



St. Paul Evangelical Community Church (SPECC)

Worship Address : Cerritos High School Auditorium
12500 E. 183rd St., Cerritos, CA 90703
(Enter at Bloomfield, across Heritage Park)

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September 13, 2009

Theme: Jesus Would Go into the Community

Text: Luke 19:1-10

In Luke 19:1-10, we have Luke's account of one of Jesus' several visits to Jericho. Some have compared Jesus entry to Jericho with the "Great Awakenings" that have happened in the UK and the USA in the last few hundred years. The USA experienced such an awakening in the first decade of the 20th century. An "awakening" is a great spiritual revival in which thousands and thousands of people are touched by the Holy Spirit in a very short period of time. There are a number of signs that an awakening is taking place: (1) Masses of believers are renewed in their faith over a short period of time. (2) Great masses of unbelievers are converted over a short period of time. (3) These renewals and conversions cause people to turn away from their sins in a dramatic way. (4) The general public becomes curious about what is happening in the churches. In the first decade of the 20th century many of the major cities in the USA witnessed these signs.

In the 90's of the 20th century, it was common for pastors and historians of the Church to speak as though another great awakening were just around the corner. I honestly do not know whether or not that is true. Many people no longer believe that God is working in our world. Many others believe in God, or believe in a supreme being. However, their ideas about god come from their own minds. God is made to fit their image of what God should be like. People need to see visible proof that God is real and at work in our world. Many will not set foot inside a church. This means that the so-called "ordinary" believer must become the visible proof that God is working in our world. If we allow our lives to be dramatically changed, people might become curious enough to investigate what is happening.

When Jesus visited Jericho, the response to his presence there seemed to be like an awakening. Some have compared his visit to an awakening. It shows some of the signs of an awakening. We will look at these signs. But a closer examination reveals that Jesus' visit to Jericho had a impact that was very different from an awakening. Those who study the history of the church say that an awakening requires that masses of people have been touched by the Holy Spirit in a very short period of time. The masses are there for Jesus' visit to Jericho. However, Luke only focuses upon the salvation of only one person— Zacchaeus. In this story we find that there is curiosity, a confrontation, a confession, and a conversion.

Luke tells us that Zacchaeus was curious. He has already informed us that the crowds of Jewish people were curious about His miracles and His teaching. Zacchaeus was so curious that he climbed a tree just so that he could get a look and Jesus. He had had tried to see Jesus, but was unable to see him because he was he was a short man. Zacchaeus



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was a wealthy tax collector. He represents unbelievers who have heard that God might be doing something among His people. He had probably heard stories about Jesus' miracles and the crowds that seemed to follow Him wherever He went. God is still working in our day. However, he appears to be using individual people and the local churches to spread the good news. This means that we must be people who live and speak the Gospel. It is the power of a truly transformed life that will cause people to become curious. A person who simply lives the beatitudes, for example, will create curiosity for the Gospel in many people.

Then there is a confrontation, but it is not between Jesus and Zacchaeus. Instead, the confrontation is between Jesus and the crowds. Zacchaeus certainly got much more than he had expected. He probably would have been satisfied to get a look at Jesus. Instead, Jesus invites himself to stay at Zacchaeus' house. Zacchaeus gives Jesus a warm welcome; but the crowds are not sympathetic to him or to Jesus. They are not sympathetic to Jesus either. Tax collectors were hated by almost everyone in Israel. The crowds begin to grumble that Jesus would associate Himself with a hated tax collector. The real confrontation is between Jesus, the Messiah, and His fellow Jews. They complain because Jesus does not fit their picture of what the Messiah should be like. It is their attitude and not the attitude of Zacchaeus that needs to be adjusted. Jesus confronts their attitude by declaring that salvation has come to his house today.

Then there is a confession, but it is not the kind of confession that we might expect. This part of the story has confused students of the Bible. It has confused them because Zacchaeus obviously seems to have repented and believed. He promises to give half of his wealth to the poor. He also promises to pay back four times as much to anyone he may have cheated. The problem for students of the Bible is that Luke doesn't tell us about his repentance. Zacchaeus does not confess his sins as those who were baptized by John the Baptist has done. Instead, he tells Jesus and the crowds about the actions that he will take to show that he has genuinely repented. This is the kind of response that John had called for as he preached to the people. We might say that Zacchaeus' words reveal his courage rather than his confession.

Finally, conversion happens. But the masses are not converted. Only Zacchaeus is converted. Jesus declares publicly that salvation has come to Zacchaeus' house. He does this to give assurance to Zacchaeus and to rebuke the crowds for their grumbling. Jesus also gives a public statement about His mission. Crowds of people were there when Jesus visited Jericho; but it is as though he came for only one person and his household. He came to seek and to save the lost. His mission hasn't changed in 2,000 years. The major difference between then and now, is that now, Jesus seeks and saves the lost through us. Only God knows what would happen if we were to allow Him to freely carry out His mission through us. The important question for us is this: Will we allow Jesus to do his mission through us until we are called home, or until He returns?