

The Last, The Least & The Lost

Dave Buehring November 19, 2017

Opening

- **Luke 19:1-10**

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

- Today our focus is on The Last, The Least & The Lost
 - When have you been last – least – lost? Look outward today!
 - My hope and aim is that our thinking and attitudes – our hearts and hands – will become better aligned with God’s heart and hands, so we can partner with Him, in obedience to bless the world around us! *Opportunity to change many lives today!*
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Zacchaeus — Luke 19:1-10

- We find ourselves in Jesus’ final journey towards Jerusalem, where He lands in Jericho, drawing large crowds. Most likely days before his stop in Bethany to be with his friends, Lazarus, Mary & Martha on the way to Jerusalem for the Triumphal Entry, that we refer to as Palm Sunday (the Sunday a week before Easter).
- Zacchaeus (Hebrew name meaning “pure” or “innocent”) was a Chief Tax Collector (probably the leader of the tax collectors in his city or region) who worked for the Romans (Oppressive Regime), not for his Jewish community; he was viewed as a traitor who extorted money from his own people.
- Was probably recognized in his town for several things: small in stature and morally small in the eyes of his neighbors; most likely well-known for his wealth and corruption. May have just been a guy needing a job so took it! *Tax + whatever he wanted!*
- As Jesus passes by, Zacchaeus can’t see over the throngs, so he exercises creativity to express his great desire to see Jesus – climbing a sycamore tree – getting a high camera angle on the event there in his town!
- As Jesus walks by He makes eye contact with him – and He calls Him by name (word of knowledge, asked someone, *Matthew?*).

- Jesus says He “must stay” at his home. In ancient culture, this kind of request publically communicated His acceptance of Zacchaeus – which stuns the onlooking crowd. Zacchaeus’ attempt to get a glimpse of Jesus has just turned into something so much more!
- Go to his home – “Jesus has gone in” – “Zacchaeus stood;” imagine a meal and talk
- We see Zacchaeus’ two-fold response – likely during the visit at his home where conversation and a meal were had (“Zacchaeus stood and said”).
 - A new generosity – “half of my possessions to the poor”
 - Restitution – “paying back 4x the amount he had cheated others”. Normal restitution (Leviticus 5:16; Numbers 5:7) was 20%.
- Salvation, freedom, and life comes to his house! Seek and Save!
- SAVE = *Sozo* in Greek: to save, i.e. deliver or protect (*literally or figuratively*); heal, preserve, save, do well, be (make) whole.
- Reveals Jesus’ heart towards those often not valued as much in the eyes of the world.
- Jesus
 - seeking (pursuing, tracking down, constantly on the lookout)
 - saving (delivering, protecting, healing, doing well for) the last, least and lost! Zacchaeus had been found and was given life!
- The book of Luke consistently demonstrates how Jesus cared for those rejected and neglected by society.
 - Luke 4:16-19 – quoting from Isaiah 61 – poor, captives, blind, the oppressed – year of Gods’ favor!
 - Luke 5:27-32 – tax collectors and sinners who He hung with. Comfortable and called.

Jesus’ Heart & Hands

Zacchaeus

Jesus called his name, Entered his world; Didn’t care what crowd thought; Brought life to him and his house; One who’d been rejected now impacting the neglected. ***Seek and save the lost.***

The Good Samaritan — Luke 10:25-37

- **Luke 10:25-37**

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” ²⁶ He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” ²⁷ And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁸ And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.” ²⁹ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” ³⁰ Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. ³⁴ He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ And the next day he took out

two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?’ ³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him, “You go, and do likewise.”

- The lawyer (an expert in the Law of Moses) seems to be interested in inheritance. In the Old Testament one could inherit land (Genesis 28:4; Deuteronomy 1:8); one might speak of the Lord as their inheritance; here he is asking how to inherit eternal life – he assumes he must do something to earn such a reward.
- He answers Jesus correctly out of Deuteronomy 6:5 – to love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind, and love neighbor.
- The lawyer latches on to the second part about one’s neighbor, trying to justify himself (*the text tells us this*).
- The question *who is my neighbor?* is really an attempt to limit who one’s neighbor might be. He expects an answer like “your relatives and friend.” In ancient culture, as today, such limits might have run along ethnic lines. There was a category of “nonneighbor,” and the lawyer is seeking Jesus’ endorsement of that concept. *In contemporary terms, any of various forms of racism may underlie the lawyer’s question: neighbors are “my folk,” and then there are the rest, “them over there.”*
- The lawyer asks the question hoping that Jesus will validate that some people are not your neighbor! Instead, Jesus tells him a story.
- The story is based on everyday life of the people of that time. It takes place on a 17-mile journey, on the Jerusalem to Jericho road, that drops about 3,000 feet. This rocky path was lined with caves that made good hiding places for bandits. It was notoriously dangerous, the ancient equivalent to the most violent inner city streets at night.
- In the story, a man is overcome by bandits and left to die on the road. Since he is stripped, he is unidentifiable. Usually dress and speech would reveal who they are. This man is “any person” – void of ethnicity and stature in society. The lawyer, being a Jew, would assume he’s a Jew.
- As Jesus continues the story, a **Priest** passes by, likely riding because he was in the upper class of society. Culturally, the lawyer is thinking “surely help is on the way now.” The comment Luke makes of “by chance” suggests hope that fortune had smiled on this wounded traveler. But, he doesn’t stop – he crosses on the other side – the clear idea of getting as far away as possible!
- Then a **Levite**, another source of aid, shows up in our story. One who serves in the Temple will surely show compassion, stop and help! But, to the amazement of the lawyer, he too, passes on the other side! Two men of similar Jewish spiritual leadership have failed to render aid!
 - Do they fear being robbed themselves? Or of being accused of doing the damage to this man if someone passes by and sees?
 - Do they fear being rendered unclean? Because the victim may be a non-Jew; or dead. If defiled he cannot collect, distribute or benefit from the tithes. His family and servants will suffer the consequences with him.
 - Did they not want to bother and get involved with this, because it made them uncomfortable?
 - Getting involved is costly – but to refuse to help can be a moral failure!

- Now back to our story. Another traveler shows up. A **Samaritan** – a people viewed by Jews as a mixed race because of intermarrying with non-Jews. A half-Jew, yet bound by the same law as the Jews. In the story, a Samaritan would not naturally be from the area where this road, is so the half-dead man would not normally qualify as his neighbor.
- When the lawyer hears Jesus say that the man is a Samaritan, something like “there’ll be no help from this half-breed” likely was the first thing that crossed his mind.
- As often happens in the parables of Jesus, a twist on cultural expectations makes His point: *the least person expected, becomes the model of truly being a good neighbor!*
- Cares for him with his time and resources, puts him on his animal and takes him to an inn. Pays the innkeeper and says he’ll cover whatever else he spends.
 - Two Denarii - according to Matthew 20:2 the average wages of a laborer for two days; or, taking the estimate of Mark 6:37, enough for a meal of fifty men. Care for 2-3 weeks. Knew it would likely cost even more.
- The lawyer’s mind is racing and blown! When Jesus asks the lawyer which of the three proved to be his neighbor – the lawyer can’t even bring himself to mention the man’s race.
- How we walk with God, and our neighbor are connected
 - Matthew 9:35-38 – harassed and helpless.
 - **Last / First Scriptures**
 - **The Rich Young Man**
“But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” Matthew 19:30
 - **Parable: The Laborers in the Vineyard**
“So the last will be first, and the first last.” Matthew 20:16
 - **The Narrow Door**
“And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.” Luke 13:30

Jesus’ Heart & Hands

Zacchaeus

Jesus called his name, Entered his world; Didn’t care what crowd thought; Brought life to him and his house; One who’d been rejected now impacting the neglected. **Seek and save the lost.**

The Good Samaritan

Saw him, came to where he was; Had compassion; Went to him, bound up his wounds; Sat him on his own animal; Took care of him, paid innkeeper to do so. **Mercy to a different race neighbor.**

The Sheep & the Goats — Matthew 25:31-46

- **Matthew 25:31-46**
“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and

you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ ⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

- This teaching comes after Jesus has warned His disciples that they will be hated by the world and persecuted for His sake (24:9). In His kingdom, the blessed ones are those who do not retaliate with violence, but bear witness to Jesus and His Kingdom by serving others (25:31-46).
- The context of this passage also suggests believers would certainly be among those suffering and imprisoned.
- Now, this passage is not about good works getting you to Heaven! The good works here are not the cause of salvation but the effect of salvation on our lives!
- Notice where this passage begins – the Judging of Nations. Jesus, the Judge. A tribe, a nation, an ethnic people group. *Nations & Individuals?*
- Six Deeds of Mercy – done by the sheep / not done by the goats
 - Hungry – those in need of being filled with food
 - Thirsty – those in need to be satisfied with drink
 - Stranger – the foreigner welcomed, embraced, belonging
 - Naked – covered with clothing and shelter
 - Sick – comforted and cared for
 - Prisoner – experiencing life-giving befriending by others
- We should regard these six deeds of mercy as illustrative rather than exhaustive. Each meets a specific need of a particular needy person. Where other needs exist, mercies tailored to those needs surely will count as highly as these six. A kind word or listening ear can help someone wrestling with life. Stopping to help someone change a flat tire can rescue a stranded motorist. The possibilities for mercy are endless, just as human needs seem to be endless.

The Church after the Book of Acts

- *Paul collecting offering for poor*
- When a devastating plague swept across the ancient world in the third century, Christians were the only ones who cared for the sick, which they did at the risk of contracting the plague themselves. Meanwhile, pagans were throwing infected members of their own families into the streets even before they died, in order to protect themselves from the disease.
- Christians lovingly helped non-believers: the poor, the orphans, the elderly, the sick, the shipwrecked – even their persecutors. Jesus had said, “Love your enemies ... and pray for those

who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matthew 5:44). The early Christians accepted this statement as a command from their Lord, rather than as an ideal that couldn't be practiced in real life.

- **Justin Martyr (an apologist in the 2nd Century)** sketched Christian love this way: “We who used to value the acquisition of wealth and possessions more than anything else now bring what we have into a common fund and share it with anyone who needs it. We used to hate and destroy one another and refused to associate with people of another race or country. Now, because of Christ, we live together with such people and pray for our enemies.”¹
- **Clement of Alexandria (Missionary Theologian to the Hellenistic (Greek) World; 190 AD)**, describing the person who has come to know God, wrote, “He impoverishes himself out of love, so that he is certain he may never overlook a brother in need, especially if he knows he can bear poverty better than his brother. He likewise considers the pain of another as his own pain. And if he suffers any hardship because of having given out of his own poverty, he does not complain.”²
- A pagan actor became a Christian, but he realized he had to change his employment because most plays encouraged immorality and were steeped in pagan idolatry.
 - **Cyprian, The Bishop of Carthage (249 AD)** told his neighboring church that they should be willing to support the actor if he had no other means of earning a living – just as they supported orphans, widows, and other needy persons. Going further, he wrote, “If your church is financially unable to support him, he may move over to us and here receive whatever he needs for food and clothing.” Cyprian and his church didn't even know this actor, yet they were willing to support him because he was a fellow believer!³
- Roman society took note of Christians! **Tertullian (Christian author, Carthage; 155-240 AD)** reported that the Romans would exclaim, “*See how they love one another!*”⁴

It's no wonder that Christianity spread rapidly throughout the ancient world, even though there were few organized missionary or evangelism programs. The love they practiced drew the attention of the world, just as Jesus said it would!

Jesus' Heart & Hands

Zacchaeus

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The Sheep & The Goats

The Hungry filled; The Thirsty satisfied; The Stranger embraced; The Naked covered: The Sick comforted: The Prisoner befriended. Real Needs Really Met.

¹ Dwight Edwards, *Game Changing Christianity* (Revolution Within Press, Aug 15, 2016)

² *ibid*

³ David W. Bercot, *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up* (Scroll Publishing Co., 1989)

⁴ Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge University Press, Dec 4, 2003)

Our Response

- Our HEARTS
 - Cynicism *(hardened heart, so don't see the need, neglected, neighbor)*
 - Separation *(walking on the other side of the road vs. association)*
 - Uncomfortable *(not familiar, foreign, insecure)*
 - Inconvenient *(unwilling to give time, money, resources)*
 - Overwhelming *(so much need, how can I possibly make a difference?)*
 - Seek & Save *(it's not if – but where, who, how)*
- Our HANDS
 - Your daily life? *(Who is in need right around you?)*
 - Your local community? *(Is our church being here really making a difference? If we went away would our community notice?)*
 - National & Global Needs
- TODAY'S OFFERING – *The Needy, The Neglected, Our Neighbor*
- THANKSGIVING WEEKÍ
 - While they might not have necessarily fit neatly into the United Nations' modern legal classification of a "refugee," they were undeniably seeking religious freedom and a refuge from persecution.
 - Reality is, unless you are a Native American you have a refugee heritage in this country!
- ARISE HOPE INTERNATIONAL
 - Reaches out to the local refugee population from the Middle East, meeting both basic necessities and spiritual needs.
 - Most have lost everything from war or persecution.
 - Last year while working with a family of six, the husband was so burdened that he couldn't pay their rent. He also had some medical issues. He was working hard but just didn't have enough. When he was told that the Lord provided for his rent to be paid, he fell to his knees, crying, thanking the Lord and the team! This has opened the door for the Lord's love and truth to enter their home.
- PRESTON TAYLOR MINISTRIES
 - PTM was founded in 1998 to confront many of the problems present in the Preston Taylor public housing area (in North Nashville), including problems like drug use, gang involvement, teenage pregnancy, illiteracy, poor school performance and crime.
 - Preston Taylor Ministries (PTM) empowers children and youth to discover and live their God-inspired dreams, develop a love for learning, and build joy-filled friendships that glorify Christ Jesus. There is a history of helping kids become overcomers.
- FRANKTOWN
 - FrankTown mission is to "be Jesus" to Williamson County's inner-city youth. Our goal is to bring physical and spiritual hope to low-income youth within our community by instilling in them critical life skills. They provide academic assistance, mentoring, recreation and spiritual growth opportunities for youth ages 8-18 in the form of weekly educational and vocational classes.
 - We meet three nights each week at Grace Chapel, and we supply transportation to and from our programs, as well as a hot meal each night. In addition to our regular programming of weekly courses, we provide college entrance test prep and college application assistance, which is a key service within our organization.

- GRACEWORKS
 - GraceWorks Ministries, Inc. was founded in 1995, when area concerned citizens and faith leaders came together and decided Williamson County needed a central place to send people who needed help with food, clothing and financial assistance. By pooling church resources with private and public sectors, GraceWorks was able to provide more help for many needs to better serve our community, rather than duplicating efforts.
 - Today, GraceWorks has expanded upon these relationships to establish a referral network with other agencies to provide help for immediate needs and long-term resources. GraceWorks has four program areas that make up the acronym F.I.S.H. — Family support, Instructional programs, Seasonal needs and Hunger prevention. Through its services, they fulfilled 46,665 needs valued at \$5.2 million in 2016.

- HOPE FORCE INTERNATIONAL
 - Hope Force is comprised of individuals committed to utilizing their expertise to inspire, equip, and mobilize thousands of trained volunteers into areas of crisis around the world.
 - Collaborative relationships with organizations and businesses such as World Relief, Smith & Nephew, and Medical Teams International (MTI) provide a platform for maximum effectiveness. HFI has been a national partner with The Salvation Army since 2005, with a focus on training and volunteer deployment.
 - HFI specializes in training volunteers in disaster response, so they are prepared and allowed to respond, often in restricted areas, when disaster strikes. HFI provides a pathway of service for caring individuals, allowing them to become willing, capable responders.

**“Truly, I say to you,
as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,
you did it to me.” – Jesus**

Discussion Questions

1. Have you personally ever been one of the Last, Least, Lost? How does that affect your response to this message?
2. Jesus said He “MUST” stay at Zacchaeus’ house... that He came to “SEEK and SAVE” the lost. How does Jesus’ personal mandate affect you, as you desire to become more like Him?
3. In Luke 5:32, Jesus said that He did *not come to call the righteous* but *sinner*s to repentance. Does that by necessity open up your normal circle of operations, of influence?
4. Discuss: “*Getting involved is costly – but to refuse to help can be a moral failure!*”
5. We all get dozens of solicitations for legitimate Christian charities... having to choose which we will support. Is supporting these good Christian organizations around the world enough, or do we need to be more involved on another level?
6. What is one way you personally, specifically can get involved with the Last, The Least & The Lost?