

"YOUR IMAGE DETERMINES YOUR IMPACT"

Luke 19:1-10

There is a story told by Boyd Seevers that tells of a traveler who was nearing a great city. He asked an old man seated by the road, "What are the people like in this city?" The old man replied, "What were they like where you came from?" "A terrible lot," the traveler reported. "Mean, untrustworthy, detestable in all aspects." "Ah," said the old man. "You will find them the same in the city ahead." Scarcely had the first traveler gone on his way when another stopped to inquire about the people in the city before him. Again the old man asked about the people in the place the traveler had just left. "They were fine people, honest, industrious, and generous to a fault. I was sorry to leave," declared the second traveler. Responded the wise one, "So you will find them in the city ahead."

Isn't it true, we can look for the bad or the good in people or situations or places depending on how the lenses we look through?

I mean, depending on our perspective or position the glass can be half full or half empty all of the time depending on, well, us.

When it comes to the church, we expect people to meet our expectations and become just like us in order to come to our church. We want them to come when the time is convenient for us; we want them to learn to like our type of music when they might be accustomed to hear different types and kinds of music. I mean, their ears are not attuned to the notes, the harmonies, even the instruments that we like and use, and because we say it is "sacred," then, well, they just have to suck it up and learn to like it or at least tolerate it because, well, after all, we say it is the right way or the right type. You get the point?

And yet, over here in the real world, the business world, they are willing to make some of the appropriate changes in order to attract the customer. And if they don't make the appropriate changes people will not visit the business, people will not buy the product.

And so over here is the real world, the business world, and over here, as a matter of fact, right here is the church world. And we say in the church that people need to hear the Word of God. And here, in the church, we have a message that the world, out there needs to hear because it is the message of hope, the message of life, the message of salvation- but many, out there in the world, don't know what the message has to offer. But out there, in the real world, there are a host of people who say that the church is outdated, that the church is irrelevant for their lives today. They don't know, yet, what the message we have of Jesus Christ can do for them or come to mean to them. For many, they don't know it, yet.

Friends, what is the image of the church? Is it this one- we are here to welcome you into our group, we are here for those who are just like us, we are here for those who understand the way we do things, the way we do "church?"

Or is the image of the church this one- we are a missions center who seeks to serve others, we are a service center who is interested in the mental, physical and especially spiritual side of people, we are a disciple-making organization that meets people where they are and points them toward Christ-like maturity? Folks, the church must be a group of people who meets needs and makes disciples; the church must be a group who loves God first and then people second. The church is in the business of loving people and because we love them we serve them and because we love God we desperately desire for them to fall in love with Jesus. And all of this comes from our love for God and our relationship with Him.

We read over and over again in the New Testament where Jesus was reaching out to people of all shapes and sizes; people of every walk of life. And the important thing to remember about Jesus is that He met people right where they were. And in doing so, He gave us an example to follow. Let's look at our passage today from Luke 19 and Jesus encounter with a

man of short stature whose name is Zacchaeus. This is a story about conversion; this is a story about the Gospel being for every man, woman and child regardless of age, social or religious status; this is a story about salvation is for all people, even a despised tax collector like Zacchaeus who also happened to be a Jew, in other words, a person of the very people salvation was promised in the coming of the Messiah. And yet salvation comes even to Jews only when Jesus goes after them and brings them home. Let's take **a closer look at our passage** as we look to a little man whose heart became so big that it filled to overflowing with gratitude and repentance that he did the unthinkable.

First, **Zacchaeus was an outcast**. Back in Jesus day the tax collector who was a Roman citizen was seen as a traitor and collaborator with the enemy- i.e. the Romans. But if the tax collector was Jewish he was despised because he had constant contact with Gentiles and he had "sold out" with his own people and was working for the Roman dogs.

But this Zacchaeus was not the run-of-the-mill tax collector. Verse 2 says he was “a chief tax collector” who hired other tax collectors to do his dirty work. Corruption was rampant with tax collectors who could gouge the people and collect above and beyond what the Roman government required. And so Zacchaeus was probably a very wealthy man and so his fellow Jews hated him even more. And what makes this story so ironic is that the name Zacchaeus is an abbreviated form of Zechariah which means “the righteous one.”

Second, **Zacchaeus was inquisitive**. Verses 3-4 tells us that he was trying to see who Jesus was, but because there was such a crowd and he was so short he was having trouble. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to get a better view. Jesus had this habit of drawing crowds and this short man does whatever it takes to see Jesus.

Third, **Zacchaeus and Jesus meet**. Jesus is walking along and looks up and sees Zacchaeus and engages him in a conversation.

Jesus took the lead and even called him by name, possibly Jesus already knew of this tax collector. And Jesus not only engaged Zacchaeus in a conversation but invited Himself to Zacchaeus' home. Jesus was compelled to go to his house for Luke records Jesus saying, "for I MUST [emphasizing the word MUST] stay at your house" tomorrow? No, today. There was a sense of urgency with Jesus for this man was lost and needed to be found. Jesus cut through all the red tape; He took the first step and reached out to this outcast.

Fourth, **there is opposition against Jesus.** Verse 7 says that the people who saw this happening before their very eyes began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." But Jesus earlier says in Luke 5:32, "I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance." No one knew that day that Jesus' visit to Zacchaeus' home would change his very life.

Fifth, **Zacchaeus believes and Jesus responds**. Verse 8 says that Zacchaeus called Jesus "Lord" signifying that he recognized Jesus' deity as the Son of God. And then he proceeded to give half his wealth to the poor and give back generously to those he had previously cheated. Zacchaeus "Got It." The Mosaic Law only required adding 20% to the amount due when restitution was required but he is going to give back 4 times. And Jesus responds in verse 9, "Today, salvation has come to this house" and it did not come because of Zacchaeus' good deeds but because he truly believed in Jesus. And Jesus goes on to call Zacchaeus a "son of Abraham." That was huge for this tax collector because his own people, the Jews, saw him as a traitor so, no way, would he have been considered a "son of Abraham" in their eyes. There were those during Jesus day that thought that being a descendant of Abraham was their ticket to salvation. But Jesus is laying out His mission in verse 10 and it is, "to seek out and to save the lost."

The window of Image- helping others see Jesus. This window that we are looking through today, the window of Image is all about doing what it takes to share God's love in Jesus Christ with people. Listen to these convicting words that Paul wrote in I Corinthians 9:22b when he said, "I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some." The religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees waited around the synagogue for people to come to them- those who were "like" them. But Jesus, He went out to the people and met them where they were both physically and spiritually.

A question: Do you ever think there are times when we, who have been in the church, increase peoples' burdens when they come to the church? Do we sometimes, think, maybe even say, to someone else, "When they become like us, then they can become one of us?" Do we ever think or say, "They have to fit into our mold, our timeframes, our values, our priorities, our tastes or they cannot really become a part of our church?"

Friends, it is our hope and prayer that those who come to our church will seek and eventually become Disciples of Christ that they will become disciple-makers. But our responsibility is to help them see Jesus, see Jesus. And we need to show them Jesus when we greet them, when we invite them down for “fellowship hour” or to the youth fundraiser or out to dinner after the service. Being hospitable to others when they walk in the door of our church just like we would do if they walked in the home where we live.

Let me share with you **some interesting statistics** as it relates to inviting someone to church, which is one of the most basic forms of outreach. And before I give you the stats let me just say that even though inviting someone to church probably causes the least amount of personal discomfort, only **1 in 4 active Christians do so monthly**. Of those Christians attending church, only **24.5% invited someone in the last month. 43.8% had invited someone in the last year. 31.7% had not invited anyone to their church in over a year**. Now why is this so?

Well, if the church is a visible object, many people feel they don't have a responsibility to invite people- it's not up to them whether visitors come or not. A church could be seen as easily accessible, having adequate facilities.

What more do people want? And yet Jesus doesn't want us to be reactive but proactive and reach out to a hurting world filled with hurting people. We need to be, and don't take this the wrong way, Marketing Agents for Christ.

So how does the church, **how do we become involved in**

Marketplace Christianity? Churches must be **outreach-minded** and be culturally relevant and provide meaningful, God-centered service and outreach. There are some churches who are engaging in **enterprise ministries** where they are meeting people where they are, meeting their needs, providing services and entering into relationships with them, and, and sharing the Gospel. Some of the ways they are doing this is establishing preschools, day care centers- which is what we have done and are doing through the trailers behind the church and the partnerships we

have entered into. Other ways are through Easter pageants, spaghetti suppers and fish fries. The objective is to create a unique environment that attracts and begins to nurture a community of believers that the traditional church setting hasn't been able to do. I mean some churches have provided bookstores, coffee shops, video stores, counseling centers, teen nightclubs and the list goes on and on as they work to create an image of the church as a mission center that serves and shares Christ. The bottom line- Marketplace ministry goes TO the people instead of waiting for the people to COME to church.

Are there risks? You bet. For example you can get sidetracked, you might not be able to share the Gospel so freely but you can build relationships. But the goal is going to the people to introduce them to Jesus Christ. So what does this have to do with me, you might ask? Plenty, for it all comes down to the cost of discipleship and what our church is willing to pay. Because, friends, salvation through Christ is a free gift to all who will

accept Him. Discipleship is costly. Jesus met Zacchaeus and Zacchaeus turned his life over to Jesus, along with a lot of the money he had basically stolen from people.

The point is this- our actions preach volumes about our true values. Do we say we have a heart for missions? Then how is our money being spent? A disciple is committed to the values of Jesus. And being a disciple means that we act out those values that were important to Jesus, because they will be important to us as well. Your image determines your impact.

Amen.

"YOUR IMAGE DETERMINES YOUR IMPACT"

Luke 19:1-10

Introduction: A traveler nearing a great city asked an old man seated by the road, "What are the people like in this city?"

EXPECTATIONS...

What is the image of the church?

Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus in our passage

First, **Zacchaeus was an** _____ (chief tax collector) vs. 2

Second, **Zacchaeus was** _____ vs. 3-4

Third, **Zacchaeus and Jesus** _____

Fourth, **there is** _____ **against Jesus** vs. 7

Fifth, **Zacchaeus** _____ **and Jesus** _____ vs. 8-10

The window of Image- helping others _____ Jesus I Corinth. 9:22b

A question: Do you ever think there are times when we, who have been in the church, increase peoples' burdens when they come to our church?

Some interesting statistics- inviting someone to church (1 in 4 active Christians do so monthly)- of those attending church:

_____ **% invited someone in the last month**

_____ **% invited someone in the last year**

_____ **% had not invited anyone to their church in over a year**

How do we become involved in Marketplace Christianity?

_____ **Ministries**

Conclusion: our actions preach volumes about true values..... And being a disciple means that we act out those values that were important to Jesus, because they will be important to us as well.