

The Gospel of Luke

Lesson 24: Zacchaeus, the Ten Minas, and the Triumphal Entry -- Luke 19:1-48

A small man is running through the streets of Jericho, robes hiked up, dignity forgotten, until he reaches a sycamore tree and scrambles up into its branches like a child. Zacchaeus is rich, and he is hated. As a chief tax collector he has grown wealthy by squeezing his own people for Rome, and the crowd that lines the road today would gladly have left him on the ground, unable to see. But he climbs anyway, because something in him has to see this Jesus. And then the most unexpected thing in the world happens. Of all the faces in that crowd, Jesus looks up into the tree and calls the despised little man by name, and says He must stay at his house today. By nightfall a thief has become a giver, and Jesus has said the words that summarize His whole mission: "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (v. 10).

From the joy of one rescued man, Luke turns to a parable that lands like a warning. The crowd thinks the kingdom of God is about to appear immediately, in earthly splendor, the moment Jesus reaches Jerusalem (v. 11). So Jesus tells of a nobleman who goes into a far country to receive a kingdom and then return. He leaves his servants with money to put to work while he is gone. Some trade faithfully and are rewarded with real authority. One hides his master's money in a cloth, does nothing, and is condemned. And the citizens who sent word, "We do not want this man to reign over us" (v. 14), are brought before the returning king to face judgment. It is a story about a King who is going away to be crowned, who entrusts His servants with work, and who will surely come back to settle accounts.

Then the King comes to His city, but not as the crowd imagined. He does not ride a warhorse at the head of an army. He rides a borrowed colt, and the people spread their cloaks and cry, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" (v. 38). When the Pharisees tell Him to silence the crowd, He answers that if these were silent, the very stones would cry out (v. 40). And as the city of David comes into view, this triumphant King does something no conquering hero would do. He weeps. He weeps over a Jerusalem that did not know the time of its visitation, a city that will be torn down stone by stone because it would not recognize the One who came to bring it peace (vv. 41-44).

The chapter ends in the temple, where the King who wept now acts with holy zeal, driving out those who had turned His Father's house of prayer into a den of robbers (vv. 45-46). Read these verses slowly, because they hold the whole gospel in miniature. Here is a Savior who seeks the lost one by one and transforms him completely. Here is a reigning King who entrusts His servants with work and will return to reward and to judge. Here is a humble King worth more than every crown, who grieves over those who reject Him and burns with zeal for the purity of worship. Ask, as you read, whether you are climbing the tree to see Him, trading faithfully with what He has entrusted to you, and welcoming Him as King over every room of your life.

Group Discussion: When Jesus invited Himself to the house of Zacchaeus, the crowd grumbled that He had “gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner” (v. 7), yet that single act of welcome changed a man’s whole life. Think of someone the world has written off as too far gone, too compromised, too hated to change. How does it shape the way your group sees such people to know that “the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost”? What would it look like for us to actually go looking for the lost rather than waiting for them to find us?

Personal Reflection: Zacchaeus did not merely feel sorry for his sin; he stood up and made it right, giving half his goods to the poor and restoring fourfold anything he had taken wrongly (v. 8). Repentance showed up in his bank account and his relationships, not just his words. Is there a place in your own life where genuine repentance would mean more than an apology, where it would require restitution, a hard conversation, or a costly change? What is keeping you from making it right this week?

Read Luke 19:1–48

Study Questions

1. When Zacchaeus welcomed Jesus, he stood and declared, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold,” and Jesus answered, “Today salvation has come to this house” (vv. 8–9). What does this account teach about the nature of true repentance and the salvation that “the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (v. 10), and how is this different from a salvation that leaves a life unchanged?
2. The crowd despised Zacchaeus and grumbled when Jesus chose to be his guest (v. 7), yet Jesus saw a son of Abraham worth seeking. Is there someone in your life you have quietly decided is beyond reach or not worth your effort, and what would it mean for you to see that person the way Jesus saw Zacchaeus this week?
3. Jesus told the parable of the ten minas “because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately” (v. 11), picturing a nobleman who “went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return” (v. 12). What does this parable correct about the people’s expectations of the kingdom, and what does it teach about where Christ’s kingdom and reign are right now?
4. The nobleman gave each servant a mina and said, “Engage in business until I come” (v. 13), expecting them to put what they had been given to work. As you look at the gifts, opportunities, time, and resources Christ has entrusted to you during His absence, where are you trading faithfully, and where are you tempted to bury the mina in a cloth and play it safe?
5. The servant who hid his mina excused himself by saying, “I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man” (v. 21), and the master condemned him for doing nothing with what he had been given (vv. 22–24). What does this teach about how a distorted view of the master leads to fruitless fear, and about what God actually expects from His servants?

6. When the faithful servant returned the master's increase, he was given authority over ten cities (v. 17), a reward far greater than the small sum he had managed. How does knowing that Christ notices and rewards faithfulness in small things change the way you approach the ordinary, unseen responsibilities of your daily life?
7. As Jesus approached Jerusalem the whole multitude began praising God, crying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!" (v. 38), and when the Pharisees objected, Jesus said, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out" (v. 40). What does the manner of Jesus' entry, riding a humble colt rather than a warhorse, teach us about the kind of King He is, and why is the praise of this King not optional but fitting?
8. Jesus wept over Jerusalem and said, "Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes" (v. 42), grieving a city that "did not know the time of your visitation" (v. 44). When have you sensed God drawing near to you, calling you to repentance or to a deeper walk, and is there any way you might be missing the time of His visitation in your own life right now?
9. In the parable of the ten minas, the nobleman goes away "to receive for himself a kingdom and then return" (v. 12), leaves his servants to do business until he comes (v. 13), returns "when he had received the kingdom" to reckon with them (v. 15), rewards the faithful with authority (vv. 17-19), condemns the servant who did nothing (vv. 22-26), and finally judges the citizens who said, "We do not want this man to reign over us" (vv. 14, 27). Putting the whole parable together, what does it teach about Christ's present reign as King, the stewardship He has entrusted to His servants now, the accountability of His return, and the judgment that falls on those who refuse His rule?
10. Look back across the whole chapter, from the rescued tax collector, to the King who entrusts His servants with work and will return to reckon, to the humble King who weeps over a city and cleanses His Father's house. Name one specific way you sense Jesus forming you through these verses. What is the single truth from Luke 19:1-48 that you most need to carry into this coming week?

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Acts 2:32-36, Peter's declaration that the risen Jesus has been made both Lord and Christ and now reigns at God's right hand; Colossians 1:13-14, our deliverance into the kingdom of God's beloved Son; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, the new creation and the ministry of reconciliation given to Christ's servants; 1 Corinthians 4:1-5, faithful stewards of the mysteries of God who will give account; Daniel 7:13-14, the Son of Man given an everlasting kingdom that shall not pass away.