The Seeking Saviour

One Sunday evening, D.L. Moody the famous American evangelist was preaching in a big circus tent in the city of Chicago. His text was (Lk 19:10) "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

He had just finished his message when a little boy was brought to the platform by an officer who had found the child wandering in the crowd, lost. Mr. Moody took the little boy in his arms, and asked the crowd to look at the lost child. Then he said, "The father is more anxious to find the boy that the boy is to be found. It is just so with our Heavenly Father, for long years, He has been following you, oh, sinner. He is following you still."

At that moment a man elbowed his way to the platform. The boy saw him, and running, threw himself into his father's outstretched arms. The great crowd that witnessed the scene broke into a mighty cheer. D.L. Moody, used the incident to close the meeting by saying this, "So will God receive you if you will only run to Him today." My .... is that not exactly what Zacchaeus did? Here was a man who was searching for the Lord, and he discovered that the Lord was searching for him!

Have you ever wished that you could find and really know God? Have you ever thought that the Lord is seeking for you? Well, here was the Lord Jesus on His way to the Cross at Calvary. He was now within seventeen miles of Jerusalem but He takes time to pass through Jericho. For He see's His visit to Jericho as part of His divine mission. Here is the shepherd seeking a lost sheep, here is the Son of Man coming to seek and save that which was lost. Now Jericho was the city that had God had given Joshua. (Jos 6:26) A curse was placed on whoever would rebuild it. But in Christ's day it was like a resort area. The Portstewart of that day. Many people spent their holiday in Jericho. It was popular, and it was one of the best agricultural area's in Palestine. Josephus, the Jewish historian called it "a divine region."

Now all of these things combined to make Jericho one of the greatest taxation centres in Palestine. I mean you had to pay tax for existing, for using the roads, harbours, markets, and one of these old tax collectors could make you stop on the road and unload your goods and charge you what he liked. You can imagine that they weren't too popular. These were Jews who had decided to work for the hated Romans collecting taxes from their own people. Now Zacchaeus whose name means "pure or righteous one," had reached the very top of his profession. But he certainly was not considered righteous by the Jewish community in Jericho. My .... here was the best hated man in Jericho, a Jew who worked for the Roman Government, a man noted for his dishonesty, someone who squeezed his victims to the uttermost, but though Zacchaeus was a renegade in the eyes of the Jews, he was a precious soul in the eyes of Christ. "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

My ... do you see:
*The REALITY here: "The Son of Man is come...."
*The MINISTRY here: "To seek and to save...."
*The COMPANY here: "That which is lost."
*The PERSON here: "The Son of Man...."
*The PURPOSE here: "To seek and to save...."
*The PEOPLE here: "That which is lost."

And how this is vividly illustrated for us in the story of Zacchaeus. You see, there are three pictures of Zacchaeus that I want you to see here. Notice, him

(1) SEEKING THE LORD

Do you see Zacchaeus? Running down the street like a little boy following a parade. And he even climbed a tree. Curiosity is certainly a characteristic of most children, and Zacchaeus was motivated by curiosity, and also by deep concern. In the East it’s unusual for a man to run, especially a Government official but here is Zacchaeus running like a little boy. (1) "And he sought to see Jesus who He was." (19:3) Now did you know that there were several things that could have hindered Zacchaeus from seeking the Lord but he did not allow them?

(a) HIS PROSPERITY DID NOT HINDER HIM:

The Bible says "he was rich...." (19:2) He had reached the top of his profession. Now his parents never dreamed he would turn out this way. One dark night he had to decide whether or not he would sell out to Rome.

As a tax-collector he would have to pay Rome a stated amount for a certain territory in which he would gather taxes. Then, of course he would gather more taxes than he paid Rome, which made him rich. Now of course there is nothing wrong with wealth as long as we remember who gave it to us. The Bible speaking of the Lord says this, "He giveth thee power to get wealth." (Deut 8:18) My .... has God prospered you? But have you forgotten Him? George Truett a famous American pastor tells of visiting a wealthy man in the state of Texas. As they stood on the porch of his house, the man pointed North and said, "Dr. Truett I own so miles of land in that direction." Then pointing south he said, "I own so many miles of land in that direction." Then pointing east and west he said, "I own so many miles of land in that direction and that direction." Dr. Truett then pointed to Heaven and asked, "how much do you own in that direction?"

My .... are things enslaving you? Is wealth keeping you from the Saviour? Had Zacchaeus become weary of wealth? Had he started yearning for something more?

Something or someone that could meet the deepest needs of his heart? Well, whatever it was, whether it was curiosity or a deep longing for that which he felt Christ could supply, one thing is certain the person of Christ attracted Zacchaeus. "And he sought to see Jesus." Do you know something? You're not here by chance this ....! Has placed a hunger in your heart for Him? Are you like Zacchaeus? Have you discovered that all this old world has to offer will never bring satisfaction! Have you sought to see Jesus? (a)
Now Zacchaeus had a real problem. He was little of stature. Now it was not his fault that he was small and could not see over the crowd. I was speaking to someone the other day who gone to London for the Queens Jubilee celebrations, and they had difficulty in seeing over the crowd. Of course Zacchaeus did what he could to overcome his handicap by putting aside his dignity and climbing a tree. My ... did you know that in a spiritual sense you are "little of stature?" Listen to God's verdict, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Rom 3:23) Not one of us measure up to God's standards. we are all "to little," to enter into heaven. But do you know what the tragedy with some of you is? You think, you're big! Do you know what you are doing? You're measuring yourself by man's standards .... money, position, authority, popularity, and these things count for nothing in God's sight. (Lk 16:15) Do you know what you're real problem is? You're a sinner who needs to become small in order to become big.

Zacchaeus had a problem. He was unable to see over people's heads and shoulders and I'm sure few of them would make room for such an unpopular fellow. In fact for Zacchaeus for mingle with the crowd was a courageous thing. I mean here was their chance to get even with him, to get their own back. Many would take this opportunity to nudge, to kick, to push him. They would take great delight in making sure this man did not see Jesus. My .... has the crowd kept you from seeing Jesus? Have your friends dissuaded you from trusting Christ? Is it the fear of the boys that's holding you back from becoming a Christian? Do you know what the Bible says, "the fear of man bringeth a snare but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord is safe." (Prov 29:25) Could I be speaking to someone and you would love to become a child of God but one thing is keeping you back? Its fear! The fear of being laughed at by your colleagues, mocked by your family, the fear of losing your popularity and esteem! Listen, the crowd may laugh you into hell, but they will never laugh you out.

(c) HIS PRIDE DID NOT HINDER HIM:

I mean he was not at the top of his profession for nothing. He was a man of resources and yet he throws dignity to the wind, and like a little boy he runs down the street and climbs up into a tree. He did not care what others thought as he throws away his pride to find the Saviour. Its a terrible sin, pride. My .... is it keeping you from finding Christ? Is it:

1. The Pride of Social Standing:

Oh, Zacchaeus could have said, "I'm rich, I've a good job. I'll soon be retiring and I live in the most prestigious area of Jericho." But he did not. Is it your social standing that's keeping you back from coming to Christ? Do you feel that you are a cut above the rest? One thing is sure. You'll have to stand on the same platform as every man if you're going to experience God's salvation!
2. The Pride of Church Position:

Do you occupy a position in the church yet you're not saved? Do you hold office? Do you sing in the choir? Are you a SS teacher but you've never been truly born again? Yes, everyone thinks you're a Christian but you know and God knows you're not! (Lk 18:11) Is this what's keeping you back?

3. The Pride of Good Behaviour:

You're exemplary in your conduct and behaviour. You would put many professing Christians to shame. But my .... if you're going to meet Christ, you're going to have humble yourself. Do you see what Christ says to Zacchaeus? "Zacchaeus make haste and come down." Is that what you need to do? Are you stuck up the tree of self-righteousness? Of pride? Of morality? Of respectability? Of religion? Of good works? My .... will you throw away your pride and come down and meet the Saviour? (1)

(2) RECEIVING THE LORD

Can you imagine the tremendous shock Zacchaeus received when the Lord of glory and stopped and called his name? I tell you most people in Jericho hated Zacchaeus but here was someone who loved him and here was someone who called him. You see:

(a) HE HEARD THE LORD'S CALL:

My .... have you ever heard God calling you through His Word via His servants? Did you notice there was:

(1) An Individuality about this Call:

The Saviour called him by his own name. "Zacchaeus make haste and come down ...." (19:5) Did Christ hear his name being bandied on the street? Or was this an instance of the Lord's omniscience at work? Whatever He calls him by name. The Lord knew his Name: Indeed "He calleth His own sheep by name and leadeth them out." (Jn 10:3) The Lord knew his Need: the very longing of his heart, thus He said, "come down today." My .... God's call to you this .... is a personal one. Could you just forget about that person who is sitting next to you for a moment. Listen, you personally have sinned, you personally have broken God's law, you personally are heading for heel, but this .... you personally are being called by name now. Will you respond? (1)

(2) An Urgency about this Call:

"For today I must abide at thy house." (19:5)
"Zacchaeus, this is the last chance you'll have. I'll not be passing through Jericho again. I'm on my way to Calvary to shed my blood for your sins." Today! Do you know something? Too many
of you are counting on tomorrow. Many of you are saying, "Tomorrow we shall be saved, tomorrow we shall get right with God." But tomorrow never comes! Tomorrow Charles Dickens would finish his novel. So laying down his pen he turned his attention elsewhere, and many have wondered how the novel would have ended had the angel of death delayed by a day. "Tomorrow we shall .... " wrote Sir Walter Scott in his dairy.

But this last sentence of one of Scotland's greatest writers was never completed. And lovers of literature still wonder what Scott intended to do on the morrow. My .... listen, tomorrow is the word of the devil. Today is the word of the Saviour. The Bible says, "Today if ye hear His voice .... " (Heb 3:7) (1) (2)

3. A Necessity about this Call:

"Today I must .... house." (19:5) It was pressing! The Lord did not say, "Well, I would like to stay at your home," no "I must," why? For the Saviour saw his visit to Jericho and to Zacchaeus as part of His divine mission. Had He not come to seek and save the lost? Well, here was a seeking sinner and for every seeking sinner, bless God there is a seeking Saviour! (a) Have you? How often have you heard His call? In how many different ways have you heard His call? Through that illness, accident, death of a friend! My .... God is calling you again this .... ? Will you respond like Zacchaeus? For:

(b) HE HEEDDED THE LORD'S CALL:

"And he made haste .... (19:6) How different was his response from the rich young ruler (18:23) For when he was confronted with the claims of the Lord Jesus "he went away grieved." (Mk 10:22) One was sad, the other was glad. One was negative, the other positive. One continued on the road to hell, the other started on the road to heaven. My .... do you want to know how to become a Christian? Would you like to know how to make Christ your personal Saviour? Well, listen to these words, "he received him joyfully." You see, receiving Christ into his house was simply an indication that Zacchaeus had received Christ into his heart. The Bible says, "to as many as received Him." (Jn 1:12) Will you receive Christ this .... ? Will you say, "Lord Jesus I receive you this .... as my Saviour and Lord."

(3) CONFESSING THE LORD

In his autobiography, Col. Harland Sanders of Kentucky Fried Chicken fame says that was always a God-fearing man. In every venture he gave God a tenth of the profits. Yet he knew that if he died he was not going to heaven. Concerned he travelled to Australia to a special church convention for the answer but he didn't find it.

One day Sanders was walking down a street in Louisville, Kentucky when he was invited to some evangelistic services. Several days later he went. At the age of 79 he claimed the promise of (Rom 10:9) "That if thou shalt confess .... thou shalt be saved." He said,
"When I walked out of the church that night I knew I was a different man, all my giving and good deeds had never given me the sense of God's presence that I knew then." Zacchaeus also confessed the Lord. Did you notice now he had:

(a) A NEW LORD:

For ( 19:8 ) says "And .... " He had no intention of being a secret disciple. He at once identified himself with the Lord whom he acknowledged openly and publicly. "Behold Lord .... "

Are you ready to identify yourself with the Lord Jesus?
Are you willing to confess Him? To say "He's my Lord." (a)

(b) A NEW LIFE:

For this old tax-collector says, "The half .... " (19:8) Now that was going beyond what the law required.
(Lev 6:5 Num 5:7) You see, Zacchaeus was a changed man. He wants to make restitution. For "if any man be in Christ he is a new creature .... " (2 Cor 5:17) When WP Nicholson came to Belfast to preach the gospel the shipyard was touched in a mighty way. Many were saved and the materials and tools that were brought back into the shipyard after being stolen was incredible. For you see, if you're saved, you're changed!

"And Jesus passed through Jericho." (19:1) It was Zacchaeus's last opportunity to meet the Saviour. He was on His way to Calvary to shed His precious blood, to make an atonement for your sins, to open a way back into the presence of God! My .... "There is a way back to God .... " "Jesus is passing this way," What if tonight is your last opportunity? What if this is God's final call to you? Where will you spend eternity? God's way of salvation is so simple. "And he received him joyfully." Will you do that now?