

RECONNECT → Generosity

Luke 19:1-10

Main Idea: Generosity is a basic step in following Jesus.

Welcome to church at the beach. So very good to see all of you this morning – and I hope that you’re planning to hang out after church for food. Sandwiches, chips, cookies – lots of cookies. Hang out with us, and let’s eat together.

During our time of worship today – as we continue our time of worship through the Word today – we’re continuing the theme of Reconnect Back to the Basics. We’re looking at the basics of following Jesus – of living our lives for the glory of God and the good of others.

Last week on Easter, we started with the Gospel – specifically looking at the Scripture in 2 Corinthians 5 that the Gospel doesn’t tell us to try harder, it invites us to start over.

This week, we’re looking at Generosity. As a basic element of following Jesus. And the Scriptures we’re going to use are found in Luke 19:1-10 – and the story of Zacchaeus.

KIDS!!! Who can tell me 1 think about Zacchaeus? Raise your hand, don't shout out. 1 thing.

- Wee little man
- Climbed up in a tree – WHAT kind of tree

Better yet – and of you know the Zacchaeus song and want to come up and share it with the church?

Well, some of you may be thinking “what does this wee little man have to do with the Basic Christian position of Generosity?” If that's you, great. Hopefully in the next 30 minutes or so, you'll have a good answer.

Turn with me, if you have a Bible to Luke 19. If you're using a device, tap swipe scroll to Luke 19.

READ Luke 19:1-10

19 He entered Jericho and was passing through. ² There was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich. ³ He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was not able because of the crowd, since he was a short man. ⁴ So running ahead, he climbed up a sycamore tree to see Jesus, since he

was about to pass that way. ⁵ When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because today it is necessary for me to stay at your house.”

⁶ So he quickly came down and welcomed him joyfully. ⁷ All who saw it began to complain, “He’s gone to stay with a sinful man.”

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, I’ll give half of my possessions to the poor, Lord. And if I have extorted anything from anyone, I’ll pay back four times as much.”

⁹ “Today salvation has come to this house,” Jesus told him, “because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost.”

PRAY.

So here’s what’s happening. Jesus is travelling to Jericho, leading up to Palm Sunday, his mickey mouse trial, and crucifixion and then Easter Sunday. So, right before the last week of his life. This was an annual pilgrimage that the Jews would take for Passover celebration in Jerusalem.

In the chapters leading up to Luke 19, Jesus had been teaching and travelling. And Luke writes to us about the large crowds that were following him. At one point it says a crowd of many thousands. Luke 15 even says “all the tax collectors and sinners were approaching to listen to him” ...

Jesus teaches about money, about prayer, about the radical nature of following him (denying self, etc.), and at one point he even looks to the crowds and warns them to count the cost of following him.

And then Jesus enters Jericho.

V2 – Well, Zacchaeus real was a small man, and a tax collector. Not only was he a tchief ax collector, he was rich the Bible says.

Clearly Zacc had heard about Jesus, and he probably knew that he had welcomed sinners and tax collectors. See, everyone hated the tax man.

- Illustration – When I was in banking, we were always dealing with Federal Bank Examiners. No one liked it. It was excruciatingly difficult to deal with these guys. But they couldn't cheat us.
- Not so with 1st Century Roman tax collectors.

- Appointed by the Romans to tax the Jews.
- Could skim off the top

And Zacc was no ordinary tax collector – he was a chief tax collector. Think of it like Multi-Level Marketing (Pyramid scheme). Zacc was at the top. The guys under him, had a \$\$\$ amount they had to get to him. He would send some off to Rome and pocket the rest.

Basically being appointed as a Roman tax collector gave you a license to steal from people, and the tax collectors were hated because they got rich by extorting their own brothers and sisters.

Well, Zacc wasn't real tall, so he has to run ahead and climb up this tree so he can see Jesus. He knows there's something to this Jesus guy, and he's desperate to see him.

Enter Jesus...

What an incredible story. Crowds all around him, Jesus looks up, and says Zacc come on down. It's necessary for me to go to your house.

- Necessary – or Must

The story says that Zacchaeus was surprised – no one of honor or ceremonial cleanliness would have ever come to Zacc's house because of his occupation. No chance.

The crowds...

The started to grumble. Of course. Because hear me, when Jesus saves wicked people, sinful people, people that are outcast from social and religious groups, people that don't look like you think like you talk like you – when Jesus saves people there's always going to be a group of self-righteous religious people that get mad and angry for Jesus saving "those people". Some of us here have experienced and had to deal with this type of thing in our lives and ministries.

See, the Scripture teaches that there is joy in presence of God's angels over 1 sinner that repents (angels literally rejoicing)...but some self-righteous religious people get grumpy. I don't know about you, but I don't give a rip about the grumpiness of self-righteous religious people. I'm going to focus on the joy in the company of angels.

The crowds complained because he had gone to stay with a sinful man.

But Zachaeus...

Re-Read 19:8-9

Now...if we take these verses out of context, we'd almost get the impression that Zachaeus bought his way into heaven. That's not at all the point.

Zacc doesn't buy his way into heaven – that's not going to happen. Just a few chapters earlier Jesus is teaching about wealth and the Gospel. And he teaches about the false appeal of earthly wealth.

We don't know the conversation that must have taken place with Jesus and Zacchaeus. But what we do know is that Jesus changed everything about Zacchaeus. And the evidence of Zachaeus' life change, a life of repentance and faith in Jesus is shown right here in how he uses his money.

In Matthew's Gospel, 3:8, John the Baptist tells people to "bear fruit consistent with repentance." Can I tell you, Zacchaeus' 4-fold restoration of those he'd cheated and his giving of 1/2 of his wealth to the poor – what I'd suggest to you is the fruit of repentance. The evidence that Jesus is better than money, Jesus is better than wealth. Jesus is all Zacchaeus needed, and he's all you and I need as well.

Couple things to consider – the authenticity of Zacchaeus’ faith in Jesus was evidenced by this instant transformation in his life. He makes the maximum restitution required by the OT law to those he’d stolen from. He goes from thief to philanthropist like that.

V10 – The Seeking Savior

Jesus comes to seek and to save the lost.

Hear me – if you are a Christian – hear me loud and clear. The only reason you believe is because Jesus is a seeking Savior. He seeks people.

- Good church people
- Tax Collectors and sinners
- Morally pure people
- Morally debased people

All types of sinners – being sought by Jesus.

What does this have to do with Generosity? Good question. See, I think we need to understand that when Jesus saves us, takes control over everything, including our finances. Zacc was a wealthy dude. Had lots of money. Was sitting on top of the pyramid. Racking in the money. And then Jesus saves him and nothing else matters.

Because when Jesus saves us, his priorities become our priorities, including how we use whatever resources God has chosen to trust us with.

- For Zacc – generosity was an act of showing the greatness of Jesus to others. For us, generosity is an act of showing the greatness of Jesus to others. And hear me, this type of showing often is accompanied by an opportunity to share Jesus with others.
- For Zacchaeus – generosity was an act of faith and obedience. For us, generosity is an act of faith and obedience.
- Generosity will always cost you something. In fact, I'd say a key component to generosity is sacrifice. I don't think there is such a thing as generosity without sacrifice. You can be giving without being sacrificial, but you can't be generous (at least how I use the word generous) without an element of sacrifice.
 - Said another way – generosity will limit your lifestyle
- Generosity (or lack of it) reveals what you really treasure more than anything
 - Matthew 6
 - ¹⁹ “Don't store up for yourselves treasures^[1] on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal.²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves

don't break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- American Mindset – make all you can so you can spend all you can
- Biblically – the more you make the more you can share
 - PH Generosity Gap
- Generosity and the love of \$\$\$ are mutually exclusive. 1 Timothy 6:8-10
 - ⁸ If we have food and clothing,^[e] we will be content with these. ⁹ But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root^[f] of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.
- Generosity and contentment often work together.

CONCLUSION...

So, if we agree that generosity is a basic step in following Jesus, where do we go from here?

- **Honest assessment**
 - **Do I really desire to honor the Lord with what he's given me?**

- **Do I really believe that God will honor my desire to honor him with my resources?**
- **Does how I use the resources the Lord has provided show a lack of faith?**
- **Faithful action – Generosity requires faith. An act of trusting the Lord over every area of our life – including our resources.**
 - **Starts with the local church**
 - **Moves out from there**
 - **Illustration – How Victoria and I have been led to practice generosity**