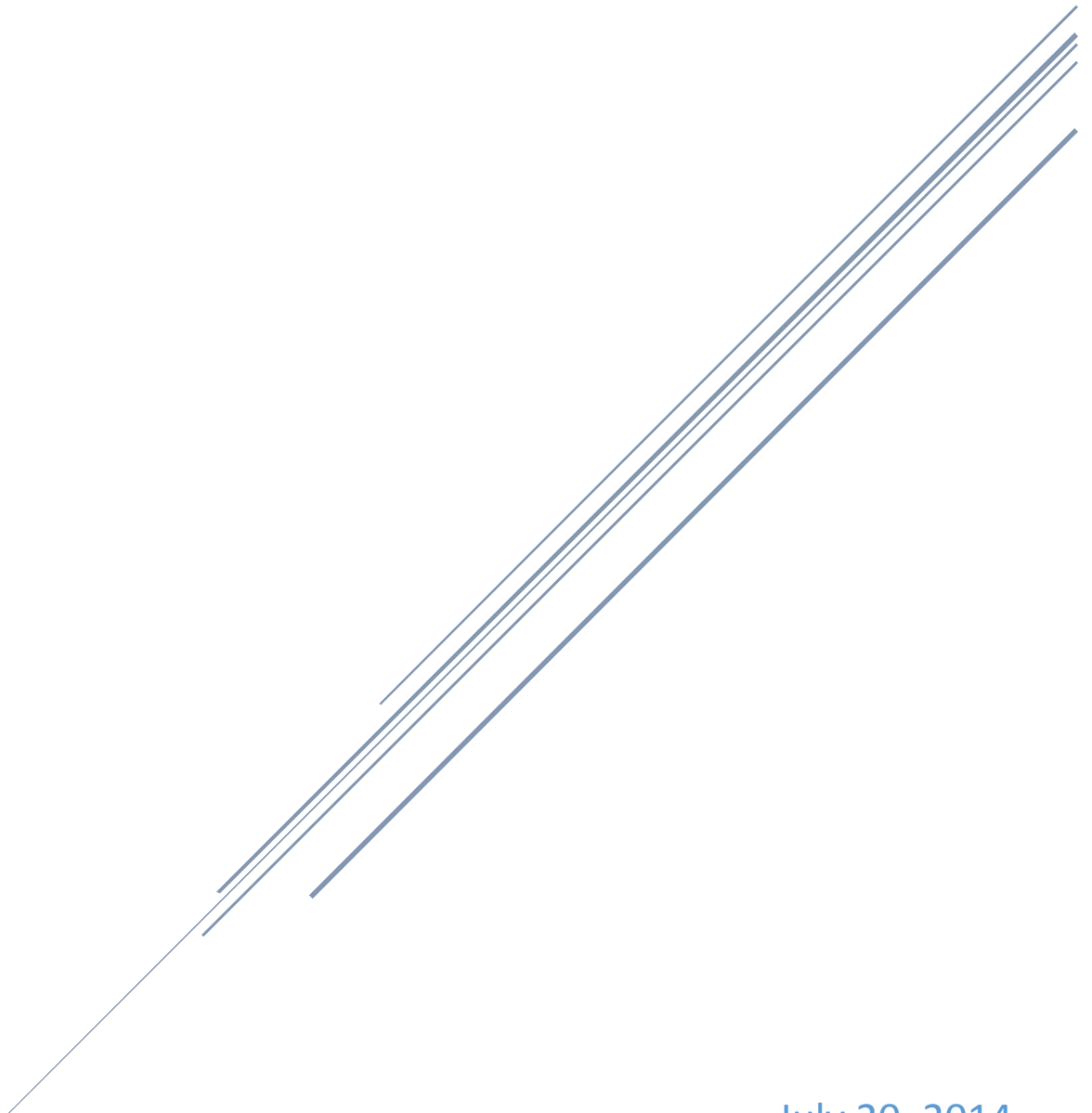


ZACCHEUS' CHAIR

"Out on a Limb..." -- Luke 19:1-10



July 20, 2014

From a talk by Jim Walker of Hot Metal Bridge Ministries

Luke 19:1-10 – I like to read these stories about misfits...broken vessels that God uses and ultimately become redeemed....

Today I'm going to talk about the lonely chair ... there it sits

Sitting there in a place of power, yet it's so scared...

Sitting there in a place of importance – the only chair up here – special; but so lonely, you know?

Sitting in a place of wealth and luxury... it sits in the well-appointed home of Zaccheus the chief tax collector. It's really nice -- a wealthy tax collector owns this chair. It's a nicer chair than this.... You'll have to use your imagination a little bit...

It's at the end of this long table with linens on it and all kinds of plates of food and baskets of bread, and figs and candlesticks and wine – it's got everything. I mean this guy's wealthy – he's got it all you know?

The floor is all tiled– you know blues and browns, it's really sweet and there's big tapestries on the walls, I mean, this guy lives nice, right?

And then the chair...looking kinda lonely – kinda sad there...

And there's Zaccheus sitting there and he's having breakfast – he's stuffing a fig into his mouth

I always see him as a very angry bitter man – he looks like he just got done sucking on a lemon or something... I see him as one of those guys with one eyebrow, you know

Sorry, I didn't mean to high jack your imagination – please – imagine him any way you want to....

But there he sits. He sits there at the end of this long table....Zacheus the tax collector – and he’s wearing a long purple robe and he’s got all these rings on his fingers – and thumb rings.

He’s sitting there eating and he’s licking his fingers and he’s eating his figs and poring over his notes there – he’s got a ledger with names on it and he’s got this bag of money because you see, Zacheus is a tax collector. He works for them. He works for Rome.

He doesn’t have any friends, see...

He goes from house to house and takes the taxes and he sends them to Rome.

And just so you fully understand, let me explain what this means: Canada decides to invade the USA. They come in and they invade everything and they kind of take over, right?... So everything’s Canadian now, you see?

And they hire people to go door to door and take the money and send it to Canada – to Montreal or something -- and I think that’s gotta be a pretty good job! I raise my hand and I become a Canadian tax collector, I come to your house and I knock on the door and I take everything you have and I send it to Canada. Are you gonna invite me to your 4th of July picnic? No! No...cuz this guy’s a traitor!

He’s a traitor and he’s selfish and he’s greedy and look at him! It’s so sad and depressing...

You gotta look deeper though...you gotta look deeper inside of Zaccheus for a second though....

We’re going to open up his chest cavity here and pull out his heart... (**holds up heart**) it’s just disgusting, you know? It’s like – gross! It’s black and it’s ... ooze-y... Look at that thing it’s disgusting...it doesn’t beat at all and it’s hard and it’s dead ... cold and ooze-y and dead.

His heart is like – it's just sitting in there (*puts 'heart' back*) and not doing anything...

You see, Zaccheus is just consumed with his own deal, you know? He's kind of consumed with himself... There's no other chair around this table – it's the only chair at the table. And he doesn't even seem to care! I mean this guy's pathetic, man! I mean -- I hate this guy, right?

He's a traitor to his people, he's greedy, he's selfish -- he's a big jerk... It's just sad and depressing you know? I mean look at him! He's bitter and angry.... I hate him.

But you know what? D'you know what's worse than this? It's the fact that....that's me... (*sits*)

I'm Zaccheus... You're Zaccheus! We...we're Zaccheus – sitting in our little chair of me – living in the land of me all consumed with our own thing...You might not be consumed with a ledger full of names and money, but maybe your consumed with other things like your popularity or your importance at high school (at the office...) or something.

Maybe you're consumed with drugs and alcohol or sex or porn on the internet...maybe your consumed with all kinds of things about YOU and what you can have and what you can get -- about your comforts and everything about you, you, you, you, you...That's called narcissism – you just collapse in on yourself and all you think about is yourself... It's like you walk around with a mirror all the time – you don't think of anybody else...

You know the scriptures say to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace... in other words if all you ever think about is you... if all you ever are -- always wrapped up in your own world, you are dead! You're dead! You're heart's like a little black thing in Zaccheus' chest cavity here!

) But there's a God – there's a God that loves you so much – that loves Zaccheus so much – that loves me so much! And whispering our name...
[6:54]

Hey Zac -- Hey Brad, ...Hey *name*, ...Hey *name*, etc. I love you so much...!

I love you so much! ...but yet we just sit – we kinda block that out because, you see, I love it up here! This is great! I'm like a king here! This is a place of power – it's like a throne! I am the king of my own life. I can do whatever I want, right?

But yet this chair's like an electric chair. It's like a throne and an electric chair at the same time -- It's my death. Because to be carnally minded – to be all self-centered... is death.

So just to think about that is kind of a bummer, you know? And so Zac, just like you and me, we start to think about something else – he starts to look at the names of the people that owe him taxes...

I turn on the TV, I get on the internet, I turn on the radio -- I think of something else, because – God forbid! – I should actually think about my own soul, you know? That I actually think about my own life – God forbid, you know...

So there Zac sits... feeding himself and feeding himself and feeding himself...but he's never satisfied – he's always hungry! He's never full! He's just feeding and feeding and feeding and feeding on TV and the internet and the radio and all this stuff – me me me me me... And he's hungry! He's starving, he's empty – it's not filling him up!

... But he tunes that out...he needs a distraction. He picks up his ledger and he picks up the gold and he starts for the door. He's going to walk out of the house – he's gonna walk down the street to Jericho and he's going to

collect the taxes and he stops...he's about to walk out the door and and he sees – there's like a little shelf here where he keeps all his cool little things that he steals and takes along the way. Some things were stolen, some things were given to him. He's got a little goblet here on the shelf. It was given to him by his great grandfather. It's a really cool goblet, and he looks at it for a moment... It's going to be Passover soon, and at Passover the whole family comes together – friends and family come together for a big party!

And they drink four glasses of wine – the party's fun! There's people laughing and children are running around... Everybody's included – everybody has a place at the table.

But guess what? This year?...No. Not Zaccheus! Zac is not a Son of Abraham. Zaccheus is not invited! He's a sinner! He's a traitor!!

You wouldn't invite him! I wouldn't invite him! ... I would hate him! If he friended me on Facebook I would click "Ignore!" NOT Zaccheus!! ...and he knows that! And so you can see his little heart shrivel up even more – he's aching – He's hungry -- He's longing for heaven but he's burning in hell!

So he puts it back down, he goes out the door, he starts walking down the street and he goes through his day. He goes to markets, he goes to homes and he's collecting the taxes. And he's walking down the street – people don't even look him in the eye, right? They just walk right on by him. They'd kill him! They'd throw him on the ground and start stepping on his neck if they could, but they don't.

They don't because he's got a Roman guard on one shoulder and a Roman guard on the other shoulder and they're armed to the teeth! He walks around town with these Roman guards... and nobody touches this guy!

This guy has so much, this guy's got everything – he's got power, he's got wealth, he's got it all! – But he's dead. So he's aching and aching, and he's hungry and hungry and he gets to this one door and he's about to knock on this one door to get the taxes – he's about to knock on this door and suddenly –

He hears it. He hears it with his heart and with his ears.

Far away up the hill outside of Jericho, there's a little path that comes down the hill and right into town. And there's a man, running down the hill, and he's waving his arms – like this – and he's going nuts!

And he cries out “Prepare the way!”

And with that, Zaccheus – he just freezes. He turns around and he looks up the hill. And the guy, he's running down the way, “Prepare the way! Prepare the Way!” And he runs right into Jericho. “Prepare the way -- It's Jesus of Nazareth! He's coming this way!!”

And those words – when those words travelled through the air and they reached Zaccheus' ears, “Jesus”, and for some reason -- I don't know why, you'll have to ask Zaccheus, but for some reason ... he opens his hands... and the ledger falls to the ground... and the gold falls to the ground... and he turns around and he looks and here he comes!

Up on the hill is Jesus and his whole entourage is coming this way! Everybody in town is coming out of their houses. The whole street fills with people -- People coming out of their windows and out of their doors and the whole town suddenly becomes crowded -- they can't wait to see Jesus coming down the hill.

And Jesus – comes on down the hill – with a white cowboy hat and he's got a Superman shirt – “Hey! I'm Jesus!” (Buddy Jesus with thumbs up)

NOOO! No...

Jesus is the love of God, come to earth in the form of a person. Sacrificial love! This guy – this guy comes -- and I always hate acting like Jesus 'cause it's hard – He walks in to town and he's ready to give! What can He give away?

He's looking at people and he's loving on people and he's just meeting people... but he's not alone. Here's what you gotta understand: There's Matthew, and James, and John, and Phillip, and Thaddeus – Thaddeus never gets a mention – I gotta mention Thaddeus! Poor Thaddeus -- There's Thaddeus – he's there!

And these disciples...they've been through everything! Like in one 24-hour period, these guys fed 5,000 people with a boy's lunch, went out on a boat, thought they were gonna die 'cuz there was a storm, Jesus said "Peace" and there's blue sky, they land the boat, there's a naked guy – he's all crazy, Jesus says "demons come out" the demons come out, go into the pigs, the pigs go down into the lake and are killed. That's one day!!

...That's one day!! So the disciples are walk around like this...(in shock & shakey) "What's gonna happen today, Jesus? What are we gonna do today?"

And the women – the women are all behind the guys -- the women make the ministry happen! They pay for the whole thing and they're carrying everything, and they make it all happen! ...Yeah!

There's Joanna, and Suzanna, and Mary, and Mary, and Mary and...like eighty five Mary's back there!

But here's the deal – it's not just Jesus, all by himself, like with a cape... It's all of Heaven! It's the Kingdom of God rollin' into town! You see?

These people are glad to be alive! ...And they're glad to be with one another. It's like your little youth group taking a trip somewhere to Pahokee

or something...the Kingdom of God is near...the Kingdom of God is near...
the love of God is near – and people want to be part of that... Right...? Right.

That's Zaccheus! That's Zaccheus! Zaccheus wants to part of it – and
his heart is longing to be part of it...and he's been all alone for so long!

He tries to see this Jesus as He's passing through...women are holding
out their babies to Jesus -- old men want their legs healed – I don't know...

And Zaccheus want to see this guy! – So he's waving like this! Two
guys look around and they see it's Zaccheus wants to see Jesus and they give
him the ol' boom! Elbow to the face! Who wouldn't? – He's a jerk! BOOM!
...and he falls down and dusts himself off ...and he sees up a head... It's a
sycamore fig tree! And Zaccheus was a wee little man, a wee little man was
he...there's only one thing to do -- Climb the tree!

And so he gets up – he's got the robe and he's got the rings and
everything, and he climbs up into this tree – he's never really done this
before...(get on chair awkwardly) and he gets out there and he scooches out
onto a limb. He gets out there onto a limb – you know sometimes you gotta
get out there to see Jesus, right? Jesus is good...but it isn't always safe. ...
you know – you could break a leg...

So he's out there and he's kind of – he really hasn't been in a tree
before, and he wants to see this Jesus, (get down and be Jesus) and Jesus
walks right underneath the tree, and he looks up, and Jesus is just
delighted...

“Zaccheus!” He knows his name, right? “Zaccheus, come down!”

Come back next week for the exciting conclusion of Zaccheus' Chair:
Guess Who's coming to Dinner!