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# Session 3 - Luke 19 Part 1

## Bible Passages

Luke 19:1-27

## Brief Notes

More commonly, and perhaps more naturally, 19:1-10 is usually seen to be rounding off the previous section, with its theme of receiving eternal life, and 19:11-27 is seen to introduce themes that will be picked up in the following section. But verse 11 seems to tie these two stories together (“*While they were listening to this...*”), and looking at them together does, I think, help one notice slightly different things.

### 19:1-10 Zacchaeus

The story is of course very familiar. And we should be mindful of the context: how Zacchaeus compares and contrasts with some of the characters we met in ch.18 – the other wealthy man, who balked at the demand to sell everything he had and give to the poor, or the other tax collector, whose contrite faith meant he went home justified. The keys to understanding the story, though, seem especially to be given us in the final two verses, where Jesus gives his interpretation of what has happened. In the light of what he says there, we might expect to find lessons here about **salvation** (v.9) and the **Saviour** (v.10).

To take in reverse order, Jesus says in v.10 that he came “to seek and to save the lost”, and that gracious initiative in seeking and saving is illustrated in the story. For all that Zacchaeus was

hoping to get a view of Jesus, but Jesus is clearly seeking him, stopping right beneath him, addressing him by name, insisting that he stay at Zacchaeus' house. And he seeks the "lost" – those the crowd mutter it is inappropriate for Jesus to be associated with (v.7).

And the story speaks of the salvation Jesus brings: essentially it is fellowship with Jesus (vv.5-7). But the story also draws attention to the evidence of this salvation: there's Zacchaeus' speedy and joyful response, certainly (v.6), but even more noticeably his transformed life and repentance that followed (v.8). This was not a demand laid on him by Jesus (cf.18:22), and it went far beyond what the law required as restitution. In this obviously changed heart we see an even more wonderful miracle than a blind beggar's eyes being opened.

The next parable helps to underline this necessity for a changed life and demonstrable repentance (hence the title given for this study – "Gospel Returns").

## **19:11-27 Ten Minas**

Verse 11 implies there is a link between these two sections ("*While they were listening to this...*"), as well as there being a contrasting truth. Jesus has just announced "*Today salvation has come...*" (v.9), but now this parable corrects a wrong expectation that this might imply that "*the kingdom of God was going to appear at once*". The parable could be unpacked by focussing on the three main characters / groups of characters.

### **The Nobleman**

He is clearly analogous to Jesus. In the account of the Triumphal Entry, which follows, the crowds expect that he arrives in Jerusalem to be crowned as king, but that entrance actually marks his going away to a distant country: it is his resurrection and ascension which particularly signifies his enthronement as God's king. His return, which still lies in the future, will be a time of reckoning, both for his servants, whose service will be appraised and rewarded, and for his enemies.

### **The Subjects**

They "hated him" (v.14) and reject his rule over them. It is telling to have this placed here just before we read of the glad welcome the crowds give Jesus as he enters Jerusalem. He knew the reality of their hearts, which would be exposed days later. Verse 27 speaks in chilling terms of the judgment that will befall those who reject Jesus as king.

### **The Servants**

Each receives some money and is told to put it to work until their master returns (v.13). Notice, unlike the Parable of the Talents, each is given the same: we might take it to refer to the Gospel, whose blessings every Christian shares, and of which each is a steward. When our service is appraised on that last day (cf.2Cor.5:10), it seems there will be differing rewards, proportionate to the

faithfulness of service, but far more generous and magnificent than might be expected or is deserved. The responsibilities that the good servants are given reflect the fact that life in the New Creation will be marked by active service.

Particular emphasis is given to the lazy servant. He offers excuses for his disobedience (vv.20,21), but the picture he paints of his master is not in keeping with the impression given in vv.17-19, and the inconsistency of his actions with what he said he believed shows that laziness is the true reason for acting as he did. We might wonder, is this servant saved or not? There seems to be a distinction between his fate and the fate of the master's enemies. Perhaps we might read his situation in the light of 1Cor.3:10-15, and see this servant as "one escaping through the flames", suffering loss but being saved. There's mystery here, we can't answer all the questions that might occur to us, but we are surely to be warned by this lazy servant, as we should be encouraged and spurred on by the example of the two good servants. There must be Gospel returns.

## Discussion Questions

### From vv.1-10

- How does Zacchaeus compare / contrast with some of the characters we met in ch.18?
- What are the surprises in verse 5?
- "Today salvation has come to this house" (v.9). If you had to unpack something of the nature of salvation from this story, what would you say?
- What does it mean to be a "son of Abraham"?
- From this story, what would seem to be distinguishing characteristics that show someone to be a "son of Abraham"?
- How is the truth of v.10 illustrated in the story?
- This story should both encourage and challenge us -
  - How does it encourage us?
  - How does it challenge us?

### From vv.11-27

- What wrong expectation is the parable intended to correct?
- How could Jesus' comment in v.9 have led to a wrong expectation?
- Who does the nobleman represent?
- How is he analogous to Jesus?
- Who do the subjects (v.14) represent?
- Does the crowds welcome of Jesus as he enters Jerusalem in 19:28ff contradict that?
- What is the chilling fate for all who reject Jesus' kingship over them?
- The servants are the main focus of the parable, those like Zacchaeus who gladly welcome Jesus and receive salvation.
- What might the *mina* represent?
  - What have we been entrusted with?

- How are we to put it to work?
- What do we learn here about what it means for Christ's servants to appear before him on the day he returns?
- How is it clear that the wicked servant's excuses are just that – excuses?
- How might we try to justify our poor service through a skewed understanding of God's character?
- Do you think this wicked servant is saved? Why? Does 1 Cor.3:10-15 help?
- What are the lessons we should particularly grasp in the light of the stated purpose of the parable (v.11)?
  - What should be the mark of those who have received salvation in the here and now?
  - What will salvation look like on the day Jesus returns?

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