

First Things First

Week #2: Changed by

This series is called "First things First."

- What do we mean when we say, "First things first?" That means that the order is vital, because the first thing is foundational for the second, third...etc.
- Fire, ready, aim doesn't work. Ready prepares for aim and aim prepares for shoot.
- Disciple comes before church.
- We will be looking at **how the church started** soon in the book of **Acts**. In order for that to make sense we need to have first talked about what a disciple is.

Look up on the wall. Last week we began by talking about what "following Jesus" means as a disciple.

Today we move toward the next phrase "changed by..."

Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. ² There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. ³ He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.

⁵ When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today."

⁶ Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. ⁷ But the people were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled.

⁸ Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!"

⁹ Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost." Luke 19:1-10

We have just read **one of the most memorable** events where Jesus changed someone's life. **Let's see if this story can help us answer this simple question. How can I be "changed by" Jesus?**

So where does it all start?

Recognition that I am lost.

You can use whatever word or phrase you want...

- Broken.
- Not as I should be.
- Not as I was designed.
- My life isn't working anymore.
- "Come to the end of yourself."

Here's all you need to know about Zaccheaus.

He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. Luke 19:2b

If you see a person working at the BMW, had diamonds and gold everywhere, an Italian suit, walk out of the office on a Friday and gets picked up by her personal chauffeur in his Rolls Royce carrying a Gucci bag...your eyebrows are going to go up.

To say that a tax collector was rich is to say that the tax collector is corrupt.

To say that a Jew is a tax collector for the Romans is to say that he is **separated from his community** and is **isolated from the practice of the Hebrew faith**. He was viewed as the worst of sinners and the worst of **traitors**. He was not recognized as one of God's people.

Here's what Jesus said about himself. **For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost."** Luke 19:10

He sees Zach accurately, meets him where he is, and still loves him.

Being lost is not a total loss if you recognize that you are, in fact, lost. As long as you think you still know where you are going, then all is lost.

But if by seeing someone who clearly knows the way and is the way you see yourself and your life clearly then this is the beginning of something good. The lost person starts following the one who knows where he is going and wants to take you there.

I see that I am stumbling through the woods in the dark without a map. I recognize that a passerby knows the way. And I want to know what he knows; I want to go where he is going. I want to travel through life like he does. That brings us to the second step to being changed by Jesus. The desire to be different.

Let's return to our story to see if we can see any evidence of a desire to be different in Zacchaeus.

³ He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way. Luke 18:3-4

I can't be sure what he was thinking, but I can see that he made a supreme effort to get to where he could see and possibly hear Jesus. Running would have been perceived as undignified for a man. And I'm pretty sure a grown man climbing a tree would look pretty silly. "I mean Zacchaeus, have some self-respect and stop making a fool out of yourself. Children run, but professional government workers don't."

This is about the sense that **Jesus is someone special**, but I don't think this is Zacchaeus being **fan boy looking for an autograph**. Yes, he thinks Jesus is something special, but I think he believes Jesus is something different. **He doesn't play by the rules that keep Zach on the outside** as an outcast, hated by his own people as a traitor and a profiteer. He's taking up with the enemy and getting fat on the backs of his own people.

Zacchaeus thinks that Jesus is different and maybe he can help him out of the life that has given him money, but has him isolated from community and worship.

Why run or climb a tree if there isn't some kind of sense of hope for something better.

I don't know for sure, but I think he is fed up and ready for something different. **His life stinks and he is willing to take a chance at further ridicule in order to have a chance at a different life.**

Here's what Jesus can do for people who know they are lost and want something different.

¹² Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. ¹³ For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. Philipians 2:12-14

Zachaeus doesn't even know it, but he is being drawn by God to Jesus. It says that first God is working in you. He gets there first always.

Then he gives the desire to do the things that please him. He gives us the desire to do right and to begin following. He gives us the desire to run when walking and standing would be more natural. He gives us the desire to risk and climb a tree when leaning

anonymously against the tree in the crowd would be the norm.

Then he gives us the power to make that step of faith toward him that is the beginning of every life transformation. That's where different begins.

The gravitational pull back to the old lost, broken, sinful, life is broken by the want to and the ability to.

Zaccheaus demonstrated this desire not simply by running and climbing, but by giving away the money he had stolen.

My draw towards being a senior pastor, which I had absolutely no interest in.

The power to do what I am most clearly not well suited for.

How can I be changed by Jesus? It starts with knowing I'm lost and then a desire for something different.

But then I have to come to terms with this different person that Jesus is transforming me into. We have to...
Accept that I am a new person who is being made new.

Present reality, future hope.

⁹Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham.

Listen to what Jesus is saying, **the words that he is using to describe this traitor, tax collector.**

- **"Salvation has come to this house."** The people who were supposed to be "good Jews" wouldn't come to his house. The God who saves has come to this house.
- **"a true son of Abraham"**...Those others who were on the inside and have put him on the outside of God's salvation now have to hear Jesus say that Zacchaeus is a **true son of Abraham, a true son of faith, not them.** They have kept the **Jewish law** that is supposed to be the barometer for being a son of Abraham, but they are not, he is.

He is new, a true son of Abraham, but he is also being made new. Listen to this. **Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. Romans 12:2**

His status has been changed, he is a saved, true son of Abraham, so now God can go to work on making him into a new person who has the ability to understand his will, what he wants.

Present reality, future hope. Now if that wasn't good enough, listen to this. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are

being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18

The Holy Spirit is transforming; tax collectors, traitors, lost people like us, into people who look more and more like Jesus.

Finally, to be changed by Jesus, we just need to **think, act, and live like the above stuff is really true.** I am a new person who is being made new. That is code for... **Live in a new reality...adoption!**

That is the opposite of trying really hard to be good enough.

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 2 Corinthians 5:16-17

If the old has passed away, then why do you keep trying to act like it really has the power to change the new status you have as an adopted, chosen loved child of God?

A person who is new, changed, who was greedy and selfish, now operates like an adopted child who doesn't need to store up wealth.

What would it look like for you to run and climb a tree where Jesus can begin to change you?

Climbing the tree...is our act of obedience, our response to the only one who can change traitors and tax collectors like us.

1. **Pray daily**: "God give me the desire for and the picture of my new life in Jesus"

2. **Feed on Romans 12:2 & 2 Corinthians 5:16-17**

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. Romans 12:2

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18