



Lost People Are Not the Enemy **Loving & Living The Gospel in an Abortion Culture** **Luke Series #47**

Luke 19:1-10

David Sunday

January 20, 2013

Our amazing, wonderful, all-sufficient Savior is with us. He loves His church. He is committed to doing us good with all His heart and with all His soul.

Lord, we ask now that You would make Your presence known as we seek to think about a subject that is both painful and unpleasant, yet so absolutely important if we're going to live faithfully for You in this world at this time. I pray for great help from your Holy Spirit to preach this truth in love and that You would grant ears to hear and that all of our hearts would be moved to act under the guidance and leadership of Your Holy Spirit. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

Every year, as the third week of January approaches, I hate that we have to address the sanctity of human life, but as long as our culture remains in the stance that it's in and until every human life created in God's image is cherished no matter if it suffers from Down's Syndrome or spina bifida or a long-term illness or a life that is different from us ethnically, I believe it's important for us as a church to think God's thoughts about the sanctity of life. I'm committed as a pastor to addressing this subject at least once a year. I believe it would be unfaithful to remain silent on this area.

Last year and in years past, we focused on the first casualty of an abortion culture which is millions and millions of unborn human lives created in God's image. I would encourage you to go back to January's message from 2013. Justin Taylor gave a brilliant defense for unborn human life and a stirring call to our church for action in that area.

Today I want to focus in a different direction. I want to focus on what Dr. Russell Moore calls the second casualty of an abortion culture. He's referring to countless men and women whose consciences are enslaved by guilt and shame as a result of their participation in this evil. Moore says that many of the people endangered by the abortion culture aren't even pro-choice. They're in our neighborhoods. They're in our churches. They are people who are vulnerable to abortionist propaganda, not because they reject the church but because they are afraid the church will reject them. These are pregnant young women. They are parents. They are boyfriends. They fear ostracism, so they keep it secret. They don't want to be seen as bad families and in that secrecy and shame, they often fall prey to the lie of the abortion clinic that says, "We can take

care of this for you and it will all go away.” Once the lie has been bought, the satanic powers scream in the secrecy of their shame, “We know who you are and we know what you’ve done!” They are tormented by shame.

Into this darkness, the gospel shines with light and beauty and power. The gospel shines with good news that God has made a way for people who have participated in this sin and in countless other sins. He wants you to hear the voice, “There is now no condemnation for you in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1). The gospel shines with good news that you, through the blood of Jesus, can be seen by God no longer as that man who pressured and paid for an abortion; or that woman who had an abortion; or that parent or teacher or social worker or medical worker who counseled or participated in an abortion; or that person who knew what needed to be done but did nothing to help a scared and vulnerable woman who was desperate in her crisis. The good news is that there is absolution from guilt, there is liberation from this shame and from all shame through the blood of a crucified Savior Who is now raised from the dead to give life to those who call on His name.

Dear church, this is our mission in a culture that too often chooses death over life. Our mission is to speak forth and show forth this gospel message, to love the gospel and to live the gospel in our culture. So I have one point for this message. If you’re taking notes, this is all you need to write down and I’m just going to keep repeating this one point and driving it home, tracing out its implications in different ways.

Lost People Are Not the Enemy

That’s the point of this message. Absorb that truth. It’s one of the key themes of the Gospel of Luke that we’ve preaching through for over a year.

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10).

Lost people thought they played the part of God’s enemy but He did not treat them like His enemy. He came to seek and to save the lost. We find in the passage that we are going to turn to now, Luke 19:1-10, where one teacher is called the distilled essence of Jesus and the epitome of Luke’s Gospel. So let’s look at this great passage together, verses one through ten. Let’s look at the distilled essence of Jesus, the epitome of Luke’s Gospel and let’s trace the message of this passage and its implications to the sanctity of human life.

¹He entered Jericho and was passing through. ²And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. ⁴So he ran on ahead and

climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. ⁵ And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." ⁶ So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. ⁷ And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." ⁸ And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." ⁹ And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Thanks be to God for His Word to us today.

Now if you wanted to sum up the message of Christianity in one sentence, verse ten would be a perfect one to reference. Jesus "*came to seek and to save the lost.*" There you have it. The gospel message in a nutshell. This is Jesus' mission statement. This is the purpose of His life from the manger to the cross.

Companies spend millions of dollars to craft a mission statement and then, when we find out it's not working well, we spend another million to rebrand it and it goes on and on and on and on. But now Jesus, from the manger to the cross, has made this the consistent mission of His life. Never was there a human being whose life was so absorbed and so concentrated on one passion, one purpose and one mission as the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. He came to seek and to save the lost. That's why He came. His prayer life, His preaching, His personal dealings with people were all permeated with this one great purpose: God the Son came down into our dark and death-haunted world to seek and to save lost people.

Now we don't like to admit that we're lost. It's a terrifying thing to be in the middle of the desert and have no water, not knowing your way out. It's also terrifying to be in Northern Wisconsin on some rural highway in the middle of sub-zero temperatures and then run out of gas. You check your phone and GPS but there's no signal; there's no OnStar navigational system. You're lost and you're in trouble. Or to be in the middle of the sea somewhere and realize, "I don't know how to get back to shore." Your compass isn't working. The Bible says humanity is lost. That's a terrifying reality but there's a glimmer of hope in that statement as well because to be lost means that we belong to someone.

We Belong to God

The reason God calls us lost is that we are missing to Him. We've been lost to Him. We've fallen out of His active use and possession. Now it's not that God doesn't know where we are, but our lives were made to revolve around our Creator, the way the earth revolves around the

sun. God is our life, our light, our hope, our health, our blessedness. We are made to delight in Him, depend on Him, adore Him and to live in Him, but we've gone rogue. We've gone off the grid. We've stopped actively trusting, serving, obeying and enjoying God and in doing so, we've become alienated from Him. We are also alienated and out of harmony with our fellow man and with ourselves. We've swung out of orbit like a wandering star and if you remain in this lost condition, the Bible says you will be lost forever. It describes it throughout eternity as being ruined and given over to destruction, a very terrifying reality. Jesus came into the world to rescue us from that reality, to rescue us from eternal lostness. He has the power to find us and bring us home to God. It's like there's a homing system inside us and Jesus knows how to locate us and how to bring us home to our God.

Now let's look at Zacchaeus. In verse two, he is a great illustration of this lost condition. He was a chief tax collector and was very rich. Now tax collectors in this culture were notoriously crooked. They slapped huge fees on top of the taxes that they were charged by the Roman government and they became filthy rich through their extortion. Being a chief tax collector would make him one of the worst criminals of them all because he could just boss around his underlings and collect all the fees. He never had to look the people in the face, see them losing their homes or going hungry because of his extortion. So he was growing rich off of other people's expenses and in doing so, Zacchaeus became a public enemy. People hated him and nobody wanted to associate with a guy like this. But they had one advantage over him, height. Zacchaeus, it says in verse three, was small of stature. He was short. "Zacchaeus was a wee little man and a wee little man was he." So just imagine the crowds as Jesus was about to pass by and Zacchaeus is trying to get a look at Him. They're not letting him through. Maybe they're blocking his way, stepping on his toes, even pushing him down and finally, as he cannot find his way to Jesus, he casts off all restraint, all dignity and he climbs up into a sycamore tree and waits for Jesus. In verse three, he tells us why he did that. "*He was seeking to see who Jesus was...*" Now that's not a bad idea is it?

Seek to see Who Jesus is. There are people in our lives right now who are curious. People you wouldn't expect. They want to know Who Jesus is. You could invite someone to "Exploring Christianity" next week. They are curious. They are wondering Who Jesus is. That's a perfect opportunity. The Bible encourages such seeking.

*Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;*

*let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

[Isaiah 55:6-6]

The Bible encourages seeking but the problem is that sin makes us averse to God, resistant to God and disinclined to seek God. Sin propels us on a mad rush toward hell. It plugs our ears and puts blindfolds on our eyes; it hardens our hearts so that the Bible brings this indictment against us in Romans 3:10-11: *“None is righteous, no not one. No one understands. No one seeks for God.”*

God says, “Seek Me” (Matthew 6:33). Sin says, “Forget about it. I don’t have time for that. I’m not interested in that.” There’s only one way a sinner like Zacchaeus— like me and like you—will ever seek the Lord and that’s because the Lord was seeking him. This is the story of two seekers. Though he was seeking, he was also being sought by the Son of Man Who *“came to seek and to save the lost.”* If you find in your heart a desire to seek the Lord—an interest in Jesus —I assure you that it is because He is seeking you. That desire did not come, did not originate, from within you. Believe that Jesus is seeking you and is able to save you.

Zacchaeus might have been seeking out of curiosity but Jesus is seeking out of love. Zacchaeus hopes to a glimpse at Jesus but Jesus intends to show Zacchaeus a prolonged gaze at His glory. We see in verse five that Jesus, Who could have just continued on His merry way, knew this man’s name. He found him from afar. He stopped at the place where he was. He looked up into that tree and said to him, “Zacchaeus!” What a surprise that must have been for this man to hear Jesus call him by name. “Zacchaeus! Hurry and come down!” Not a suggestion; a command. “Get out of that tree for I must stay at your house today.”

Don’t you love that Jesus doesn’t wait for an invitation? He doesn’t seek permission. He invites Himself over for dinner. He exerts the authority of His sovereign grace over this rich tax collector and Zacchaeus finds that grace irresistible. Verse six says, *“So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully.”* No hesitation. No suspicion. No guardedness. His heart is opened along with his home and he gladly receives Jesus, the Friend of sinners.

We find here an illustration of good news that is for you and for me. In all our seeking, we are being sought. Jesus—the great Shepherd of the sheep, the great Seeker and Saver of the lost—has a thousand ways to bring us to the point where He desires to meet us. He sees us when we’re still a long way off. He comes to us in sovereign grace and power. He doesn’t wait for us to invite Him in. He asserts Himself. He pursues us through the labyrinth of our sin and folly, and sometimes to the very brink of our destruction. Then His grace prevails over our lives and we find ourselves singing,

I once was lost, but now I'm found;
was blind, but now I see.

(Amazing Grace, John Newton)

It's all due to the amazing grace of a seeking, saving Savior.

Now I'm going to read you something that describes the condition of our lives that requires us to be sought after, to be saved, to be found. I read these words from Ray Ortlund and he didn't know where he found them originally, but they struck me forcefully.

"There will come a time when you simply fail, inexcusably and terribly. You will feel yourself standing among the shattered pieces of the beautiful work of art that you just broke. You will surprise yourself that you were that stupid, bad and morally weak. You will fail at something incomparably important and you will feel like you are a failure. You will despair in hopelessness. You will meet your inner Judas—that spiteful little coward who lives in the basement of your soul. You'll hurt the ones you love and you'll lie about it. You will do something embarrassingly bad and not face up to it. You will give yourself excuses and you will give others excuses. If you don't confess to yourself then you won't be able to confess to God and those you love either. You will do this and then the rot will stay in there and spread until it rots your life so obviously that you can no longer deny it."

That's reality. That's the human condition after men and women fell in the Garden of Eden. Can you identify with that? Have you ever felt that kind of failure? Maybe the word abortion brings you face to face with your own failure, with the inner Judas that lurks in the basement of your soul. If so, you are not alone. This is the raw truth about each of us. Our lives, created in the image of God, are a beautiful work of art that we have shattered. The failure that you feel is the story of every human life. It's just that so many people have desperately been afraid to face it, to admit it. We make excuses. We lie to ourselves and to others and to God, but our souls are rotting. We are desperately afraid that there is no one who will accept us if we come clean with who we really are and what we've really done. We're hiding in shame and running away as fugitives from our own guilt.

Then we hear a voice calling, "Hurry and come down! Stop your searching! Stop your running! Stop your hiding! Stop your self-exertion and all your efforts to cleanse yourself, to redeem yourself and to save yourself. I am a Savior Who came down into your world, into your mess, into your failure, into your ruin and I do not despise you. I love you and I love you with an everlasting love. I came to seek and to save the lost. Though you've played the enemy, I come to you as a friend. I seek you and I save you, not to shame you but to redeem you, to restore your long-lost identity, to bring you into the family of God, to make you like Zacchaeus, a son of Abraham, an heir to all the covenant promises of My grace."

Do you hear that voice? Do you realize that's what the gospel is saying to you today? We think our guilt and our shame are so repulsive that we've got to get our house all cleaned up before Jesus would ever want to come over. But the more we try to clean up the mess, the more disheveled it gets. Jesus says, "Just forgot about all that. I'm coming now. Get down out of that tree. I want to enter into a relationship with you." He interrupts. He invites Himself in. He initiates friendship. Jesus takes an interest in you—an interest that stuns you. "He, the Savior of the world, wants to know me? He wants to have a relationship with me? He wants to come into my house? He wants to enter into my life?"

The more you cultivate that friendship with Him, the more you find that grace that amazes you is now transforming you, making you a new creation, just like it did for Zacchaeus. And that's why we see a new man in verses eight and nine. He now repents from his sin and does restitution for those he's stolen from and he's a new person in Christ Jesus. He's got a new identity in God's family. What explains this traumatic transformation? Verse ten, "*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*" Praise God for that! Praise God that Jesus meets us at the intersection of the collision of our failure and shame, where our lives have been totaled by sin. And He says, "I'm going home with you and I'm not just going to make you better, I'm going to make you whole. I'm going to make you new and I'm going to stay with you forever."

Friends, lost people are not the enemy. Lost people are not Jesus' enemy. He didn't treat them like enemies. He initiated friendship with them. They are the objects of His relentless love. If you are hiding in the dark right now with some shame and some guilt that's just tormenting your life, we, as the church, exist to show Jesus to you. That is our reason for being the body of Christ. It's to show Jesus to you. We want to do that through our relationships. We want to do that through our conversations. It's what Exploring Christianity is all about, too. Jesus came to seek and to save you and me from our guilt and from our shame.

I'd like to close with a challenge to us as a church. This is to every member and every follower of Jesus and it's simply this: Do we share the heart of our Savior? Do we embrace His mission as the mission of our lives? Let's relate that to Sanctity of Life Sunday. Who do you know who is a casualty of the abortion culture? Who do you know who is radically pro-choice? They support Planned Parenthood. They stand for everything you find reprehensible. Can you think of someone in your life like that?

What are you doing to get close to those people? How are you seeking to show them the love of a Savior Who has sought you and found you amidst the shattered pieces of your broken life? Do you love lost people or do you treat them as the enemy? Are you eager to enter into their lives to engage with their thoughts, to meet them where they are? Or are you just kind of angry

with them for ruining our country through the things they stand for? The more you see our culture going in *this* direction, the angrier you get.

It doesn't come naturally for people to identify with Jesus' mission. If Jesus were here right now, there'd probably be a few people who'd be offended, even in the church, with how aggressively and how warmly He embraces lost people. Just look at verse seven for a minute. When they saw Zacchaeus getting down from that tree and rejoicing that Jesus was coming to his house and Jesus probably putting His arm around him and smiling and saying, "Oh, I'm looking forward to spending some time with you." *"When they saw it, they all grumbled."*

Jesus had gone in to be the guest of a man who was a sinner. If they had known the hidden evils of their own hearts and faced the Judas in the basement of their own souls, they would have rejoiced. They would have seen that and they would have said, "How wonderful! Maybe there's hope for me, too. Maybe Jesus will come to me." They didn't realize that if Jesus went into their house, somebody else would be grumbling about them and their sin. They didn't see themselves as sinners.

So here we are on Sanctity of Life Sunday, talking about what I believe is one of the most horrendous moral crises of our time. I think that it would be a shame for any of us to get fatigued in the battle for the sanctity of human life and to be silenced by a culture that just wants us to stop talking about it. But today, I'm asking us what's going on in our hearts toward people who are on the other side. When we see the metastasizing effects of abortion and all its related issues on our culture, does it provoke you just to grumble or does it grieve you and move you to compassion, to give of yourself actively in love toward lost people? Do we treat those people as the enemy or do we seek them out with the saving grace of Jesus, the Friend of sinners, Who came to seek and to save the lost?

I read about, Sohan Sing, a grocery store owner in England who got fed up so he banned customers from his store. He told the London Newspaper that he had taken an incremental approach. First he banned smoking, then crude language. People didn't respect that. Then he banned baby strollers because you know, they can be a little disruptive at times; then pets and finally customers. He banned customers from his store because of their bad manners. Shoppers now had to look through the window to spot the items they wanted and ring a bell to be served through a little hatch in the door. When he was interviewed by the London Newspaper, Sohan Sing said, "I have lost business but I cannot say how much. I am a man of principles and I stand by my decision." I think it's safe to say that a grocer who bans customers from his grocery store has lost sight of his mission. He needs a little recalibration to remember what it's all about.

I ask are we so appalled by the worldly ways and sinful habits of lost people that we have kept our distance from them? Do we ever say in our hearts, “If they want to come through the doors of our church, that’s fine? We’ll serve them, but otherwise we will maintain our principles.” Have our hearts been melted by Jesus’ seeking and saving heart? Have we forgotten that lost people are not the enemy but the objects of His relentless love? If you’re saved and you know it, then make Jesus’ mission your own. Bring lost people to Jesus and bring Jesus to lost people. Amen

Let’s pray together.

Oh, great God! I was blinded by my sin and had no ears to hear your voice. I did not know your love and did not taste of heaven’s joys, but I thank You that the Spirit of Your Son, Who came to seek and save the lost, gave me life. He opened up Your word to me and through the gospel of Your Son, He gave me endless hope and peace. [Adapted from “O Great God” lyrics by Bob Kauflin.]

God, I pray that You would be actively doing that by Your Spirit right now for people who know they’re lost. I pray that they would hear the Savior calling them into fellowship with Himself and that gladly, they would respond, “Jesus, come to my heart. Come to my home. Enter into my life and transform me by Your grace.” I pray for those of us who are experiencing that transformation in our lives that it would be on-going and would have the effect of melting any hardness that is in our hearts, any distance that we have toward the lost, any anger that we feel about our culture and the direction that it’s going. Help us to be melted with a compassionate heart of Christ and to be active in reaching out to those who are in darkness. Unto Your glory, we pray. Amen.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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