiles and was using his position against the people. Righteous one, yeah, really. And yet there was something unique about him because in this, in this time, Zacchaeus has this incredible encounter with Jesus. I've often wondered what in the world, who lead him, what perked his curiosity to pursue after Jesus. I mean, Zacchaeus, really. Maybe he was Levi. Levi was a former tax collector. Luke talks about him in Luke, Chapter 5 beginning with verse 27, I mean, Levi was a former tax collector but you and I better know him as Matthew. Levi was the individual who comes into Zacchaeus' life and maybe just maybe, Church, maybe Matthew could identify with Zacchaeus. Maybe he understood the views at how people looked at him. Maybe he understood how people were disgusted with him. Maybe he understood the hustle, maybe he understood because he had been there himself before. And yet, somehow, God uses Levi as a conduit of grace, a distributor of grace, I resonate with you brother. I understand because I mean it was Jesus who comes into my office, speaks to me and I left everything to follow him. Maybe he simply understood what it is like to be ostracized, what it is like to be looked down upon, what it's like to be called a sinner. So maybe Levi ministered to him, maybe Levi simply said, you know what, you need to go see this Jesus. I'm telling you, you need to go see this Jesus. You need to meet him, I promise you he'll change your life. Maybe that is what he did. Maybe he simply heard about all the miracles that Jesus had performed. Maybe he was fascinated by the concept that Jesus had walked on the water. Maybe he was drawn over the simple fact how someone could take a couple of barley loaves and a couple of pieces of fish and lift them up before the Father in a multitude. whatever the reason or the rationale, one thing is certain is that Zacchaeus wanted to meet Jesus. And so he goes where Jesus was. And he pursues him and low and behold in his pursuit of going to see Jesus, he runs into a crowd and Luke, Dr. Luke, is so fascinated with this story that he is captured by everything. He looks and he says, wait a minute, he can't see. He said there are obstacles that are preventing him from seeing Jesus and the number one reason is because he is short in stature. He is a small man, he doesn't have the height to see Jesus, he is short.

And you know, the moment I'm looking at that, right away I start thinking about myself because I mean truth be told, if we were to be honest this morning, some us are spiritually short. Let us look at Romans 3:23 all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. When I start looking at my life, there have been plenty of times, brothers

and sisters, I got to be honest with you, there have been plenty of times I have come short of seeing the Savior. There have been plenty of obstacles, plenty of struggles, plenty of challenges in life when the Savior was right there and I fell short of seeing him. Regretted but I want to be real with you, plenty of times I have fallen short and truth be told, I'm not the only one in here. Some of us in here have fallen short of seeing the Savior. We fell short. But I like him, I like him because he is determined to see Jesus. He is determined to get a look at the Savior. He is determined to meet this guy. He is determined if I could only get a glimpse of him, he is determined to do that so what takes place in this inspired text blows me away. What he does is he's trying to look over the crowd, he can't see and what he does, he starts running back into the city. And that is unusual, that is unorthodox because Eastern custom simply says this, if you are wealthy, if you were a government official, it was beneath you to run. And yet here is this wealthy, this affluent brother, this government official running. He's almost like, childlike in behavior. He is running, he's anxious to see Jesus. No wonder, it's no wonder, that Luke tells us that unless we come like a child we should not enter the kingdom of God.

There is something about being childlike. I tell you for a moment, I thought I was set up for a moment when this little precious girl came walking up the steps and dropped her net down...ooohh...the innocence of that, the last minute. But yet I gotta do this. And so she kind of interrupts everything that goes on because she's just got to get this. When I say that back home, that is shouting territory. That's incredible. Being so childlike. I mean John Calvin said that curiosity and simplicity are a sort of preparation in faith. I mean he, his curiosity overwhelms him that he is willing to disregard his dignity to get a view of Jesus. And so he comes running and he runs to a sycamore tree. He doesn't run to a building, he doesn't run to where he can look out the window, he does nothing. It is the first thing that he encounters, is the sycamore tree and he runs and climbs into a sycamore tree. He sets aside all the dignity and all the affluency. He sets aside all the cares of the people. The viewpoints of the people, the looks of the people, he sets all that aside. Can you imagine for a moment this businessman, this government official in his sharpest Armani suit, cell phone to the side, expensive tie, I mean, if I was back at home, I would say that this boy is G'd up. This is GQ down. He is looking good. And yet he is so captivated by wanting to get a glimpse of Jesus that he looks and he says I'm climbing up that tree. I mean that he just becomes so childlike in nature. He says I'm getting this view of Jesus. I often wondered, as I have started studying this thing, if keeps us from putting ourselves out on a limb for Jesus. I mean really what's hindering you today from putting yourself out on a limb to see Jesus. I tell you know what, as he brought me this thing, I started thinking, you know what I believe some reasons that some people don't climb to get a better view of Jesus is because No. 1 they are concerned about what people think. What are people going to

say if I put myself out there? I mean what will people say if I really just become transparent in nature and I really, you know, take off the mask and show myself, you know. Some people don't try because they are more concerned about what people think versus what Jesus thinks about them. Some people don't climb because you know what, they are afraid, they are afraid, they are afraid of being neglected or rejected. They are afraid that someone may not receive them. They are afraid. Some people don't climb because they are afraid of the additional responsibility. They are afraid because they know that the higher you go, the more your butt is exposed. And for that reason, I may need to come down here. They are afraid of the responsibility that is attached to it. Because it is safe to stay in our own little corner, because if they go higher I'll see the herd of people outside these walls. I'll see the plight of people outside of these walls. I'll see neighborhoods in devastation. The kids without fathers, mothers without husbands, daughters roam the streets, sons in jail, and yet it is easy to stay here and to get a glimpse of him here and yet he calls us out there and so I don't want to climb because I don't want to be responsible. Another reason because some people don't climb, is because the higher you go, new levels bring new devils. The higher I go there is more, more attacks from the enemy. The higher I go in my view of Jesus, it doesn't please the enemy, he comes after me and so it is easier for me to stay on a lower level to stay low key. But I like this brother because he is willing to put himself on a limb to see him. Jesus comes, and this cracks me up, Jesus comes and the crowd is following him and Jesus comes and he looks up in that tree and here is hanging this affluent guy, this business guy, I mean, he is kind of like the, you know, when I think of Zacchaeus, I kind of, in that sycamore tree, it goes back in my mind as a grandparent and thinking of playing with my daughter, we would watch Sesame Street and I can hear the song "One of These Things Doesn't Belong Here". He is in this tree and Jesus looked at him and he said, "Zacchaeus, come down. Salvation has come to your house. I must abide there." That word abide is the same word Paul uses in Ephesians 3:17. That word abide means to be comfortable. He says to him, he says Zacchaeus, come down. You know the first thing that blows me away, is the fact that Jesus notices him in the tree. I mean, come on ya'll, there were other people all around Jesus. That there were other people who had issues, who were struggling, who were hurting, who was wounded and yet out of all the people that were there, Luke tells us, Luke says, wait a minute, I know there were a lot of people there, Dr. Luke says, listen the only person he noticed was the one that was in the tree but this gives me the tendency to believe that Jesus noticed those who are willing to rise above their handicap. He notices those who are willing to stretch themselves for his purpose and for his glory. I mean, come on, Bartimaeus was one who did that. I was so intrigued with Bartimaeus because when Bartimaeus saw four beggars sitting on the side of the road, he is hearing the crowd, he's hearing the uttering of the people, he's probably sitting there and hearing Jesus speak and then all of a sudden with the masses set

there, Jesus calls for Bartimaeus. He knows him by name, why? Because Bartimaeus cries out to him, "Jesus, Son of David, have Mercy on me". You would think that some of the precious brothers and sisters in the crowd would say, listen man, I know you want to see him. Let me help maneuver you closer so you can get a good look at him. And what does the crowd say? The same thing that the enemy saints use today, "just shutup and be quiet". He cries out more to Jesus, Son of David, have Mercy on me now and the bible says, that Jesus says Hey tell him to take courage, I'm calling for him and what does he do, what is the thing that rivets me the most, he drops his cloak. His cloak was his crutch. He would use the cloak and tie it around his waist and some kid would lead him through the city because they didn't have seeing eye dogs or sensitivity sticks. Sometimes he would wrap it in his hand and a kid would guide him and with the other hand he would lead but the moment he heard that Jesus was calling for him, he dropped his cloak, he dropped his crutch and navigated himself through thousands of people to stand before Jesus. He notices those who are willing to stretch themselves to get a glimpse of him. So he tells Zacchaeus, he said to Zacchaeus, he says, Zacchaeus I need you to come down. Come down because I must abide at your house. In other words he says Zacchaeus I want you to be comfortable. Aahhh, you talk about being blessed when I start looking at that, blessed because what the Savior does is he says listen, you thought you were looking for me. I came looking for you. I came looking for you this morning, I came looking for you, you thought you were looking for me, I came looking for you and I knew you would be here. And I want you to know you can come down this morning and be comfortable. You don't have to put on no pretense, you don't have to put on those masks, you can come just the way you are. Hurting, wounded, afflicted, disappointment, disillusionment, and whatever you are dealing with, he says you can be comfortable today because I came looking for you. And I want to abide with you. I know you've been hurt, I know you've been troubled and you might even have been ostracized but I came looking for you today so come down and allow me to abide with you. You see, that blows me away because the scripture says he comes and he knocks on the door. But in this particular text, Jesus said I'm coming, I'm coming to stay with you. I mean, scripture says he's a gentleman, he knocks on the door and whoever opens up, he'll come in and sup with you but in this text, Jesus is saying, I'm coming, I'm coming, you are just too important to overlook. You are just too important for me to pass by, I am coming for you, I am so glad, I don't know about ya'll today but I'm so glad when I look back over the benchmarks of my life. I'm so glad that Jesus didn't pass me by, I'm so glad that he's found me in my mess, I'm so glad that he's found me in my disappoints, I'm so glad he's found me in my failures, I'm so glad this morning that the sovereign Savior did not pass me by. Ah, it makes sense to me when I hear the songwriter say, Pass me not o gentle Savior. Hear my humble cry, while on other thou art calling, do not, Hallelujah, do not pass me by. And he stops and he says to Zacchaeus, come down. You know I found out that whenever you pursue

after Jesus, whenever you are willing to take the gamble and the risk to go to another level to see, whenever you are willing to come out of your comfort zone and leave the comfort of a plush building and go out there to find and to seek Jesus, everybody's not going to be happy. Everybody's not going to be thrilled that you are willing to stretch yourself out on the limb. Everybody's not going to be excited that you are willing to rise above your circumstances to pursue him. I mean, you know, the sad tragedy is, is the people that you think should understand are usually the people who don't understand. You would think, the Jewish leaders looked at him and said are you kidding me? He's dining with sinners they grumbled in their complaints. Everybody's not going to be happy but I like this because there has been this genuine encounter with Jesus and what I love about Jesus is that he changes us from the inside out and look what Zacchaeus says, Zacchaeus looks up at Jesus and he is a student of the Mosaic law, he says listen. He says if I have stolen anything, Lord, I'll give it back, anything. Mosaic law says that if a thief has confessed in taking some goods, he has to pay back restitution not only what he's taken, but 1/10<sup>th</sup> more. If he is caught with it, he has to give double. Zacchaeus is not grumbling over lost, he is not grumbling over principle, he says if I've taken anything, if I've defaulted anybody, if I've hurt anybody, take it all. Because what I saw was the most important thing. What I saw, what made me a big man, my wealth, my image, my prestige, today none of that matters than having that relationship with Jesus. I'm willing to give it all. What about you today, are you really willing to give it all? He says I'll give it all. There has been a change in this brother's heart and then and then Jesus and the crowd looks at him and I love what Jesus said because when Jesus looks at him, Jesus says Salvation, salvation has come to your house. You are the son of Abraham. Wait a minute, hold up. Zacchaeus, the son of Abraham? Yeah, Zacchaeus, Zacchaeus the renegade. Zacchaeus the manipulator, Zacchaeus the thief, is the son of Abraham. How can that be? Because he has this in common with you, he believes in Jesus. He has faith. Now faith without works is dead. So he exemplifies Abraham more than anything, because he says not only do I believe in Jesus but I'm willing to lay down everything for him. Like Abraham who laid down Isaac, his only son, Zacchaeus says I'm willing to lay it all down for Jesus and the Father. Jesus looks at him and says aahh, you are the son of Abraham. What about you today? Does he say that about you and I today? Can he say that about you and I today? Are you really, come on really seriously, are you really willing to go out on a limb for him? Are you really willing to lay it all on the line for him? How bad, Blackhawk, how bad do you really want to see him? Are we really willing to be like the little girl who just loved the Savior in her little sweet, tender way to drop her net to see Jesus? I pray that all of us are like her today that we are willing to go out on a limb just to give to him. Pass me not o gentle Savior, hear my humble cry, while another thou art calling, Thank you for not passing me by. Amen.

Let us pray, Father thank you today that you don't pass us by. But even right now in this place Father you are in deed looking for us, you knew we would be here, you knew our shortcomings, our failures, our disappointments, you knew we would be here. And you pursued us and you looked for us. Help us Father to have that tenacity to pursue you, to stretch ourselves out on a limb, to rise above our circumstances and our handicaps knowing Father that all things work together for our good. We love you today. Thank you for loving us and meeting us just where I am. Amen. Bless you.