

Sermon Notes for Luke 19:1-10, Epiphany II

1. "Epiphany" means "showing forth" or "manifestation." In our text for today Jesus is manifested as the One Who seeks and saves the lost.
2. Our text is peculiar to Luke. It is not found in the other Gospels.
3. The site of the text is at Jericho, a sub-tropical city near the Jordan River, about 25 miles straight east of Jerusalem. The time of the text is only a few days before Jesus' final entry into Jerusalem, described in vss. 29 to 40 of this chapter.
4. This text is about a superintendent of tax-collectors. At this time in history Palestine was under the control of the Roman Emperor. To collect taxes the Romans hired native Palestinians to collect a fixed amount from the people. The tax-collectors were allowed by the Romans to collect more than the Romans required. Whatever they collected in excess of the required amount became the collector's property. The people disliked these tax-collectors and even hated them for their excessive demands. Therefore, they were known as "sinners" (vs. 7) which here means "social outcast."
5. Some scholars think that Zacchaeus had heard Jesus before and had already become a Christian. Others think that Zacchaeus' desire to see Jesus was merely curiosity and that Jesus used this curiosity to bring the Gospel to him. In vs. 9 Jesus says: "Today salvation has come to this house." This indicates that Zacchaeus was only curious and then became a Christian on this occasion.
6. The divinity of Jesus is plainly evident and active in this account. Because of His omniscience He foresaw and knew that Zacchaeus would be looking for Him. In fact, Jesus even knew his name without being told.
7. Furthermore, the providence of God is plainly evident here. God arranged all these circumstances so that Jesus would be able to speak to Zacchaeus. It all looks so natural but it is all under the control and guidance of God. Without his own knowledge, Caesar August brought it about that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Without realizing it, the woman at the well, John 4, found the water of life in addition to mere water. Nothing is accidental. God rules and overrules the whole world and every detail thereof to bring about His will. Christians see the hand of God at work in their lives.
8. "Son of Abraham" in vs. 9 can mean either "a member of the Old Testament covenant people" or "a believer." We think it means the latter here.
9. In verse 5 "house" means a building. But in verse 9 it means "household." Evidently Zacchaeus was married and perhaps had children. Perhaps more than one person became a Christian on this occasion.
10. In verse 5 Jesus says: "I must stay in your house." This is the divine "must" of the will of the Father. At Luke 2:49 Jesus said: "I must be about My Father's business." At Luke 24:7 He said: "The Son of man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men."
11. Verse 7 tells us that "all of them began to grumble." The disciples were with Him. They, too, very likely, grumbled because this was so unusual. But the love of Jesus disregards man's grumbling.
12. Zacchaeus said: "Look here, I'm giving half of my possessions to the poor and, in case I've cheated anyone, I'll restore it fourfold." True faith produces fruits. Zacchaeus was rich in money, maybe became poor and he had been poor in spiritual matters but became rich.
13. The word "Behold" occurs at verses 2 and 8. This word always draws our attention to something important. In verse 2 it draws attention to the conversion of Zacchaeus and in verse 8 to the fruit of his faith. Cf. Matthew 1:9, 13, 19; Luke 2:25.
14. The expression "the lost" occurs at Luke 15:6, 9, 24, 32. It describes mankind lost in sin and death.

Sermon Outline for Luke 19:1-10, Epiphany II

Theme: JESUS SEEKS AND SAVES THE LOST

Introduction: The Bible tells us about remarkable conversions. Who would have thought that Jesus would seek and save the harlot at the well, John 4? Who would have thought that devil-possessed women would become Christians, Luke 8:2? Who would have thought that Paul, the persecutor and blasphemer, I Timothy 1:12-17, would become the great Apostle? Who would have thought that Zacchaeus, the chief tax-collector, would become a "son of Abraham?" It is true because the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. He sought and saved the chief of sinners, too.

I THE SON OF MAN CAME TO SEEK THE LOST

A Luke 15 gives us three parables about the lost. The lost sheep, verse 4, could not find its way back. The lost coin, verse 8, could not find its way back. The lost son, verse 24, could not find his way back. Paul could not find his way back to God. He fought against God. The woman at the well of Sychar, John 4, would forever have remained lost. She could not find her way back. The harlot at John 8:1-11, was hopelessly lost in her sin. Mary Magdalene was hopelessly in the power of seven devils. She was truly lost and could not save herself. Natural man is spiritually blind, I Corinthians 2:14, spiritually dead, Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13, and an enemy of God, Romans 5:10. Natural man is hopelessly lost. Natural man flees from God. He destroys himself. Hosea 13:9.

B Jesus SEEKS the lost.

Some people wrongly think that they found Jesus, not vice versa. Some people think that they make a decision for Christ. That is not true. Even Christian faith is a gift of God. Jesus said: "This is the work of God that you believe in Him whom He sent." Faith is the work of God, not of man. In the same chapter (John 6:44) Jesus said: "No one comes to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day." Coming to faith is the first resurrection. John 5:25. Resurrection of the body is the second resurrection. John 5:28. Both are a gift of God. Dead people cannot make themselves alive. Jesus seeks the spiritually dead. Faith and conversion come by the Word of God, the Gospel. Romans 10:17.

II THE SON OF MAN CAME TO SAVE THE LOST

The whole Bible tells the story of Jesus saving all the lost in the world. Genesis 3:15 said that Jesus would crush Satan's head. See Romans 16:20; Revelations 12:9; Hebrews 2:14. Genesis 12:3 says that in Jesus all the nations would be blest. Paul applies this at Galatians 3:8. Leviticus 16 is an Old Testament shadow of Christ, the Savior. As the High Priest entered into the Most Holy Place once in the year to atone for his own sins and those of the people, so Christ, once and for all, atoned for the sins of all mankind, Hebrews 9:23-28. The fiery serpent in the wilderness, Numbers 21:8, is an Old Testament picture of the cross of Christ, John 3:14-15. Isaiah 53 is a marvelous prophecy of Christ the Savior. "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." verse 5. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." verse 6. Daniel 9:27 reads: "He (Messiah) shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering." Likewise the Baptist said: "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." John 1:29. When Jesus was on the cross (Matthew 27:39-43; Mark 15:29-32; Luke 23:35-43) the chief priests, the people, the soldiers and even the two malefactors taunted and derided Jesus again and again about SAVING people. That clearly shows what Jesus had constantly taught and it shows that even His enemies knew about it. Everyone knew that Jesus was the Savior, as the angel had foretold to Joseph, Matthew 1:21.

Conclusion: The account of Zacchaeus is just one example of Jesus' statement: "The Son of Man has come to seek and save the lost."

1. Cana lay about six miles north of Nazareth. The people involved in this wedding were likely friends or relatives of Mary. The name of Joseph is conspicuous by its absence. Scholars have determined that at this point Jesus had only five or six disciples.
2. The use of alcoholic beverages is not prohibited by God. The misuse is condemned. An old Latin proverb says: "Abusus non tollit usum." "Abuse does not prohibit use." Wine, used correctly, is a blessing.
3. Marriage is a great blessing of God. See Heb. 13:4 and Eph. 5:22-31. Celibacy is not holier than the married estate.
4. On the words "What have I to do with you, woman?" Luther says: "Though there is no greater power on earth than that of father and mother, yet it is nothing when the word and work of God are concerned." And on the word of Jesus: "My hour has not yet come" Lenski says: "Jesus' hour is the one appointed for him by the Father; it may be the hour for this or for that in his Messianic work. When it comes, he acts, and not until it comes . . . Here the hour is the one arranged for the first miraculous manifestation of his glory." Cf. 7:6.8; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1. Both of these statements indicate Jesus' Messianic mission.
5. The word "sign" meaning "miracle" occurs seventeen times in the Gospel of John. In our text we have the first occurrence. Ylvisaker writes: "The fourth Gospel has been called the 'Book of Signs'. John groups his account of Jesus' public ministry before the passion around six great signs or miracles. Three of these were performed in Galilee; the turning of water into wine, chapter 2; the healing of the nobleman's son, 4; and the feeding of the 5,000 in 6. Three were performed in Judea: the sick man at Bethesda, 5; the man born blind, 9; and the raising of Lazarus. The opposition to Jesus becomes greater and more bitter, therefore His signs become more marvelous and reveal His majesty with ever greater glory. . . Jesus tries to save His opponents but they despise and reject Him."
6. In the early church the Apocryphal (false) Gospels picture Jesus performing miracles as an infant and child. But John clearly says in vs. 11 that this was the first of His miracles.
7. Jesus created no less than 400 litres of wine on this occasion. The Lord blesses abundantly.
8. Vs. 10 contains an axiom understood readily all over the world. It does not condone drunkenness. Jesus would never do that. Here it means the point at which it makes little difference whether the wine is good or bad.
9. Throughout the Gospel of John the twofold purpose of signs is to show the glorious divinity of this man Jesus and to cause people to believe or grow in their faith. Here it means that the disciples grew in their faith in Jesus. Read especially 20:30-31.
10. The word "to show forth" in vs. 11 occurs nine times in John: 1:31; 2:11; 3:21; 7:4; 9:3; 17:6; 21:1 (twice) and vs. 14. It always indicates Christ's self-disclosure.
11. The primary purpose of Jesus' miracles in the Gospels is to show forth His glory, to prove His divinity. The primary purpose of miracles in Acts is to certify the validity of the Gospel. Many false Messiahs in our time claim they perform miracles but not for these two purposes.
12. When Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the Temple (Lk. 2) Jesus refreshed their memory concerning His true identity. That happened eighteen years before this account in Cana. When she said "They have no wine" was she truly praying? And did her command in vs. 5 "Whatever He says to you, do it" mean that she merely had confidence in Him or did she really believe that He would provide? People have asked these questions for centuries. But more important than that is to ask myself: "When I pray do I merely inform Jesus of my problems or do I really believe that He is what He says He is?" "Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief!!"

Theme: THE PURPOSES OF JESUS' MIRACLES

Introduction: Moses, Elijah and the Apostles performed miracles but none of them compare with Jesus when it comes to miracles. Jn. 21:25 makes the astounding statement that the world would not be able to contain the books in which all of Jesus' deeds would be recorded. But all of them were never for entertainment but for definite purposes.

I-TO PROVE WHO HE WAS

Think of the six great signs in the Gospel of John: turning water into wine, chapter 2; the healing of the nobleman's son, 4; the feeding of the 5000, 6; the lame man at Bethesda, 5; the man born blind, 9; and the raising of Lazarus, 11. From water into wine to raising the dead, all become increasingly difficult for man. In fact, mere man cannot do them. And that is why our text, in vs. 11, says: "This first of the signs Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee and thus He showed forth His glory." And at the end of the Gospel (20:30-31) we read: "Jesus performed many other signs before His disciples which are not recorded in this book. But these are recorded so that you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." No one else in history can claim to be who Jesus is, God and man in one indivisible person. His miracles prove His person. They were even prophesied. Is. 26:19; 29:18; 35:5; 42:18. See Mt. 11:2-6.

II-TO CAUSE PEOPLE TO BELIEVE IN HIM.

When He turned water into wine we read "and His disciples believed in Him." They already believed who He was. See Jn. 1:41,45,49. Jn. 4:50 tells us that the nobleman "believed the word which Jesus had spoken to him." Think how often the words "faith" and "miracle" are associated with each other in the Gospels. To the man who had been lame (Jn. 5:14) Jesus said: "Look, you have become well. Sin no more." These words can be addressed only to a believer. Next comes the feeding of the 5000. It must be admitted that these 5000 remained dead in their sins and unbelief. They returned the next day because they wanted more bread but Jesus wanted to give them bread of life. They all left but the disciples had grown in their faith. Read Jn. 6:68-69. Then we have the wonderful account of the man born blind. Jesus even said: "(This man was born blind) in order to show the works of God in him." Jn. 9:3. The Pharisees hated Jesus so much that they tried to deny the miracle. They threatened the boy's parents. They drove the boy out. But the young man said: "Lord I believe." And he worshipped Jesus. And now we come to the greatest of all miracles, the raising of Lazarus. Many Jews came to faith in Jesus. Jn. 11:45. But the authorities planned Jesus' death. But, isn't faith caused only by the Word of God, as we read in Rom. 10:17? Yes, only through the Word. See I Pet. 1:23; Js. 1: The miracles do not create faith but they prove Who Jesus is and also strengthen the faith of believers.

III-TO SHOW HIS COMPASSION FOR HUMANITY

Before Jesus raised Lazarus He wept. At Mt. 9:35-36 we are told that Jesus had compassion on the people who were like sheep without a shepherd. To them He preached the Gospel of the Kingdom and healed all their sicknesses and diseases. Just before the feeding of the 5000 (Mk. 8:2) He said "I have compassion on the crowd." At Acts 10:38 Peter speaks about "Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and power, Who went about doing good and healing all those who were overpowered by the devil, because God was with Him." We could quote many other passages but these will suffice for our purposes. Jesus did not heal all the sick. Jesus did not drive the devil from all of those who were possessed but He did die for all and forgave all and gives forgiveness of sins to all. At Cana He supplied about 400 litres of very good wine. This is a picture of how richly Jesus blesses us in our souls. The blessings to our bodies also come from Him.

Conclusion: Jesus' miracles had a threefold purpose. We know and believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God, Who gives us eternal life.