

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
Senior Pastor Titus Green
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The Mission of Jesus
Luke 19:1-10

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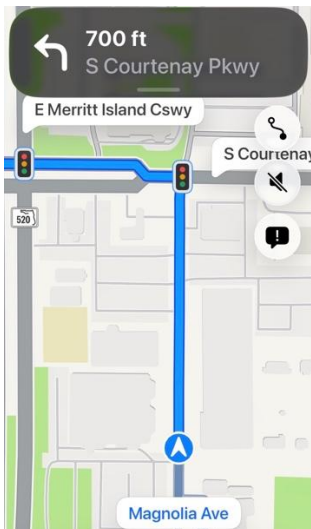
A couple weeks ago, our family took a trip to California. We flew into Fresno, crammed all six of us into a rented minivan, and spent 9 days driving a thousand miles around the state.

But we weren't just driving around. We had mapped out the journey well in advance. We had specific places to be and specific things we had planned to do. We went to Yosemite. We went to Monterey. We drove the Pacific Coast Highway. We were a family on mission. That meant we had to stay on course, which is easier said than done. We drove through hundreds of miles of desolate landscape. We had to find gas stations and bathrooms and food along stretches of road that have breathtaking views but almost nothing else. And then there was all the traffic around LA...it was a nightmare.

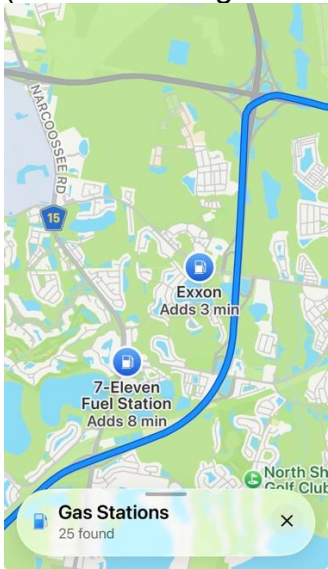
So, I constantly had the map on my phone out to ensure we were staying on course. While my family was looking at this...(Pacific Coast Highway)



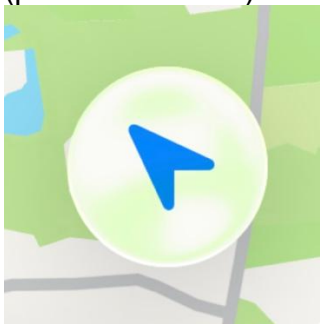
I was looking at this...(screenshot of map)



I did most of the driving and Emily was my navigator. As I drove, she would zoom in and out on the map to look for places to eat or to check on traffic up ahead, which was immensely helpful. You can search along your route for gas stations or restaurants.
(screenshot of gas station options)



But, after she finished looking up ahead, I would need to get the map back to where we actually were to make sure we were staying on course. And there's a button for that...
(picture of button)



When you move around the map, that button pops up. When you press it, it re-centers the map to where you currently are on the road so you can be sure you're still on course.

I feel like I pressed that recenter button a hundred times on our trip. Here's why I bring that up... The Bible often describes the Christian life as trip, or a journey, we are on with Jesus. Christ calls us to "follow" Him. He calls us to join Him on a mission. And, just like any road trip, staying on mission with Jesus can be easier said than done. It's possible to veer off course or take a detour along the way.

So, it's good for us to get into the habit of recentering. To take a good look at our lives and ask if we are staying on course with Jesus. Are we following Him on His mission in this world?

And that's what our next series is about. Before we get into our next verse by verse study (which I'm about 99% sure will be the book of Hebrews), we are going to spend a few weeks talking about the mission we are on with Jesus. And in our text for this morning, Jesus tells us explicitly what His mission is.

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."

Let's start with that last verse. Jesus not only summarizes the point of His interaction with Zacchaeus, He essentially summarizes the point of His coming to the world. You could make the case that He's summarizing the entire point of the Bible – the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.

That's the mission of Jesus and it gives us our Big Idea for this morning.

Big Idea: The mission of Jesus is to seek and save people who are lost.

That's why Jesus left His throne in Heaven to come to this earth as a man. He came to seek and save people who are lost. That's the mission Jesus invited us to join when He said, "Follow me." That's the mission Jesus sends us on when He tells us to "Go and make disciples of all nations." The mission of Jesus is to seek and save people who are lost.

That's the point Jesus is making here. With that in mind, let's dig a little deeper into our text to see what we can learn about this mission of seeking and saving the lost.

1. Jesus Seeks the Lost

Luke 19:1-5

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."

At first glance, it seems like the point of this story is that Zacchaeus is seeking Jesus. Verse 3 says the whole reason Z climbed up into the sycamore tree was because he was "seeking to see who Jesus was." He was curious about Jesus and wanted to get a glimpse of Jesus.

But the real initiative is all on Jesus. He's the one who stops under the tree. He's the one who looks up and calls out Zacchaeus' name. Jesus is the one who tells Zacchaeus to hurry up and get down. Most importantly, Jesus tells Zacchaeus, "I must stay at your house today." He says, "I must." Jesus isn't just inviting Himself over. He's indicating there's a plan Zacchaeus didn't come up with it. Zacchaeus didn't invite Jesus to come over; Jesus commanded him to open up his home for Jesus. Jesus does the seeking.

And who is Jesus seeking? He's seeking Zacchaeus. As a kid, I remember singing the song about Zacchaeus, the wee little man. I'm not sure why, but that phrase "wee little man" made it sound to me

like Zacchaeus was this cute-as-a-button little guy. I imagined a jolly little elf who had to climb up into a tree because all the mean big people wouldn't let him watch the parade.

That's not Zacchaeus. Verse 2 says he was the chief tax collector. Tax collectors were despised in First Century Palestine, and they earned every bit of disdain that came their way.

The Roman government would hire tax collectors in the nations they conquered. Rome would tell the tax collectors how much money to collect from their district – that was their quota. But tax collectors had the authority to take as much money as they thought they could get away with. That's how they got paid. Anything they collected above and beyond their quota was theirs to keep.

The common people were already poor, but once the tax collectors came around, they lost what little they had. Parents couldn't feed their children because of tax collectors. Husbands couldn't care for their wives because of tax collectors. Widows went hungry and homeless because of tax collectors. So, tax collectors were selfish, lying thieves...they were the worst of the worst. So, Zacchaeus wasn't a jolly little elf. He was more like a mix between Danny Devito, Benedict Arnold and Ebenezer Scrooge.

And that's who Jesus came looking for in Jericho. Out of all the people there, He went after a mean, greedy, traitor who had become filthy rich by taking money from the poor.

Just imagine the scene. The town is throwing a parade for Jesus the miracle-worker. Right in the middle of it, Jesus stops. The crowd grows silent. This was the moment they were all waiting for. Maybe He was going to feed the crowd or heal the sick. Instead, He looks up in the tree at a vertically challenged Ebenezer Scrooge. And He tells him to come down. Everyone holds their breath. Surely Jesus is going to read him the riot act. Maybe He'll call down a lightning bolt or something. But what He does sends shockwaves through the city. He doesn't condemn little Z. He invites Himself to Zacchaeus' house.

In this culture, going to someone's home was essentially one of the ways you publicly displayed friendship with them. Jesus intentionally went to Jericho to find and befriend the worst guy in town. Here's the point Jesus is vividly making: no one is too lost to be loved by Jesus.

Jesus came to seek the lost and show them His love. But, in His love Jesus doesn't leave them lost.

2. Jesus Saves the Lost

Luke 19:6-10

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."

When Zacchaeus receives Jesus into his home, his life is transformed. He repents of his sin. His repentance includes a desire to restore what he has taken. And he doesn't just restore it with a little bit of interest. He restores it fourfold. He basically gives back 400% of what he has taken. Jesus saves Zacchaeus from his greed and selfishness and sin.

That's what Jesus does. He loves the lost and shows them grace and for those who receive Him, His grace transforms them. He makes them something new.

That's what it means to be saved by Jesus. The story of Zacchaeus is the story of every person who is willing to place their faith and trust in Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

And it begins with us being lost. When Jesus describes us as lost, He isn't saying that God misplaced us and didn't know where we were. It's not that kind of lost. It's the kind of lost that happens when we stray off course and can't find our way back.

When my son was younger, he had a tendency to wander off and look at things without his parents. Em and I would tell him over and over to stay with us, but he continued in his wandering ways. So, on one occasion when he was about 10 years old, I noticed he was wandering off again. This time, I let him go and stayed behind him, just far enough that I could duck out of sight and he wouldn't see me. And the whole time, he kept getting further and further away from where he was supposed to be. He was lost and didn't even know it. I waited long enough for him to realize he was lost, before I stepped in. I knew where he was the whole time. But he was lost.

That's more like what Jesus was talking about. The story of the human history begins with people who have wandered from their Father. People who have strayed from the place they were meant to be. That's what sin is. It's a turning away from God and His design and desire for our lives. And through our sin, we have wandered away from God...we are separated from Him...we are lost. And that's for all of us. Every man, woman, and child.

Isaiah 53:6 says, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way..."

All of us were lost in our own sin. All of us have wandered away from God by turning our backs on Him through our sin. And we can't get back on our own. That's why we need Jesus. And we don't just need Jesus; we have Him because God so loved this world that He sent His Son on a rescue mission to seek and save people who are lost.

When Jesus died on the cross, He paid the penalty for our sin. His sacrifice enables us to be forgiven and brought back to a right relationship with God. In other words, Jesus saves us from the Penalty of our Sin.

And because Jesus restores us to fellowship with God, that makes it possible for the Spirit of God to live in us and produce the life of Christ. In other words, Jesus saves us from the Power of Sin. He frees us from greed and lust and lying and jealousy and drug-addiction and every other form of sin. When we received Jesus as our Lord and Savior, He saves us in every way we need to be saved.

Ephesians 2:8-10

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Jesus came into this world on a mission to seek out sinners like us and to save us by His grace. And the grace of Jesus that saves us transforms us. We become new creations in Christ. And that new creation includes new works that God has prepared in advance for us to live in.

That's the mission of Jesus – to seek people who are lost and save them and transform them by His grace as they repent of their sin and turn to Jesus in faith.

That's what Jesus is doing in the world today. He's still going after lost people to show them His grace. He's still seeking the worst of sinners and saving them. And He desires for you to join Him in His work.

That's the last thing I want to show you...

3. Jesus Sends Us to the Lost

Luke 10:2

And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. 3 Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves."

Before Jesus went to Jericho to seek and save Zacchaeus, He sent His disciples on a mission that He referred to as a harvest. That's slightly different language to describe the same mission. Jesus is gathering people into God's family from every nation like a laborer gathers in the harvest from a field. And He's using His people to do it.

Listen to what He says to His disciples after His resurrection...

John 20:21

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

Jesus came on a mission to seek and save the lost. And before He ascended into Heaven, He tells His followers that His mission is now extended through them. When we say "yes" to following Jesus, we are saying "yes" to His mission of seeking and saving the lost.

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Jesus desires to fill His people with the power of His Spirit so we can be witnesses who go to the ends of the earth testifying of the excellencies of His love and grace. In other words, the mission of Jesus is continuing today through His people – through you and me.

And I want to close our time of study this morning with two questions of application.

1. Have you been saved by Jesus?

Has there been a point in your life that you realized you were lost in your sin and separated from God? Have you received Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior?

Are you being transformed by Jesus? The word is repentance. It's a change of heart and mind that leads to a change of life. Zacchaeus received Jesus with joy and the entire trajectory of his life changed. He didn't want to continue being greedy, he wanted to be generous. He didn't want to continue living a lie, he wanted to live in the light of truth. Repentance isn't about our perfection; it's about our direction. Have we had a change of heart and mind about our own sin that is bringing about a change of direction in our life as we follow Jesus?

And no matter how far down the road of sin you've traveled, Jesus is ready to receive you if you will turn to Him in repentance and faith.

No one is too lost to be loved by Jesus. Do not leave this place without knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt that your sin is forgiven and you are restored to God through the work of Jesus. Our pastors and prayer partners will be down front at the close of this service; we would love to talk with you about your relationship with Christ.

2. Are you living on mission with Jesus?

After Jesus seeks and save Zacchaeus and all the people are grumbling about it, Jesus basically says "that's the whole reason I'm here – to seek and save the lost." Are you living with that same kind of purpose where you live, work, learn, and play?

For instance, students, as you go back to school to start a new year, are you living with on a mission to seek out relationships with your classmates so that you can tell them about Jesus? Is there a "that's the whole reason I'm here" mission?

When you go to work, are you living with a mission to build relationships with people who are lost so you can introduce them to Jesus? Is there a "that's the whole reason I'm here" purpose at your work? If we are truly following Jesus, then we are following Him on a mission. And that mission is for Jesus to use us to seek and save people who are lost?

What would change about the way you are living toward the people in your life who are far from God but close to you if you were living on a mission to introduce them to Jesus?