

Luke 19:1-10
To Know the Gift of Enough
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10-27-18

Again, I want to offer my greeting to you this morning. We are gathered here believing that God has come to us to give us the thing we need most, freedom. There is something that is true of every one of us here today, and that is we all need to be set free, released, relieved of some weight or burden that continues to hold us in its grips. In our Reformed Tradition, this is what we call the process of Sanctification, that is God's continual work of refining and perfecting us that we believe doesn't reach its completion until we meet Jesus in heaven.

Now the thing that holds us in bondage may be different for each of us, it may be an insecurity, or fear that says to you: "you're not good enough." It could be a hurt or resentment that lingers like bad memory. Or it could be something more surface, like an addiction, or obsession that takes more of you than you wish to give it.

Whatever it may be, the answer comes to us not in an idea or a self-help strategy to help you become a better you. It comes to you in a person, his name is Jesus. Jesus comes to us to offer you freedom in himself.

Now this is the last Sunday in October, and it's also the last Sunday in a series of messages we've been in together for the last 11 months. We've spent the last year in Luke's Gospel, because I believe walking slowly and methodically with Jesus allows us to see the span and scope of Jesus' Word over our lives. And on this last Sunday in October we come to a passage that speaks abundantly clearly to the thing that can be the most dangerous to our life with God—money.

Have you ever fantasized about winning the lottery? I have, just this weekend in fact. Driving up to Fort Wayne there is that billboard on Highway 69 just north of Illinois Rd. Do you know what it read? 999 (and that's not thousand, that's million). You may think about all the debts you would be able to pay down, all the fun things you could do, and all the generous gifts and good work you would be able to accomplish with that money. I've been in conversations like this before with people, and whenever it does and I'm around, people always say quickly: "I'll give half to the church." I'm keeping track of these people, so when they do, I'm coming for them.

I went online this week to look for an article about people who win the lottery. Turns out there are a few of them, and without exception every one of them tell the same story—how miserable those who win big money jackpots wind up being.

Jack Whittaker – 315 Million "I wish I had torn the ticket up"

Billy Bob Harrel Jr 31 Million

Winning the lottery is the worst thing that has ever happened to me

William Post 10 million

Everyone dreams of winning money, but no one realizes how much misery come

The truth is that money in itself is nothing, but it has the ability to tempt us, and that when it does it can become for us a prison. And what Jesus does is free us not from Money itself, but free us from the temptations that money offers, he frees us from the trap of money becoming the thing we serve, instead helping us to know how to make money serve us, as we serve God. This is the direction Jesus leads, to the place where we make money to serve us, as we serve God.

In this morning's passage Jesus meets a man who is trapped by his wealth and frees him. Now, wherever Jesus went in his day all manner of people would follow him. But the people who followed him with the greatest curiosity were the poor, the needy, because Jesus had a reputation of being strong and powerful. One day when entering the city of Jericho a man named Zacchaeus came to meet him.

Now Jericho is an interesting city, Jericho is also at the intersection of the east and west on a major trade route. It was a critically important city in terms of trade and commerce. And in cities like this one that were so strategically advantageous, the person who got the job of chief tax collector would have been very wealthy. Zacchaeus was this man.

And as we see Jesus come into town, Zacchaeus wants to see Jesus just like everyone else, but there are things that stand in Zacchaeus' way. He can't just press into the crowd because he has to run ahead and climb the tree. So, what we see right away in this man **Zacchaeus is a man who is desperate to see Jesus**. This is also strange because Zacchaeus is wealthy, and not just a little bit wealthy, he is extremely rich and has all the power and influence he could need to get whatever he wanted whenever he wanted it.

And so, this situation is very strange for this reason: if Zacchaeus is wealthy and has no material lack in any way, why would he be scurrying to catch a glimpse of this poor Rabbi Jesus? Sure, if you are the poor messed-up broken person, you want to see Jesus. But what about Zacchaeus, he has everything he could ever want, so why would he want to see Jesus?

Just a few chapters before this there is another story of another rich man who comes to Jesus, even though he too has everything.

Both of these men are driven to come and see Jesus because, despite having everything, both of them know that there is still something desperately missing from their lives.

All around us are those who appear to have everything, but they still realize that deep down there is still something that they are missing. And so, they too come to see Jesus. I suspect for Zacchaeus and the rich man, and everyone who has come to the place where they have all that they could ever want, they have come to the place where they realize that the lies that money tells are ultimately false.

What are some of these lies that money tells us:

1. **Money will meet your needs.** Sure of course in a way this is true, money meets your needs like food and shelter and basic human needs. But we have a tendency to tell ourselves that we need this house or this car or to send our kids to this school, and that if we do, we will have our needs met. But the side effect of this is often that money also creates more needs. Buy a bigger house with a bigger yard, you need a bigger lawn mower, that takes more gas, and because it takes longer to mow you have a cost benefit dilemma to answer:

sacrifice the time it takes to mow away from my kids, or pay someone each week to mow my grass?

2. **How much will be enough? More will be enough.** John D Rockefeller, one of the wealthiest men in history was famous for answering the question “how much do you need?” By saying “just a little more.” This answer reveals a sneaky trap, because yes it is true that more will be enough, but this gets twisted around because strictly speaking more is enough. But once you have more and the question is asked again, the answer is always, more will be enough.
3. **Enough will bring fulfillment.** Money makes the promise that it can bring you the contentment you need because it is able to provide the things you want, it will bring status and esteem. But what people who achieve great wealth and success nearly always say is that their success has not brought them the fulfillment they hoped for. More often it separates people from the relationships. I can’t see my family as much, because I’m always at work. Or, I suspect that the reason this person is interested in me is for my money. Or, in order to continue to have the life that others have grown accustomed to I have to work all the time.
4. **You can enjoy that fulfillment later.** And the truth is that later doesn’t come any more than enough comes.

I think this is what happens with Zacchaeus. He’s been down that road, his heart has been tricked by the lies that money tells, and so now he’s coming to see if there might be something different about this wandering Rabbi.

After Zacchaeus climbs the tree where Jesus would walk by, Jesus looks up at him and says: **“Hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.”** Zacchaeus is driven by his need, to go and see about Jesus, and when Jesus walks by he doesn’t look up and say: “Let’s deliberate, or when you have some time available, pencil me in.” No, he says hurry up and come down now. Because this moment demands an immediate response. If you have been on the verge of making a decision to follow Jesus, or if you are on the verge of allowing him to take control and free you from some part of your life where you are trapped, I want to say to you that the Spirit is crying out to you right now saying: “hurry, come down now!”

Jesus then says I must come into your house now. **This was Jesus’ mission, to come into the lives of people like Zacchaeus, people who are trapped in one thing or another and to say to them today, right now, I want to come to be with you now.** And Zacchaeus’ response is so wonderful do you see how he responds. Verse 6 says that **he hurried and came down and received him joyfully.** Earlier in the Parable of the lost sheep and coin, it captures this feeling of this moment when Jesus says: **“I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”**

It is such a glad thing when Jesus comes into the presence of a person who is trapped and invites them and is gladly welcomed by them.

But do you see what happens next? All around him were people who grumbled to themselves: **“He’s gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.”** Jesus is earnest in his desire to go and be with Zacchaeus; Zacchaeus is excited to have Jesus come to his house; everyone else is angry. He’s extending hospitality and grace to this sinner. And what they wanted was Jesus to say to this man: get your act together, and then I will come to your house. Straighten up and fly right, then I’ll come to be with you. That’s how the crowd wanted Jesus to respond.

But, and this is very important, the way that Jesus deals with sinner is he looks at them and first of all what he sees is not an offender, but a prisoner who is trapped. And Jesus doesn't come to punish people for the prisons they're trapped in, but he comes to release you first.

Zacchaeus' relationship with money was that money had become his god, it had taken him captive. And because he had sold his heart out to money as if it were god, he was completely trapped. And Jesus came to free us from our traps.

Now this relationship to money is not just present among those who have a lot of money. It's not about how much money you have, you can have very little money at all and be trapped in this same prison. But money has so much power of our minds and our hopes and our aspirations that it makes promises to us, that sound like they're coming from God.

Earlier in chapter 16 verse 13 Jesus says: **you cannot serve both God and money (Greek: mammon). You cannot serve two masters. You will either hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."**

Jesus knows that money promises, not just to help us, but to save us. And if you are looking for a picture of what it looks like, Luke offers us two that come from chapter 12: On one occasion there were two brothers who were following Jesus in a crowd, and somehow the crowd disburses and these two have an audience with Jesus. Imagine this, somehow you are face to face with him and you get to ask a question. One of them steps forward and this is how he uses his one shot: master, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me. Can you imagine having your one shot and then blowing it with this request. You have missed life.

Or there was a rich man who had an abundance of crops, and then one year he has a banner harvest, and he thinks to himself, I know what I'll do I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones to store all of my stuff, so that later on I can eat drink and be merry. But then in the midst of his busy life he dies unexpectedly, and at the funeral God gives the eulogy, and it's one word: fool. He missed life.

What these and so many others tell us is that if you follow wealth and money, or the love and obsession of it, you will be utterly trapped and you will miss life.

But Zacchaeus takes this opportunity and he makes the right decision, and we know it because it says that **Zacchaeus is joyful**. And the decision he makes, as one who has great wealth is to give half of what he has to the poor, and to make things right with anyone who he has defrauded by paying them back fourfold. Zacchaeus goes from being a greedy hoarder to being the most generous person anyone could imagine. This man who was in the grips of wealth's lie, was a lost man, and has now been found, he was in bondage but has now been set free. Salvation has come to this house. Zacchaeus was saved by Jesus freeing him not to serve his money, but to have his money serve him, as he served God.

Jesus wanted to show Zacchaeus and you and me how not to be possessed by his possessions, but you own them, and they serve you, as you go forth to serve God. And this is the freedom that Jesus offers us as we give our lives to him and allow him to guide and direct how we make decisions about things like our money. Let's pray...