



Sermon Growth Guide

April 13, 2025

Life Changed



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“Life Changed”

Luke 19:1-10

Key Verse: Luke 19:1

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Big Idea: Conversion transforms your entire life.

Foundations

The most remarkable promise of Christianity is that by turning to Christ, one can find an entirely new way of life. New life. The old is gone. The new has come.

Christianity is not about adding some new information or helpful habits to an otherwise relatively successful course of life; it is about moving from death to true life. Jesus did not come to make good people better; He came to make dead people come to life. This is conversion.

Today, we meet Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus wanted to see the parade. He was curious, but he wanted to stay in control.

However, true conversion culminates in statements like “for me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” and “I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.”

In other words, conversion transforms your entire life.

Happy Palm Sunday! Check in with one another. Pray for one another. Hold one another's lives with grace and truth. Process together, face-to-face, what it means to move through Holy Week within the framework of your abiding relationship with Jesus, who paid it all for you – for you!

Understanding God's Word

Together, read Luke 19:1-10.

In verse seven, Jesus “becomes the guest of a sinner.” Why does Jesus do this? As we become like Jesus, what does it look like for you to “become the guest of a sinner?”

Process the faith-filled and transformative response of Zacchaeus in verse eight. What might we learn about generosity and what happens when the gospel penetrates our heart?

Applying God's Word

Conversion transforms your entire life.

What is the next area of your life to hand over to God? How are you going to do it?

Witnessing God's Word

Verse 10 says, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

How would you like to join Jesus in seeking and saving those around you who do not yet abide in Jesus? How can you share Jesus' love with someone in a special way this week?

Is there someone who God is prompting you to invite to Easter this year?

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Well, I said we were in John the through Easter, but we are jumping around the Gospels. We have Luke today, a variety of passages in the Maundy Thursday service at 6:30 (which is by the way a full, original composition by our own Chris Owenby) and Matthew at the Good Friday service at 6:30 in the Worship Center. Then we will have John on Easter. The four Gospels give us four portraits of the same man, Jesus, and only help us to see different sides. Today we are in Luke, and we meet a man who longed to see Jesus. What would you be willing to do to lay eyes on Jesus? Have you ever been to an event, a concert, a game, a Denver Broncos practice session, and there was that one guy you really wanted to see? In your secret heart, you were wondering if you might not only see them; you might strike up a conversation, share a handshake, get an autograph, be invited to their guest house in Hawaii. But you really did want to see them. Okay, just between you and me, did you push anybody?

Today is Palm Sunday. There are no gifts or chocolates or magical characters for Palm Sunday, but it is a day we recognize every single year. Didn't the kids do a wonderful job? We wave these palm branches because on the Sunday before Jesus died, Jesus marched into Jerusalem—actually, Jesus rode into Jerusalem—on the back of a donkey and it became a sort of parade. Everyone was marching into Jerusalem to begin the Passover Feast. The population of Jerusalem was about 30,000 in Jesus' day. When feasts happened, people came from everywhere and camped all around the city, and the population swelled to 150,000. Passover was like that. Everyone was coming. Jesus rode in on a donkey, fulfilling the prophecy. "The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, 'Hosanna!

'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Blessed is the king of Israel!' Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: 'Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt.'" (John 12:12-15) Palm Sunday.

I want us to look at another parade, another entry of Jesus. Before Palm Sunday, Jesus arrived in Jericho. Everybody wanted to see Him, one man in particular. Turn Again is about meeting Jesus and finding new life in Him. This man wanted to see Jesus, he wanted to be in His presence, and when he did his whole Life Changed. "Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy." (Luke 19:1-2) Zacchaeus. When we get someone's name in the Bible, it usually means one of two things: either they were famously horrible people, or they were transformed by Jesus and are still part of the church, a "You could go ask him," kind of a thing. Which will Zacchaeus be? Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector, and he was wealthy. Both of those things need to be said to understand. Tax collectors were not well-liked in that day. They weren't super-popular like they are now. The Jewish people were under Roman occupation. Tax collectors bought their franchise of a tax base from the Romans, delivered an agreed amount, then kept whatever else over and above they could wrench from the people. It was a corrupt, greed-driven, mob-boss kind of system. Zacchaeus was good at it. He was wealthy. In a corrupt system, the person at the top is the best at being the worst.

What else do we know about Zacchaeus? He was short. "He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way." (Luke 19:3-4) Okay, yeah, he was short. But



catch something else here. Nobody moved for Zacchaeus. Nobody made room for Zacchaeus. Chief tax collector, rich, short, disliked, but one more thing: Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus. There was something missing in his rich, successful life. His heart longed to see the Lord. Why? Curiosity? Jealousy? The buzz of celebrity? Here is a man that, we can assume, has the life he always wanted. He achieved what he set out to achieve. Maybe he apprenticed himself to an accountant, worked his way up the chain. I'd bet he took risks, leveraged all he had to buy his tax base or take over someone else's. Time and time again, he got what he was after. I'm sure some things didn't work, some things failed, but he bounced back and got right where he wanted to be: Chief Tax Collector. He had it all. He got to the top of the ladder—and it was the wrong ladder. Thomas Merton said, "People may spend their whole lives climbing the ladder of success only to find, once they reach the top, that the ladder is leaning against the wrong wall."

The World Happiness Report came out last week. The U.S. dropped another slot. We rank #24, the lowest ranking since they started the survey twelve years ago. Among those under thirty years old, we are down in the 60s! We have it all. But we don't have it at all. There is something missing in all this success, all this wealth. Zacchaeus had all he ever hoped for, and in his heart of hearts he admitted, he had nothing. He wanted to see Jesus. It was enough to cause him to take a risk, climb a tree, brush off the humiliating jabs from the crowd—he had to see Jesus. Conversion is about giving up on one direction and turning a new direction. There is a negative here. It's not just about adding Jesus to your life but turning away from what is wrong. It is repentance and faith. No more of this, I choose this. Are we humble enough to admit there is something missing without Jesus? Zacchaeus was.

"When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.' So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly." (Luke 19:5-6) Jesus shows up and everything starts to change. Part of "welcoming" Jesus was a meal or something because the next thing we get is Zacchaeus standing up from the table. The story jumps, as if Luke wants us to see how immediate the change was in Zacchaeus' heart. Jesus calls it "salvation." "But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.' Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.'" (Luke 19:8-9) The law if you defrauded someone, in Leviticus 6, was to return the amount with 20% more. Zacchaeus goes with 400%. And half of his estate, half of all he has, he gives away. I'm telling you, a man like that in a city like that—life changed in the whole city that day.

More importantly, Zacchaeus changed. He is transformed. A new man. The rivers of his heart changed direction in a violent flip and suddenly all that was flowing in was flowing out, and all that he resisted he is open to, and his life is totally changed. "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10) He was lost. Jesus sought him. Jesus found him. Jesus saved him. Zacchaeus longed to see Jesus, but now he knows Jesus and his life belongs to Him, living in His presence every day. That's salvation. That's eternal life. "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:3) "Oh, I see," you might say, "we are talking about being good people. This is about not being greedy cheats but being generous and just." No. This is about new life. That's



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what I want you to see. Zacchaeus doesn't just add a little Jesus to his life. We think we can change the trajectory of our lives by adding a little Jesus, adding a little church, sprinkling a little Scripture over the top. Jesus didn't come to make good people better. Jesus came to make dead people come to life. Zacchaeus will look back on all his life and say, "I was blind; now I see. I was dead; now I am alive." Why? Because he gave his life to Jesus.

It is an absolute turning in of the old life and a picking up of the new. Turn again. John Stott wrote, "This involves repentance, turning decisively from everything we know that displeases him. Not that we make ourselves better before we invite him in. On the contrary, it is precisely because we cannot forgive or improve ourselves that we need him to come to us. But we must be willing for him to do whatever rearranging he likes when he has come in. There can be no resistance and no attempt to negotiate our own terms, but rather an unconditional surrender to the lordship of Christ. What will this mean? I cannot tell you the details. But in principle it means a determination to forsake evil and follow Christ." Unconditional surrender. Russell Brand is an actor, a well-known celebrity, a comedian, and was known famously as a drug user and womanizer. A year ago, he posted a video on his X account. "This Sunday, I'm taking the plunge. I'm getting baptized...it's an opportunity to die and be reborn. An opportunity to leave the past behind and be reborn in Christ's name." He got baptized in the River Thames in London. Zacchaeus climbed a tree. Russell Brand took the plunge. What about you? What would you do to see Jesus? Turn again to Him. It is not an offer to add some religious things to your life and see if things change, like adding a little sugar to the sauce to sweeten things up. You don't add Jesus to your life like a fashionable

accessory. No. You come to the foot of the cross. You die to self to live to Him. Turn in the old. Receive the new. New life in Christ. All you do and want to do, your wants and desires, your goals and purposes, they will all change in His hands. It is a new life, living in the presence of Jesus.

So, let's pray then. It begins with prayer, simply acknowledging the presence of Jesus, the presence of the Holy One. I'll pray, but I ask you to take this prayer to heart, to make it your own before God: "Jesus, I trust You are here. My heart has been running the wrong direction. Turn me around. I have been all on my own; make me Your own now. You have won me by Your love, by Your grace, by Your death on the cross for my sins, by Your rising to eternal life. Take me along. From today, I am yours. In Jesus name. Amen." If that is something you prayed for the first time, please share that. We will have a baptism service on April 27 at the end of this series. Maybe it is time to take the plunge. Register online or speak to one of the pastors. If you have renewed your faith today, share that with someone. New life is here in Jesus. Amen.

