

Money

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[0 : 00] Music Good morning.

Good morning. Today's scripture is taken from the book of Luke, chapter 19, verses 1 through 10. Zacchaeus the tax collector. Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through.

A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus. He was a cheap tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man, he could not because of the crowd.

So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, come down from that tree.

I am going to come to your house today. So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.

[1 : 05] But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, Look, Lord, here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.

Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.

This is the word of our Lord. Thank you, Amy. This sermon series is about redemption, how we can redeem different parts of our lives, our hopes, our dreams, and all that God can do for us.

As illustrations, we're using some superheroes. I want to talk about one most of you have heard of, Batman. What's Batman's superpower? Do you know?

How many people are on this special fight team? Three. Including you. Three? Against what? I'll tell you on the plane. Plane?

[2 : 12] What are your superpowers again? I'm rich. That's it. He's rich. He's got more money than he knows what to do with.

I looked it up. The Black Panther is actually the wealthiest superhero. And then Tony Stark. And then Batman. But of course, Batman has more money he has absolutely no use for than anybody else.

He can spend money on anything he wants. That's why he's got all those toys. But in the book of Mark, we're asked the question, what good is it if we gain the whole world and forfeit our soul?

So this morning we're going to talk about how can we redeem our attitude? How can we redeem our understanding of money?

Jesus tells a parable after this story about Zacchaeus. And it's a story similar to the one of the talents where he gives some money to some people and goes away for a while and comes back to see what they've done with it.

[3 : 18] And the first one came back and said, here, I doubled your money. And he says, good job. Good job. The second one, he says, here, I've doubled your money. He says, great job. Wonderful.

The third one comes back and says, here's your money back. I hid it because I knew that you're a mean guy and you take advantage of people. I said, really? Take what's his and give it to the guy who's got the most.

Because to those who have will more be given. And to those who don't have, even the little they have will be taken from them. Seems kind of harsh, doesn't it?

But the truth is, God gives us gifts of many kinds. And when he gives us gifts, he has an expectation we'll use them. We'll use them in this world and in this life.

Not just for our satisfaction, but for God's. But we often don't see the gifts that way. In some churches, they actually go out and they give people money.

[4 : 18] You know, like \$10 or \$20. Everybody gets \$10 or \$20. And then they tell them, take about two months and see what you can make with it and bring it back. I'm not doing that, by the way, in case you're wondering.

I'm not doing it. Never mind why I'm not doing it. I'm not doing it. But I want you to think in a different way. What if we gave you \$100,000 and we said, use it for 10 years.

And at the end of 10 years, come back and let's see how you did. How many of you really think that at the end of 10 years, you would still think that money belongs to the church?

You see the problem? Once we've used it for a while, once we've had the efforts to do as long as we want with something, we start to think it's ours.

And this stuff, as the old song says, makes the world go round. It can do so many things. It's just green paper, really. But we get all obsessed about it because of what it can do in our lives.

[5 : 27] And it can do a lot. Timothy wrote about it in, well, Paul wrote about it in a book to Timothy. He says, we brought nothing into the world and we can take nothing out. But if we have food and clothing, we'll be content with that.

And so because of the fact that the love of money can cause us great problems, not only in our lives, but in our faith, people start to think that money itself is bad.

Money is just green paper. And even what it can do for us is just a tool. It's just something we can use like any other tool, a hammer or a book.

Not something that's wrong or something to be embarrassed about. It's the love of money that creates our trouble. Money in and of itself is just something that helps us make things happen.

So we need to redeem our attitude and our understanding of what money is supposed to be. But to do so, we have to start by redeeming our understanding of who we are.

[6 : 53] How many of you remember that little song we sang at VBS? Jesus was a wee little man and a wee little man was he.

No? Well, in verse 3, it says, Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short, he couldn't see over the crowd.

So he couldn't see Jesus because he was short. Right? Well, that bothers you, doesn't it? The idea of Jesus looking like Danny DeVito is a problem for you, isn't it?

Jesus must be big and powerful and strong and like Hercules, not some weird little dude like Danny. Zacchaeus.

If he was the short man and not Jesus, it caused him all kinds of problems with his own self-image. There were lots of things he couldn't do, especially back then when most of the work depended on physical attributes.

[8 : 03] He wanted to do that. I'm sure he got picked on and threatened a lot. And all he wanted is what most of us wanted, which is to be loved and respected, to have some purpose and value in life and maybe a little bit of security.

So he decided he would hook up with the toughest guys in town, a gang that could beat anybody. We call them the Romans. The Romans were tough guys.

Let me tell you, Roman soldiers had one skill, killing people. That's what they did. So Zacchaeus got a couple of them, and he'd walk up to people's houses and say, give me taxes or you deal with these guys.

All of a sudden, Zacchaeus got at least some attention. Became wealthy. He had a big house. He had nice things. But he still lived alone.

He still didn't have the respect of the people around him that he so desired. Kind of like Batman. Have you ever noticed Batman only has one real friend in the world, and that's an old butler he has to pay to be his friend?

[9 : 07] That's kind of scary, isn't it? He's got all the money you could ever imagine. But what is it good if we gain all the money in the world, but we have no one to love?

No one to enjoy it with? So Zacchaeus climbed the tree. That's weird. I just want you to picture a grown man climbing up a tree and how weird it would look in front of a whole crowd of people.

There's Zacchaeus up in a tree, and Jesus comes along and points it out. Look, Zacchaeus is up in a tree. Right? I'm sure Zacchaeus felt even smaller. Right?

And then Jesus says, Zacchaeus, we're going to your house for dinner. Get off the tree. Now, I don't know how you all would feel. Maybe some of you would like it, and I don't want to see a show of hands.

But imagine if today, as you're going out to church, I say, my wife and I are coming to your house for dinner, and we're bringing a bunch of people with us. You'd all be ready, right?

[10 : 11] We're bringing a whole crowd, everybody that's with us. You know, like 20, 30 people will be there right after church. You have no warning. We're going to be there in five minutes.

Most of you would say, Pastor Tom, it's very nice that you want to come to my house. How about next Thursday? And you can leave the entourage behind.

Right? Zacchaeus was happy to have anybody come to his house. Imagine you have a beautiful home, a nice house, all these lovely things, and you've never had anybody over to share them with.

So Jesus was glad to go to Zacchaeus' house, and Zacchaeus was glad to welcome him. But the disciples didn't like it. They muttered, He's gone to the house of a sinner.

You know, that's something I find interesting. As you read through this passage, there's not one place where it says Zacchaeus was a sinner. There's not one place where it did anything immoral or broke any of the laws of God.

[11 : 19] And yet, the disciples decided right off the bat that he was a sinner. And by the way, every sermon I've ever heard about Zacchaeus in every church I've ever gone to says Zacchaeus is a terrible sinner.

But the Bible doesn't say it. It doesn't even say he's a short guy. I know that bothers you. All it says is that he wanted to see Jesus, but the disciples, the people, wouldn't let him get anywhere near him.

You know, when there's a parade, a lot of times they let the little kids go up front. But imagine what Danny DeVito has to do to be able to see the parade. Nobody lets that guy in. Who cares about you, pal?

Your problem. Go climb a tree. See, the truth is, is that the disciples of Jesus kept Zacchaeus from Jesus. Something that's always troubled me all of my life is that the organization that is the best at bringing people to God, the church, is also the organization that has driven the most people away from God.

Because sometimes disciples have a real problem trying to figure out how to let somebody like Zacchaeus get near Jesus.

[12 : 40] Because we make up images in our mind. We decide before we even are sure. Like, right now, we have a completely different idea of Batman.

You see, people have two different images of Batman. For some of you, you think of him as like this. It should be good practice if something ever takes us to Mount Everest, Batman. I think we'll be confining our campaign against evil to Gotham City for some time to come, oh chum.

It needs us. Hey! Batman and Robin! What are you guys doing? Just routine crime fighting. Would you like to come inside? I'm rehearsing. Thank you, citizen, but our pursuit of justice allows us few diversions.

Oh, be seen. Hi, Robin. I always think it's more like this. I'm Batman.

I'm Batman! When did Batman become a scary dude, you know? I mean, when we grew up with him, he was the most straight-laced guy there was. Batman was... Thank you, citizen, for inviting us in, but our crime fighting time gives us no opportunities for diversions.

[13 : 51] Are you serious? Are you serious? It's Sammy Davis Jr. Get in there! But now we have different images.

And we have the same thing happen with our image of each other and our image of ourselves and even our image of Jesus. The crowd, the disciples, they're fickle about what they think of Jesus.

One minute they love him and admire him, the next minute, he's gone to be with rotten sinners. And even you have already decided Zacchaeus is the short guy, Jesus is the big tall guy.

Isn't it fascinating how we don't have the information and yet we make a decision? What we really need to do to see Jesus is to get ahead and get above the crowds and stop thinking like everybody tells us to do and start looking for the real Jesus.

You see, we will actually be able to redeem our money when we first learn how to redeem ourselves and our image of ourselves and our image of God so that we end up with God esteem.

[15 : 00] Timothy told us that the love of money can cause us to walk away from our faith. It's really not the love of money.

It's a sense that we don't somehow measure up. And so we cling to anything that makes us feel better. Redemption, you see, is more than an idea.

It's a way of living so that we live into a life of an attitude of gratitude. Timothy tells us that we bring nothing into the world and we can take nothing out and yet we spend our lives trying to accumulate as much as we can get.

And let me tell you, I know all about it because right now all I'm trying to do is get rid of junk. And we got a lot of it. We cling to it.

Some people even cling to it thinking that somehow it's going to make a difference after they leave this place. One guy said to his wife, honey, I'm taking it with me. So here's what's going to happen.

[16 : 06] When it seems like I'm about to die, I want you to put a big bag of money, big bag of money up in the attic. And then when I die, I'm going to grab it on the way out. So her husband was getting sick.

She put the bag of money in the attic and she watched. And when he died, she ran up real quick. She says, there's the bag of money. I knew I should have put it in the basement. Imagine if you show up with a gold brick to heaven anyways and they're going to say to you, why would you come with paving material?

We put it on the streets, the things we think matter, God doesn't care about. But Matthew chapter 6 tells us where your treasure is, your heart will be also.

So what are we withholding from God? What are we clinging to? What are we trying to gather so much that we hope that maybe it'll make us feel better about who we are?

It was interesting that when Jesus commended Zacchaeus, he said in verse 9 that Zacchaeus today had received salvation because he too was a child of Abraham.

[17 : 26] Why Abraham? Why out of all the people in the Bible would he pick Abraham? James, the brother of Jesus, tells us, was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did.

When he offered his son Isaac on the altar, we see that his faith and his actions were working together and his faith was made complete by what he did. Now I know we say that it's what we believe and it's the values we hold in our heart that we're saved by faith and faith alone.

But if that doesn't change who we are, if that doesn't make what we do any different, then our faith is meaningless. It wasn't because Zacchaeus gave away money.

It's because he valued Jesus more than he valued the money. That's why we have an offering in church. Yes, it helps pay the bills.

We appreciate that. But the truth is that someone has said somewhere else, it would be better for you to take some of your money and throw it down a rat hole than to be so obsessed about it that you lose your faith in God over it.

[18 : 43] The Bible tells us to give a tithe or 10% because it's enough so that we feel that we really did something but not so much that there's nothing left for us.

God doesn't want you to be poor. In fact, the truth is if you do well and you do well with the money that God gives you, he'll give you more. He said so. But what we withhold from God, he asks from us.

And so, we give away. And why do we give it to the church? Because the church does better than a rat hole. That's all. It's a good reason. Zacchaeus was lost. Now he's found.

This isn't about money. This is about the fact that he welcomed Jesus and Jesus came in. Redemption. Redemption is that we let Jesus into our lives.

And Jesus walks in. How do we redeem our wealth? We put it to work for God. Do we really welcome Jesus?

[19 : 55] Or only what he can do for us. Jesus was a wee little man. You know why that bothers us?

Because we don't want some shrimp for our God. Right? We want a big God. And God is great. God is bigger than the whole universe.

And yet, do we only look for God for what he can do for us? Would it really matter if Jesus turned out to be four foot three?

Would that somehow disrupt your idea of who God is? Would it bother you if you found out Jesus himself was poor? Zacchaeus gave half his money to the poor.

He helped them. Can you imagine what would happen if we were to give money to people who needed it and some show just because they needed it?

[21 : 00] Might it change the way people feel about us? Bruce Wayne didn't have very many friends. Just an old butler. They'd had to pay to be his friend. But there is a place where he becomes friends with another superhero.

Thank you is not enough for what you did. I did a mistake, that's all. How did you get the house back from the bank?

I bought the bank. The whole bank? It's like a reflex with me, I don't know. It'd be nice if you could just buy the bank, wouldn't it?

If you were Zacchaeus you could give away half your money and still be rich. He came from his abundance. But when do we feel that we really have enough to share, that we have an abundance?

When is enough enough? And what can we do with it to change how the world not only sees us but how we see ourselves because we're children of God.

[22 : 19] Matthew chapter 6 says to us, don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moths and vermin destroy and where thieves break in and steal but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moths and vermin do not destroy where thieves do not break in and steal for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

What Jesus did for Zacchaeus was accept him just as he accepts you not because of anything special about Zacchaeus but just because Zacchaeus was willing to accept Christ and so Christ accepted him and so instead of trying to get his self-esteem by gathering up a bunch of this he did it by taking Jesus into his life and it changed everything.

he was filled with the power of God and redeemed and redemption changes who we are what we do and how we live.

I know what you're saying but I'm not Zacchaeus I'm not Bruce Wayne I don't have that kind of money how much do you have? There must be some abundance somewhere Jackie and I were traveling through West Virginia a couple years ago little tiny town in the middle of West Virginia in the middle of nowhere and we went out to eat at Applebee's you ever go to Applebee's?

You know we were sitting at those tables those high ones in the bar area and this little young blonde woman comes over to wait on our table I don't know why but we just struck up a conversation with her have you ever done that?

[24 : 02] We actually talked to the wait staff just kind of makes life interesting you learn things about people and she's starting to tell us her story and her life and some of the struggles she's had I don't know why she's just telling us this and so when she came back with the drinks Jackie just reached and gave her a \$20 bill just because and the girl started to cry she said nobody's ever done anything nice for me why are you doing this?

and we just said because God loves you and she went away well she came back with food and brought a few more things and we talked a little bit more and we heard how she's really struggling trying to get her broken life back on track and she really is trying she's not living in the dysfunction she's walked away from it but quite honestly the pressures of life and the cost of living are suggesting she can't make it her name was Brianna and so we said well here's a \$100 bill maybe that'll help a little that's all we have right now it's no big deal I'm not saying it so that you can think I'm bragging or I'm such a generous guy because that's nothing God gave it to me in the first place but God doesn't give us these gifts so that we can figure out a way to hoard them for ourselves and keep them for ourselves gives them to us so we can change the world

Zacchaeus didn't say he'd give his money away to the Roman soldiers Zacchaeus didn't even say he'd give his money to the disciples he said I'm going to go and find the people that are struggling the most in life and I'm going to give them something God gives us a lifetime not just a lifetime to make money but that too a lifetime a lifetime where we are gifted with everything what do we do with that gift do we use it to transform the world and the lives of people around it or do we use it to store it up until somebody else takes it from us what will it profit us if we gain the whole world and we lose our soul for years I hated that song I never picked it I just didn't like the idea like Jesus is just going to blow us off I just didn't like that idea right and then I read the story of Zacchaeus and it said Jesus was going through

Jericho and was planning on passing through and there's Zacchaeus up in the tree Savior Savior hear my humble cry all on everybody else your calling about me and all of a sudden it was different and you know what God planned on passing through but he stopped and God will stop for you too he will pause from his work on ordering the entire universe to spend time with you that's the kind of God that can give you enough self-esteem that you don't need to worry about whether you collect enough of these to feel good about yourself because you already should feel good the God of the universe stopped for you may God go with you and be your strength and be your peace and be your joy and be your confidence now and forever go in peace amen and be your cytokine you and be your thief and be or to appreciate close to you all in that and be your zeal thanks to your and the and the in that

Amen. Amen.