

Summary

This Palm Sunday sermon explores the story of Zacchaeus from Luke 19:1-10, focusing on how Jesus offers acceptance to those who deserve rejection. The message emphasizes that Zacchaeus, a despised tax collector, climbed a tree to see Jesus but discovered that Jesus was actually seeking him. When Jesus called Zacchaeus down and invited himself to his home, it demonstrated radical grace - accepting someone before they changed rather than requiring change first. The sermon highlights that true salvation produces immediate evidence through repentance and life transformation, as seen in Zacchaeus's generous giving and restitution. The central message is that Jesus came to seek and save the lost, offering acceptance through his sacrifice on the cross, and calls listeners to either come down from their 'tree' of distance or surrender more fully if they've already encountered Christ but haven't truly made him Lord.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, as we gather together, we thank you for your Word and the powerful story of Zacchaeus. We ask that you would open our hearts and minds to what you want to teach us today. Help us to be honest about where we are in our relationship with you, whether we're still watching from a distance or need to surrender more fully to your lordship. Give us ears to hear your voice calling our names and the courage to respond. We pray that through our discussion, we would grow closer to you and to one another. In Jesus' name, amen.

Ice Breaker

What's the highest place you've ever climbed to get a better view of something? What were you trying to see?

Key Verses

1. Luke 19:1-10
2. Psalm 139:13
3. 2 Corinthians 7:10
4. Leviticus 6:5

Questions

1. What do you think motivated Zacchaeus to climb the tree? Was it just his height, or were there other factors?
2. How do you think Zacchaeus felt when Jesus called him by name and asked to stay at his house?
3. The crowd 'muttered' about Jesus going to be the guest of a sinner. How do we sometimes react

when we see God's grace extended to people we think don't deserve it?

4. What's the difference between regret and repentance, as illustrated in Zacchaeus's response to Jesus?
5. Zacchaeus gave half his possessions to the poor and promised 400% restitution. What does this extreme generosity tell us about genuine transformation?
6. Jesus said he 'must' stay at Zacchaeus's house. What does this divine necessity reveal about God's heart for the lost?
7. The sermon mentioned that 'Jesus accepted him and Jesus changed him' rather than the other way around. How does this challenge common misconceptions about salvation?
8. Where do you see yourself in this story - still in the tree, having climbed down but not fully surrendered, or living with evidence of transformation?

Life Application

This week, identify one area of your life where you've been holding back from fully surrendering to Jesus as Lord. Take a concrete step toward repentance and change in that area, whether it's your finances, relationships, habits, or attitudes. Also, look for someone in your community who might feel rejected or overlooked, and find a way to show them the same acceptance that Jesus showed Zacchaeus.

Key Takeaways

1. Jesus sees and seeks us before we seek Him - He was looking for Zacchaeus all along
2. Jesus offers acceptance before requiring change, not the other way around
3. True salvation produces immediate evidence through repentance and life transformation
4. We are called to reflect Christ's heart by moving toward those others reject or overlook
5. The cross is where Jesus took our deserved rejection so we could receive undeserved acceptance

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for the powerful example of Zacchaeus and your incredible grace toward him. Help us to remember that you see us, know us by name, and offer us acceptance we don't deserve. For those of us who need to come down from our trees of distance or doubt, give us courage to respond to your call. For those who need to surrender more fully, help us to live like you are truly Lord over every area of our lives. May we go from this place with hearts transformed by your grace and hands ready to extend that same grace to others. Transform us to be people who seek the lost just as you do. In your precious name we pray, amen.