

"THE CAGE OF ROUTINE"

Luke 19:1-10

Today we continue in our "Chase the Goose" series. If you were with us last Sunday you'll remember that we focused on the "Cage of Responsibility" and the fact that it is easy to let the lesser responsibilities overtake the most important ones. And that we don't want to miss out on the greatest responsibility of all, that being, following Jesus Christ.

But this morning we want to focus on another cage- "The Cage of Routine" and how we can permit the sacred in our lives to become the routine and if that happens, we can become bored and miss the adventure of the Holy Spirit. And as we learned last Sunday, for Celtic Christians *An Geadh-Glas* is "The Holy Spirit."

Let me ask this- do you have a sense of motion? Or better yet, do you understand the whole concept of motion that involves the planet earth and the solar system and the axis the earth spins on? Well, you and I are sitting on a planet that spins around its axis about 1,000 miles per hour.

And besides that, you and I are hurtling through space at about 67,000 miles per hour. And get this- before the clock hits 12 midnight you and I will have traveled, are you ready for this, 1.3 million miles in our annual journey around the sun. So now do you now have a sense of motion? I mean, God does all of this in one day and before I told you all of this weren't you overwhelmed and in awe as I raised the issue of motion? Weren't you just waiting with baited breath because you were aware of these unbelievable statistics that I have just shared with you? Now be honest- the answer is NO. We just took it for granted, this thing called motion. The bottom line is that we all, I mean we all take constants for granted and over the course of time, we get used to the little miracles around us. Any kind of awareness begins to wear off and these constants, as simple as running water when you turn on the faucet and electricity when you turn on the light switch that are a part of our everyday environment become almost, well, invisible. Psychologists label this **inattentional blindness**.

Even farmers get used to routines. One farmer was heard to say, [quote]

“The hardest thing about milking cows is that they never stay milked.” *Bits &*

Pieces, August 18, 1994, p. 3.

Do you ever think it can become easy to lose the joy of living? The last wedding we had here at the church was Saturday, August 15 when Beth Deger and Zac Kohl were married. Few things in their life can compare to the joy they experienced on that day they were married in August. And the most recent birth in the congregation was Tuesday, September 22 when Ella Marie Wilson was born to Wendy and Bobby Wilson and there is nothing more miraculous than witnessing the birth of your child, of any child. But then the realities of changing diapers and feedings during the middle of the night, and if you have cloth diapers the washing of those stinky, once poppy diapers and some of the joy begins to dissipate. And so, what eventually happens is that which can be considered sacred becomes old hat, it becomes routine.

But if we are going to chase the Wild Goose, rather than us sit back and hope the Holy Spirit will follow us, if we are going to follow and even chase the Holy Spirit we have to be willing to break out of the cage of routine.

This morning we are going to look closer at a passage where a man took a chance, where a man was willing to break the routine in his life, where a man got a little crazy in a good kind of way, and had a life-changing, a life-altering experience- folks, his life was radically changed forever. And it is a story from scripture that some of us might be familiar with, right? So let's focus on the routine in the life of Zacchaeus.

First, **Zacchaeus was a wee little man [like the children sing] who had a wee little routine.** Zacchaeus had it "made in the shade," so to speak. He was wealthy as a result of the racket he was running. He was not only a tax collector, but verse 2 tells us he was a "chief tax collector" which put him at the top of his profession. But he was also one of the most hated men in the district and he was basically an outcast because of his

chosen profession. He collected taxes and, of course, he had to get paid, so he took some money off the top for himself. I mean, he wanted to live the lifestyle he had grown accustomed to and, well, even though it was dishonest and the people hated him for it- his own Jewish people hated him for it, a man's got to do what a man's got to do, right? And besides, a guy has to make a living, doesn't he? But there was something missing in Zacchaeus' life. He had settled into the routine of the mundane, collecting taxes, and he missed the work of God in the ordinary. And can't we do the same? But on this particular day, something was different. Maybe the light came on, even just a little, and he saw an opportunity, yes, a divine opportunity that was coming his way that day. For he had heard of this holy man who was coming by the name of Jesus, and word out on the street was that this Jesus just might be the waited for Messiah. Could it be? Could this really be the one Israel had long been waiting for? And so a divine opportunity was possibly presenting itself, right before Zacchaeus' very

eyes. And so let me bring this home to us- just like Zacchaeus, we must keep our eyes and ears and hearts open to develop the intuition to spot divine opportunities, those God-moments, if you will.

Second, **Zacchaeus climbed up a sycamore tree and disrupted his routine.** I remember visiting Jericho when I was in the Holy Land back in 1998 and we saw the sycamore tree that legend says was the tree this little man climbed. Probably the last time Zacchaeus climbed that tree was when he was a little boy. But now he is a grown man he climbs this tree so he can get a glimpse of this one who people are saying might be the Messiah, the Savior of the world. So let me just point out that a treetop is no place for a rich, distinguished man. It just isn't the place for him to be. Here's the point I want to make and it is something we all need to consider- **to experience Jesus, we need to welcome the risk and break out of the ordinary.** Did you catch that? To experience Jesus, we need to welcome the risk and break out of the ordinary.

How often, when confronted with something slightly different we take the easier way, the familiar road and do what we have always done. I mean the 7 last words of the church are, "We've never done it that way before," thereby keeping us in the same routine and yet hoping for better results.

Let me share with you the time I visited George, who was married to a Godly woman at a previous church. Maybe you have heard me share this story a long time ago but I'll share it again just the same. I had been at the church in Titusville for a year and the denomination was going to put an emphasis on evangelism. And so there were people being trained in the presbytery to come to churches that wanted to strategize on new ways to take the Gospel out into the community. And the consultant had a number of programs to choose from and we picked the one that we felt best fit our needs and the church. It happened to be HELPER Evangelism, written by Dr. Ron Rand, who has been here at the church on a few occasions to teach and preach.

Anyway, after going to Ron's church- College Hill Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, OH we had people trained in evangelism and sharing the faith.

Now let me just say that we never had this kind of evangelism training that Ron brought us in seminary, it took me getting out of seminary to get it.

After going through the training one of the women in our church told me her husband was recently diagnosed with cancer and she asked if I would go to visit him, which I did. Now previously, if I would be visiting someone who was ill or diagnosed with a terminal illness I would pray with them and offer words of encouragement. But this particular night, I asked George if I could share some scripture with him and I read passages that Ron had instructed us on, I Peter 5:6-7, 10-11 and Matthew 11:28-30 and after sharing those passages I asked George if he had ever given Christ all his worries and cares surrounding his terminal cancer and then I asked him if he had ever made a commitment to Christ and he said he hadn't. And then I asked if he would like to and he said, "Yes." And I almost thought about asking him again

because I was so shocked that he said yes, but I didn't. And right there in his living room, this man who once lived a terrible life and was known all over town, and not in a good way, right there in his living room, on his couch, he accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior. Folks, if I had approached that visit like the others I previous had, and never read George those passages and asked him if he had ever made a commitment to Christ and asked him if he would like to, well. Well, I don't want to think of the possibilities because God can do anything. The point I want to make is that on that particular night, I took a risk and asked some questions of George that, up until that point, I never asked. And I broke out of the ordinary and asked him some questions and the passages that I read to him that night was what I preached from at his funeral. Disrupted routines go hand-in-hand when we embrace or invite people to embrace Jesus.

This Zacchaeus was willing to look downright foolish- climb up a sycamore tree, take a chance and hope and pray that he might actually see this Jesus- which he did. And not only see him, Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus' home and the rest is, as they say, history. You see if we are going to break out of the cage of routine, we have to disrupt our routines in order to connect or reconnect with Jesus. Zacchaeus did it, so can we.

And third, "**when the Savior passed that way" he changed Zacchaeus' life**. Just think about this rich tax collector who was disliked by everyone in town- he was willing to do whatever it took to seek out Jesus. And what did Jesus do in return? Jesus honored his efforts. And Jesus will honor our efforts if we are willing to leave our routines behind and follow Him in a new way; with a new outlook; with a new purpose. And do you know what is also important in this story that is acted out for us? That is that Jesus desperately wants greater fellowship and a relationship with those who are willing to seek Him out. And thanks to being willing to stick his

neck out and literally up the tree, Zacchaeus' life changed from the routine to the remarkable all because he climbed up a tree.

So where do we go from here and what is the lesson of the story for us, you might ask. Well folks, maybe we need to get our climbing shoes on and climb some trees. Because the reality is that most of us go about our usually routines, day-in and day-out without much change or excitement. We get into our routines and even that which is sacred, like coming to church and our prayers and what we do in ministry, becomes the ordinary. God is willing to help us break out of the cage of routine; God is willing to encounter us in new and exciting ways if we break out of the cage of routine. So what tree do we need to climb? So what if we look a little foolish and have to make some changes along the way. Jesus will meet us there and He will honor our efforts and what we do in His name. Break out of the cage of routine and see what God can do with us and through us.

Amen.

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Introduction: Today we focus on "The Cage of Routine" and how we can permit the **sacred** in our lives to become the routine and thereby miss the adventure of the Holy Spirit (*An Geadh-Glas*= The Holy Spirit)

Question- Do you have a sense of motion?

When we take constants for granted- psychologists label this
 _____ - **blindness**

Question: Do you ever think it can become easy to lose the joy of living?

The routine in the life of Zacchaeus

First, **Zacchaeus was a "wee little man [like the children sing] who had a wee _____ routine**

A divine opportunity presented itself before Zacchaeus

Second, **Zacchaeus climbed up a Sycamore tree and _____ his routine**

To experience Jesus, we need to welcome the _____ and break out of the ordinary

Zacchaeus was willing to look downright foolish

If we are going to break out of the cage of routine we have to disrupt our routines in order to reconnect with Jesus

Third, **"when the Savior passed that way" He changed Zacchaeus' _____**

Where do we go from here and what is the lesson of the story?

Conclusion: Break out of the cage of routine and see what God can do with us and through us