We thank you that Your love is from everlasting to everlasting; that Your love never fails; and, God, that You are love. Let our hearts be so overwhelmed and satisfied with the love of Jesus Christ that we experience hilarious transformation and the glad surrender of all that we have and all that we are.

Lord, we invite You to speak to us so powerfully through your Word today that we would have a revelation of Jesus Christ, of Your finished work in Him, and of the power of His shed blood for our lives. We pray, Lord, that You would open up the eyes of our understanding, that You would capture our attention, and that You would fix our eyes upon Jesus, Who is the author and the finisher of our faith.

And Lord, we pray that as surely as You called Zacchaeus down out of that tree, You would speak to us each individually today, calling us by name, and delivering us from all that binds us. May there be the sound of salvation in this house. It is in Jesus’ precious name that we pray. Amen and Amen.

Are you ready for some good news?

God loves you, and you can change. Those are two of the most hopeful things I can tell you, and what’s even better is that they are intimately, indeed, inseparably, connected.

**There was a man** who had been woefully inattentive to his wife, but he decided he was going to change. Instead of his usual way of returning home from work – grumbling, walking past his wife, flopping down into his chair, turning on the TV, and sitting there all night – he decided he was going to return home and show some love to his wife.

So he dressed himself up, bought a dozen roses, and, instead of going straight into the house as usual, rang the doorbell and stood waiting with the bouquet of roses in his hand.

When his wife opened the door, she burst into tears, but not tears of joy, so he said,

**What’s the matter?**

**Pastor Alan Wright**

Part 6
February 19, 2012

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What amazes me is not how stubborn we are about wanting to change, although we can be stubborn, but rather how little we do change, even though we really want to. Maybe we need to change the way we are changing.

And she said,
This has been a terrible day. First, I thought Johnny just had a cold, but when I took him to the doctor, I discovered he has a bad earache. Then the dishwasher broke and it flooded the whole kitchen. The plumber’s been here half the day, and I think the refrigerator is broken and the food is spoiling. And now, to top it all off; you come home drunk.

What amazes me is not how stubborn we are about wanting to change, although we can be stubborn, but rather how little we do change, even though we really want to.
Maybe we need to change the way we are changing.

COMMON INCENTIVES FOR CHANGE

Criticism
Change because you are so bad

One of the ways we think we will change is by emphasizing how bad a person we must be to be hurting ourselves or others by our sin, by our bad behaviors, or by our bad lifestyles, that if we could just feel worse about ourselves, we would change.

Have you noticed this doesn’t really work?

This reminds me of my back exercises. From time to time I’ve had some minor difficulties with my back, but about five years ago I actually injured my back, and it took weeks to recover from it by exercising my abdominal and back muscles to build my core strength. Yet I’ve noticed since then that instead of exercising as a proactive measure to maintain that core strength, I tend to think, Why start exercising now and mess up a perfectly good back?

In a similar situation, you might think that the way to change would be to get up every day and remember the pain and how bad your back can be without the exercise. And it is true that a part of the path to change is fueled by recognizing all the dangers of your life style, but it is not the complete answer.

I remember talking with a cocaine addict who was in a season of recovery, and I asked what was helping him most. He said, Well I’ve learned one thing I have to do is to play a mental picture all the way to the end of the story.

When I asked what he meant by that, he said, When I was tempted to use cocaine, I would only think about the high I would get from it, but I would never think far enough beyond that to remember the consequences. I wouldn’t think about losing my wife, losing my job, losing money, being incarcerated, or any of the other bad things that resulted from my choice. Now I play the whole scene to the end, and that’s helping me.

It is interesting, but sad, that thinking like that was helping him for a while, but then he relapsed.

One time many, many years ago, when I first began preaching on the subject of shame, I was talking to someone in the church who said, I disagree with what you are saying; I think we need shame.

I talked with him more, and as we moved into deeper conversation, he revealed that he had a struggle with pornography. He said, I need to feel really bad about that; I really need to feel worse before I can get better.

I said, So what you are saying is that you’d rather me preach in such a way that you just feel worse about yourself?
And he basically said, *Yes, because then I’ll be motivated to change.*

We may not envision something quite that stark when we think about how we can change, but a lot of people assume that the pathway to change is to so emphasize your wretchedness that you will be disgusted with yourself and you’ll change.

**Shame**

*Change because you are not acceptable*

Closely related to this is the whole idea of the shame that says you are not acceptable, that the sheer fact of being so embarrassed by your wretchedness should be enough to motivate you to change.

A good illustration of this is a personal experience which I relate at the risk of planting in your mind an image which might be difficult to erase, but anything for a good sermon illustration!

Recently I took the kids to an indoor pool for a swim, and my plan was to put on my bathing suit under some sweat pants, and then to just pull off the sweat pants when I was ready to swim. But imagine my surprise when I took off my sweat pants and realized that I was standing in my underwear in the presence of thirty or so people who were around the pool! I had forgotten to put my bathing suit on. It was a really bad moment.

Now, if you are standing in your underwear at a public pool, especially if you’re a pastor, it will move you to make some changes pretty quickly. It’s amazing how fast you can find a table, a chair, a towel or anything else handy when you realize that. I’m still thanking God that I noticed it at some point before I dove into the water!

Many think that if they are humiliated or embarrassed they then will be able to make changes, because everybody wants other people to like them and to approve of them. No one wants to have feelings of shame. We might also think that we can motivate one another in this way, by simply withholding our acceptance until someone makes changes. *You’re not acceptable as you are; you need to make some changes. Once you make those changes, you’ll be acceptable.*

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**So the common views** of change are credited to essentially two motivations: **Criticism,** emphasizing our wretchedness, saying, *Look how bad you really are;*  
*Or shame,* emphasizing how unacceptable we are, saying, *I don’t accept you as you are now.*

I want to show you today that the Gospel has a totally different answer to how we change, and it is in a way that is almost the exact opposite of these common incentives.

**Transformation Power**

In the opening chapters of Romans, Paul said two very important things that relate to our change.  
First, in Romans 1:16, he said, *I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to those who believe.*

Then, in Romans 2:4, he said, *Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?*  
When you see the kindness of God in Jesus Christ, it will become for you the greatest transformation power you could ever experience. To demonstrate this, we will look at the familiar story of a man named Zacchaeus.

The story of Zacchaeus is often considered to be a children’s story, a favorite because children can identify with the song about him: *Zacchaeus was a wee little man; a wee little man was he.*

But Luke’s account of Zacchaeus’ encounter with Jesus is much more than a children’s story. It is a

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1 Joyce Reba Luttrell (a.k.a. Dottie Rambo), *Zacchaeus Was a Wee Little Man* (words and music).
People are willing to listen to the accuser’s tempting voice, and to be allured by the delights of lesser and fleeting things, when inwardly they are deeply dissatisfied with themselves and with their lives.

story about the transformational power of the Gospel. It is a story about how a man’s life can truly move from wretchedness to hilarious generosity, faith and joy.

LUKE CHAPTER 19 (ESV)

He [Jesus] 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.’

ZACCHAEUS

A life without Jesus

A Small Jewish Child

There is only a sparse amount of information in the Scriptures about this man, Zacchaeus. We don’t know anything about his childhood, but we do know that he was Jewish, so we can guess that as a boy he would have been taught the Torah. He would have been taught how to wash his hands properly and how to obey the Sabbath. And he would have been taught what he could do, what he couldn’t do and how to do it right.

We know that Zacchaeus didn’t grow very much, although we don’t know why. Whether it was some malfunction in a hormone, whether it was some other kind of disease that impeded his growth, we don’t know, but Zacchaeus somehow remained very small.

We are not told how his small stature affected Zacchaeus, but sometimes I give free rein to my imagination as I think about some of the characters that we read about in the Scripture, thus I have a mental picture of young Zacchaeus. Even in the best of communities, when there is something distinctive and different about a child, there is a self-consciousness about it, and if anybody else says anything, it makes the child all the more self-conscious. So I’m only imagining that this happened with Zacchaeus, that he was continually trying to measure up, trying to find some way to be like others and to be accepted by them.

I can see this boy one day going to his own dad and saying, Dad they’re picking on me. And I can imagine his Dad, trying to help, not knowing any other way, just saying, Well, Zacchaeus, you may have to try a little harder. You may have to run a little faster in order to keep up with everybody and to prove to them that you can hold your own.

Deep Inward Dissatisfaction
Something in me is bad; I have to measure up

I think something like that had happened with Zacchaeus. Now having grown, he had a deep inward dissatisfaction with himself, with his life, with the direction of his life, with who he was. He felt he was different than other people. He felt he was under the control of other people and their opinions. He felt he was handicapped in the world. He was a hard worker; He wanted a better life; and yet he was inwardly empty.

Tax Collector

So Zacchaeus was ripe to be picked off by one of the Roman officials, who perhaps came through one day and said, Zacchaeus, I noticed your hard work
and I think you’re a very responsible person. We need more tax collectors in the Jericho region.

**Trait to the community**

The Roman officials liked to employ a local Jewish person to collect taxes in his own community because that man would know his own people, who therefore would have a harder time avoiding him or hiding income from him.

**Corrupt**

Then, as a way of motivating these men to become traitors of a sort against their own people by collecting taxes from them for Rome, the Roman officials would turn a blind eye to all of the corruption in those tax collectors. So the tax collectors were famous for their dishonesty and for their wealth, because they would charge twice as much as a person actually owed to Rome, and keep the excess for themselves.

**No place to belong**

When a man signed up to become a tax collector, he knew he would be ostracized by his own people and, although he might hobnob with the Roman officials, he would not be one of them either. He was signing up for a life in which he would have no place to belong.

**No right to the Temple**

Furthermore, because of their associations with Gentiles, and because of some of those associations that might leave them ceremonially defiled, in most cases the tax collectors would not be welcome at the Temple, so Zacchaeus was giving up his right to the Temple.

**Disowned by family**

And often, a tax collector’s family would disown him.

So in order to become rich, Zacchaeus was giving up his family, his place of worship, his belonging to the children of Abraham, and all of his friends.

**Moved to Throw Away His Life**

Why would a man do all that by choosing to be a tax collector?

Why would any person, perhaps even you, choose and continue in a lifestyle or direction which could result in the loss of everything dear to him? It is because people are willing to listen to the accuser’s tempting voice, and to be allured by the delights of lesser and fleeting things, when inwardly they are deeply dissatisfied with themselves and with their lives.

_Have you ever noticed_ that any area of your life in which you are profoundly satisfied is the place where you are least tempted? We all have areas in our life in which we find ourselves easily tempted, and yet I am convinced that all of us also have areas in which we are not as tempted. Some people are tempted by the allure of riches and would do a lot to gain them; other people are not. Some people are tempted by the allure of substances; others are not, but they are tempted in many other ways to find meaning in their life through other substitutes.

But why is it that we are not tempted in certain areas of our lives?

In my own life, I find that there is little temptation to seek something bigger or better than what I am doing now in pastoring this flock. I do have great dreams of the many things that we would do, and if God were to clearly call us to some other place, of course, we would go. But my response to anyone who asks me if I think about leaving Reynolda is, _Why would I want to go somewhere else?_

After fifteen years here, the love that we share; the love that I have for preaching to a congregation that is so hungry for the Gospel, that is so hungry for all the things of God that draw out of me, not just the milk, but the meat of the Word; the great vision that we share on this journey together; all are reasons why I am deeply satisfied, and I can say, _Why would I leave now? The best is yet to come!_ I am so satisfied in all of that, as well as in the challenges that are before us. I don’t need to look for some other identity. And it is out of that satisfaction that I am content and confident that the Lord has much more for me to do here.
It is also that way in my marriage. My wife and I have spent a lot of time together, and we have a lot invested in each other. We have a real marriage, so we have our discussions, we have to work through things, and we each have our flaws, [at least I do!], but I spend a lot of time thinking about what a blessing my wife is. She is called to the ministry just as much as I am, and what a delight it is to walk together in the same direction in life.

Some of you don’t know that when Anne was a little girl she and her friends would play dress up, and her friends would pretend to be a teacher, or the wife of a doctor, or some other calling, but she would dress up as the minister’s wife. I think she was the only child who has ever done this in the history of time! She would dress in froufrou clothes and sparkly things, saying, I’m not the ordinary minister’s wife!

I think about how much my wife has done to mother our children, and what a beautiful woman she is. It would be very, very hard to ever tempt me with another woman. I’m a one woman man, because I’m satisfied.

You can’t tempt somebody very well if they are satisfied. If somebody has a billion dollars, are you going to be able to tempt them with ten dollars? Could you move them by saying, I’ll give you ten bucks if you’ll... What a joke! Someone who is richly satisfied is not easily swayed.

But Zacchaeus was inwardly bankrupt and could be moved to throw his life away.

The Appearance of Power

What did Zacchaeus gain? He gained the ability to acquire wealth, but I don’t think it was about the wealth. He gained with his position the ability to tell other people what they must do. So a little man was able to feel a little bit bigger, because he could tell other people what to do; he could take from them; he could make them do what he wanted them to do, because everybody knew they had to be nice to the tax collector, or he would charge triple the next time.

His position might have given him the appearance of power, but what Zacchaeus was really looking for was to not feel so small.

SCROOGE

A picture of change

There are many stories in literature of people who change, and in thinking about them, the well-known story of Ebenezer Scrooge came to mind.

The Old Man

The word Scrooge is actually a play on an old English word that has fallen out of usage, and it means to press or to hold tight. That was Scrooge. His face was tight; his fists were tight; his heart was tight. He was an old miser who hated Christmas. He didn’t care one whit for anybody else. He was the picture of self-absorption. All he cared about was money.

The New Man

Scrooge was visited by the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future, and in his separate journeys with each of them, he encountered dark and fearful images. Yet in the end, these journeys all culminated in an unbelievable, transforming experience that made Scrooge a new man, such that at the end of the tale he was so delighted that we read:

‘I don’t know what to do!’ cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath; ... ‘I am light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a school-boy. I am as giddy as a drunken man. A merry Christmas to everybody! A happy New Year to all the world! Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!’

....and it was concluded Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinitely more; and to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second father.

He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a man, as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town, or borough, in the good old world.

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It was not the fear of his death that changed him. It was the delight of having the chance to live; it was the recollection of love; and it was the awareness that he could have been slain for all his wretchedness, but instead was shown kindness and an opportunity to live. THAT is what changes a man’s heart.

The Planting of Many Seeds

When I was first thinking about the story of Scrooge, I thought, There’s an example of a man who changed because of all the fears that came upon him, for I assumed that he changed because he saw that he was going to die unloved and friendless, and that the thought was unbearable to him.

But when I thought more deeply about the story, I realized that was not the way the story progressed. At the time Scrooge was in the midst of a supernatural experience which caused him to realize that he wasn’t in control, that he couldn’t do anything to keep the ghosts from carrying him away to show him different scenes of his life, something else was happening. There was also at work an awesome power which was much greater than Scrooge or his fear. I realized that in the midst of his fear, seeds of kindness and love were being sown into his visions.

The Ghost of Christmas Past showed Scrooge a picture of himself as a lonely little boy, sitting by himself at his boarding school near Christmastime, with no friend there, and no family arriving to take him home. And in that moment of seeing himself as a little boy, Scrooge had compassion on himself, just a little seed, but He began to love himself. So before Scrooge’s transformation, before he ever started loving others, a little seed of love for himself was sown.

Then there was the scene of his sister interacting with him, loving him, and as he remembered her love, another seed was sown.

In the next vision, he saw himself dancing together with his fiancée, and when he remembered that he was loved by a woman, another seed was sown.

The Ghost of Christmas Present first showed Scrooge a scene that was taking place in the Cratchet home, where Bob Cratchet was toasting Scrooge, despite all the unkindness that Scrooge had given towards his employee, and despite his disregard for the lame Tiny Tim and all the problems in that poor family. Cratchet, against all odds, toasted Scrooge. Scrooge watched it all, and another seed of kindness was sown.

The ghost then showed Scrooge a scene taking place at a Christmas party which his nephew had invited him to, but he didn’t go. Scrooge saw people there laughing and playing charades about him, but, despite it all, his nephew said, A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man, whatever he is! He wouldn’t take it from me, but may he have it, nevertheless. Uncle Scrooge! 3

And we are then told, in response to the seeds of kindness:
Uncle Scrooge had imperceptibly become so ... light of heart, that he would have pledged the unconscious company in return, and thanked them in an inaudible speech, if the Ghost had given him time. 4

Undeserved Kindness

In the midst of all his fears in the company of the three ominous presences, what was it that really changed the man’s heart? It was undeserved kindness, such that after the Ghost of Christmas Future came and showed Scrooge his own imminent death if things did not change, Scrooge awakened. And when he realized that he was alive, it was not

3 Ibid, 70.
4 Ibid.
When God calls your name, He shows that He is powerful, but at the same moment He shows that He is loving. Something that could kill you, but instead longs to restore you, has invaded your heart.

the fear of his death that changed him. It was the delight of having the chance to live; it was the recollection of love; and it was the awareness that he could have been slain for all his wretchedness, but instead was shown kindness and an opportunity to live.

THAT is what changes a man’s heart.

ZACCHAEUS
Transformed by an encounter with Jesus

A Desire to See Jesus

Zacchaeus was eager to see this miracle worker, Jesus. The text simply says he wanted to see who Jesus was, so we can only guess that he might have been hoping for some miracle of life, or possibly that he was simply curious.

But in his longing to see Jesus, Zacchaeus did two things which were very unusual for a man in that culture. First, he ran. No dignified Jewish man of ancient cultures would ever run, thus it was so surprising in the story of the prodigal when the father ran to meet his son. But Zacchaeus ran to get ahead of the crowd.

And then secondly, he climbed a tree, like a little child. How bizarre, how humbling—a rich man shimmied up a tree.

Called by Name

Then, in the next moment, the Lord Jesus Christ called Zacchaeus by name. Zacchaeus! It was a supernatural utterance, a prophetic word of knowledge and understanding that the man was Zacchaeus, and Jesus called him by his name. And when He did, Zacchaeus knew that this was no ordinary man who was calling him. Zacchaeus had wanted to see who Jesus was, and with astonishment and also incredible potential dread, Zacchaeus was called down out of his place in the tree to encounter Him.

God’s Holiness and Power

Knowing that this was a supernatural experience, there was something taking place in Zacchaeus. At the same time that he was curious, he was filled with awe. Later in the text, it says that Zacchaeus stood up, so I don’t know if at this point he might have been trembling and had fallen at Jesus’ feet, like the woman with the hemorrhage of blood when Jesus called upon her. But I can reason that Zacchaeus did fall at Jesus’ feet, because when you encounter the holiness of God, there is a part of you that becomes like Peter who, after the great catch of fish, fell down and proclaimed, Depart from me, I am a sinful man. When we encounter the supernatural power of God, something in us cries, I cannot stand in Your presence. You are too holy. I am too unclean.

God’s Kindness

And then, at the same time that the holiness of Jesus came upon Zacchaeus at the call of his name, Zacchaeus was lavished with the kindness of Jesus. He experienced immediately an endearment, a kindness, from Jesus.

God calls your name, and when He does, He shows that He is powerful, but at the same moment He shows that He is loving. And this is where real change begins to happen in the human heart. When you are aware of overwhelming, potentially ominous power, and then you become aware that it is joined inseparably to everlasting, steadfast love—that is where the heart begins to melt. Something that could kill you, but instead longs to restore you, has invaded your heart.

6 Matthew 9:20-22; Mark 5:25-34; Luke 8:43-48
7 Luke 5:1-11
Intimate Fellowship

Jesus called Zacchaeus. He said, *I must, I MUST stay at your house.* I must. It is a word that is a favorite of Luke’s in his gospel, the little Greek word that means *it is necessary.* This was not a fickle mood from the Messiah. This was an announcement of deep destiny. He said, *I must stay at your house, with you.* The word *stay* is the same word that is used to refer to abiding. *If you abide in Me, I will abide in you.*

It is the idea of truly being with someone in their house, an intimate association.

A High Priest

Then, as all of this was taking place, the unimaginable occurred. The other people were watching this, and in verse seven we read: *And when they saw it, they all grumbled, ’He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.’*

They began to persecute Jesus for loving the sinner, and in that moment, a beautiful and once again unimaginable thing took place. Zacchaeus, who had felt ostracized by the crowd his whole life, and who as a tax collector had no one, was suddenly joined with Jesus in a fellowship of suffering, for they were rejecting Jesus. Zacchaeus had a great High Priest, Who was able to sympathize with his deepest weakness.

Changed!

When they criticized Jesus, Jesus did the exact opposite of what Zacchaeus had done with his life. Being so inwardly rich in mercy, Jesus ignored the persecution and mocking of his own brothers and sisters, and continued to extend kindness to Zacchaeus. When Zacchaeus saw that Jesus was going to continue to love him, even when the others were rejecting Jesus for doing so, the well erupted. The heart that had been slowly changing in this encounter with Jesus, suddenly welled up and he could not contain himself.

*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.’*

Far beyond any measure of the prescriptions of the Torah, Zacchaeus was restoring and bubbling over with generosity. The man who was the greatest miserly wretch in town, the stingiest, most greedy, most boastful man, suddenly became recklessly, hilariously, uncontrollably and joyfully giving of his life.

A man cannot change that much EXCEPT by an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ

Power to Change

By an Encounter with Jesus

*Jesus* is powerful enough to take away your life, but instead He came that you would have life, and have it more abundantly;

*Jesus* stands in the rightful position to be able to judge and condemn, but instead He said, *I did not come to condemn, but to save.*

*Jesus* came to seek and to save that which was lost.

When Called by Name

The way that change came about in Zacchaeus was by an effectual call of Zacchaeus’ name to come and to encounter the grace of God.

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8 John 15:4 9 Hebrews 2:17-18, 4:15

10 John 10:10 11 John 12:47
By God’s Grace and Mercy

It is the encounter of the grace of God that truly changes a man or a woman’s heart. We are not changed by deeper criticism or by deeper shame. We are changed by the deep well of the grace and mercy of God wherein we who justly deserve only God’s displeasure, have instead been lavished with His affection through the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Fullness of Salvation

The Gospel of God in Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation for everyone who would believe. That word salvation, *soteria*, means not only being saved so that you can go to Heaven, it means being delivered from everything that holds you back, from all of your besetting sin, from the shackles that hold you down. It means being made well, being made whole, being *satisfied*. Paul said, *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ because it is the power of God unto *soteria*.*

When Zacchaeus threw his arms up and said, *I want to give my whole life away for this Man Who loves me*, Jesus smiled. And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation – ‘soteria’ – has come to this house’.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is powerful to change your life, because it is the good news of the kindness of God in Jesus Christ.

By Faith

At the end of the story, Jesus said of Zacchaeus that salvation had come to his house because he was *a son of Abraham*, meaning not just by blood. Jesus was saying that the promises made to Abraham, the blessedness spoken over Abraham, belonged to Zacchaeus, for he had been changed, not because he tried harder, but because he had *seen* and he had *believed*. The righteous are so by faith.

**God has big plans** for you and for me, for us to be able to change. But that change does not come the way the world offers. It comes by a love that NEVER gives up.

**And THAT is the Gospel!**

*Father, we thank You today that the same love that You had for the most wretched member of that Jewish community, a tax collector, is the love that you have for us today. And so we ask, Lord, for change, for the opportunity to change from destructive patterns of living, besetting sins, pride that eats away at the soul, jealousies, bitterness, envy, rage, lust, slander, gossip, malice, greed, or whatever might be underneath it, Lord. Somewhere there is some inadequacy, some place of the soul that has not been satisfied in Christ.*

*And so, Lord, today, with the sound of salvation in the house, we turn our attention away from the besetting sin to the face of the Savior. Let us see Jesus!* I pray by the power and unction of the Holy Spirit, that You would call each by name, and

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12 Romans 1:16

13 Romans 4:3, 16-24; Philippians 3:9
announce a saving word, a command that is filled with a promise.

And for those who are beset not by personal sin, not by the allure of the flesh, but by the despondency of a soul that is slumbering through life, I pray, Oh God, that You would call each by name with Your promised word and command to awake and be satisfied.

Our prayer, Lord, is that we would see Jesus, that we would know His love, and be set free.

It is in His precious name we pray, Amen.

Closing Remarks

Sometimes the wolf is trying to isolate the sheep in order to wreak havoc and to devour, and I saw in my spirit today that there is a wolf named shame, and it is masquerading as an answer to your besetting problems. But this wolf is making your problems worse, because it is instilling more fear in you, and the more fear you have, the more inwardly bankrupt you actually feel, and therefore, the more tempted that you will be.

I believe that God is announcing a new message over your life, and it is for you to just receive in faith the saving work of the Lord Jesus, your Shepherd. This message that Jesus is announcing over your life is entirely different than what anyone else has ever announced over you. Rejection has planted in you seeds of shame and fear of further rejection, but the Lord Jesus is saying, I want to come and be in your house with you. It is just for you to say, Yes.

It is hard to believe that a man like Zacchaeus could meet Jesus and Jesus would never tell him, Here is what you ought to do. Here's how much you ought to give. Here’s how you ought to make amends for all the wrong you’ve done in your life. Here’s how you need to do ... Here’s ...

Instead, Jesus only said, I want to come to your house and be with you today. And the man’s life was totally changed.

And that is what He will do for you today. Just say, Yes.

May the Lord God bless you and keep you,
And be kind and gracious to you,
And make His face to shine upon you,
And give you His peace,
Today and every day, forevermore.
Amen
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