

## Devoted to God: Being September 30, 2007 - Skip MacMillan

### **Opener:**

Jesus puts it like this: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisees! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean" (Matthew 23:25-26).

Hypocrisy occurs when a person is doing the right behaviors but there is no change of heart.

"Merely changing what we do will not change who we are" -Larry Crabb, *The Marriage Builder*, p10.

Christianity is something you are (justified – official position before God through Jesus Christ's atonement) and become (sanctification, becoming more like Christ), and is manifested by the things you do (good works).

This is the difference between "religious Christianity" and "religion-less Christianity".

Religion-less Christianity: someone rescued by God, in relationship with God, who then desires to live for God.

First God wins your heart, then your actions will follow his lead.

"I am therefore I do."

### **Luke 18:18-27 and 19:1-10**

(see also Luke 10:38-42 - Mary and Martha)

**R.Y.R. (Rich Young Ruler)** – "certain ruler," "young man".

Wealthy – "he had great wealth" (Luke 18:23).

Religious man, keeps the rules.

Thinks he is a pretty good guy and people are lucky to have him around.

Thinks God is concerned more with human performance than the human heart.

He is disciplined, an achiever, and a doer.

Trained and experienced, therefore he goes right up to the leader; no disciple will do.

Good - "Why do you call me good?"

R.Y.R. - I'm good like you; see what I have done, is there something else I need to do, surely not!

First Jesus plays along with him.

1. Jesus challenges him on his perceived goodness, "Why do you call me good? No one is good – except God alone." You think you are good but I'm about to show you that your "goodness" has limitations.

2. Undercurrent of "Why do you call Me good?": "you don't realize who you are talking with, do you? You don't realize I am God."

3. So let's play the game: keep the six commandments.  
His response: I have and I am, perfectly; arrogant.

Notice: Jesus bypasses the first four about the man's relationship with God – no other gods, no idols, LORD's name, and worship/rest on the Sabbath, because the man isn't about being related to God. He is about doing, achieving, he has a humanistic world view even of how a person gets to heaven.

Even his question "What must I do to inherit eternal life." No mention of God or relationship!

Second, Jesus presses the limitations of his "goodness".

Since you are so good, "Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven." The man's response: "he became very sad" because he realized he wasn't all that good.

This is the logical end of this man's thinking of works-based Christianity.

Jesus presses this guy to see the limitations of his goodness.

You are not all that good, are you? See? You aren't willing and you won't give it all away.

Jesus' point: This isn't about human effort or accomplishment because it has limits.

Eternal life or God is not found in a to-do list; lists without heart are religion.

Religion = I do or attend therefore I am good with God.

God doesn't want sacrifices, works or right behavior. I want your heart, a relationship first.

Imagine being given a gift from someone who doesn't really care, i.e. a company birthday card.

Very difficult for the rich to enter Heaven.

Jesus: "how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Pretty depressing news seeing we are all trying to gain more wealth. What does this mean?

"What is impossible with men is possible with God."

What is impossible for you to do is possible for God to do.

It is impossible for you to work, do, or earn your way into heaven.

But God can change a person on the inside, He alone can change a person's heart.

### **Here is what is possible with God: Luke 19:1-10, Zacchaeus the Tax Collector**

#### **Zacchaeus**

Chief tax collector, so he isn't really liked by the community, probably alone a lot.

Wealthy, he has become wealthy due to the years of cheating and taking advantage of people.

Physically, a short man.

The religious people labeled Zacchaeus as a "sinner" (v. 7).

The religious people didn't get it. Jesus: "He (Jesus) has gone to be the guest of a sinner" (v. 7). As if they were not sinners.

These religious people were like the rich guy: do right, disassociate with sinners and maybe you will get in.

Zacchaeus' view of himself - He knows he is messed up and that he has cheated people. But, he is determined to see Jesus, to just catch a glimpse, his desire was "to see who Jesus was" (v. 3).

Jesus comes to Zacchaeus (Ephesians 2:1-10).

Jesus wants to stay at Zacchaeus' home: "I must stay at your house today."

Zacchaeus welcomes Jesus gladly into his home, opens his private world to Jesus, "welcomed him gladly".

### **Compare and Contrast**

Both were wealthy.

Rich Young Ruler kept the law, religious, had it together externally, he was a "doer".

Zacchaeus was a shyster, living for himself, didn't know the commands nor did he bother to keep them, religionless.

R.Y.R., being religious, really believed he was good and so walks right up to God and asks for validation that he is good.

Zacchaeus knew he wasn't good, he knew he was messed up and a cheat, so he keeps his distance physically from Jesus, climbs a tree to see; a genuine sense of humility.

R.Y.R. comes close to Jesus physically but is far emotionally and relationally.

He might have said, don't get too close or involved, Jesus; just keep your distance and tell me what I need to do.

Zacchaeus stays far away physically but is close emotionally and relationally.

He was curious, apparently wanting something more than information.

Parallel with the two different men praying, one religious and one a sinner (Luke 18:9-14).

RYR's time with Jesus was centered around a question, "what must I do;" – pragmatic, get it done, non-relational.

Zacchaeus' time with Jesus was spent eating together, listening, talking with and just spending time together.

Jesus for the RYR was a source of information, direction, a means to his own ends – inheriting eternal life.

Jesus for Zacchaeus was the end – abiding (John 15), the work of God (John 6:28).

It is easier to do (a list) than it is to be (in relationship).

I can accomplish a list and set it down, but a relationship is always there.

A relationship with God is much more involved than a religion based on defined behaviors.

### **How does the situation end for the two men?**

RYR - left overwhelmed, burdened down, frustrated, confronted with his own lack of "goodness," still dislocated from God relationally and never understood who Jesus was.

Zacchaeus – left with his burden removed, freed up, released, filled with happiness and joy - God likes me! God wanted to come to my home! God saw all of me and still loves me.

He left with more than he could have ever imagined or dreamed possible. "Today salvation has come to this house".

Why did they leave this way?

RYR – remained in his religion, his list, and fighting to believe he could do it without God; there was no relationship with God. The inside of his cup was still unclean.

Zacchaeus – understood his own failings, knew he could never redeem himself and just wanted to be with God.

Result

Zacchaeus did of his own free will what Jesus challenged the RYR to do – "sell it all".

"Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount'" (v. 8).

Motivation

RYR was motivated by arrogance, and the personal benefits of good behavior.

Zach responded to the love and acceptance he received from Christ.

Christianity is something you are and become and is manifested by the things you do.

Seeing Jesus

Zacchaeus saw Jesus for who He is: he came to know the Messiah, his hope and forgiveness, the One who loved him.

Natural response - not forced or coerced, no list but the walk that develops from being in relationship with Jesus Christ.

Zach was changed from the inside out by God – God cleaned the inside of the cup and then the outside became clean.

"What is impossible with men is possible with God" (Luke 18:27).

A rich man *can* enter the Kingdom of God; Zacchaeus was "wealthy."

God captured his heart then changed his life.

## **What are we learning:**

Humility of Zacchaeus.

Are you a "doer?" Does that define your Christianity? The call is to "Be with Jesus": listen and read His words. Being devoted to God is about being with Him!

Jesus is calling you, He wants to sit with you in the most genuine and personal of places. He wants to walk with you in the garden in the cool of the day, to talk, listen, and just be together.

Being comes before Doing - I am therefore I do.

Christianity is something you are (justified - official position before God through Jesus Christ's atonement) and become (sanctification, becoming more like Christ) and is manifested by the things you do (good works).

God wants your heart, a relationship, before you do anything.

"First (allow God to) clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean" (Matthew 23:25-26).