

GROWTH GROUPS
WEEK 9
WEEK OF NOV 15



Growth Group Fall 2020

Jesus Stops

Week 9 – November 15, 2020 - Luke 19:1-10

Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at a church. In this time of Corona19 and “social distancing” please don’t meet in person, but do continue to check in with each other. If your growth group would like to meet online or if you are aware of needs that the church can help fill, please let us know at connect@ljpres.org. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.

Setting the Context

In Luke chapter 19 we find the story of Zacchaeus, a man despised by the people for his greedy ways. He was the chief tax collector and had used his position of power to oppress and rob those in his community. However, when Jesus came to town Zacchaeus was curious. He ran and hid in a sycamore tree just to get a glimpse of Jesus. This act of running would have been considered shameful for someone of his wealth and status, but because the crowd was keeping him from Jesus he had to find a way to see Jesus. As the crowd was likely murmuring, “what is Zacchaeus doing in the tree?” Jesus called him by name. Jesus told him to come down immediately. The people were likely expecting Jesus to scold Zacchaeus for his poor behavior, but instead Jesus said, “I must stay at your house today.” This one line flips the narrative on its head. Jesus extends grace to someone who did not appear to deserve it.

In this passage we glimpse the costly love of Jesus Christ. As Jesus calls Zacchaeus down from the sycamore tree he is forgiving him and restoring him, a process that would only be completed on the cross. Jesus offers him salvation, which in turn elicits a response. Zacchaeus, aware of the great grace he has been shown, responds with this: “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.”

This costly reparation was unprecedented. The Old Testament law required that all reparations be paid back with twenty percent interest. However, Zacchaeus increases his payment to 400%. He is committing himself to an earthly life of poverty in response to the eternal life that Jesus has given to him.

This story of Zacchaeus comes right after the story of the blind beggar at the end of Luke 18. In that story the blind man had cried out for Jesus to have mercy on him. When the crowd told him to be quiet, he kept on calling out. Jesus stopped and healed him. The crowd was amazed and praised God. He got up and followed Jesus and actually got to witness Jesus interacting with Zacchaeus.

In both stories Jesus stops. He asks the blind man what he would like for Jesus to do for him. He calls Zacchaeus down from the tree and says he wants to share a meal with him. In both stories Jesus calls the men to him and restores them. Jesus extends grace to both the oppressor and the oppressed. While the crowds pick and choose who is deserving, Jesus sees both men as beloved, and deserving of salvation.



Exploring the Text

Read Luke 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. ² A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. ³ He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

⁵ When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” ⁶ So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

⁷ All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

⁸ But 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.”

⁹ Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Questions

If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.

- 1) Tell a story about a random act of kindness that has been done for you, or a time that you participated in a random act of kindness
- 2) The gospels often allude to the way in which the “crowd” gets in the way of seeing Jesus. What is something that gets in the way of you “seeing” Jesus?
- 3) Are you surprised that the first thing Zacchaeus does is give away most of his money? Why do you think Zacchaeus responds to Jesus’ call by talking about money instead of focusing on how he can be a disciple of Jesus?
- 4) After Zacchaeus was called by Jesus he responded generously and immediately. What does it look like for you to respond generously because of what Christ has done for you?
- 5) What is the significance of Jesus eating at the house of Zacchaeus?
- 6) In verse 9 Jesus says, “Today salvation has come to this house.” What do you think Jesus meant by that statement? How do you define salvation?
- 7) God’s grace can come to us in unexpected ways. Share about a time when you have seen God’s grace in your life?
- 8) For the past nine weeks we have been talking about the path of discipleship. How we follow Jesus, become like Jesus and then act like Jesus. Based on what we have talked about, how would you define the word disciple? Where have you found yourself growing in the area of discipleship over the past couple of months?