

Well, thank you, guys. You know, if you think you've come to a church where everything is expected and planned out in months in advance, you have come to the wrong place. Yeah, I did not expect that, but I really appreciate that. Thank you very much. For all of you who participate, we have got a great men's ministry here on Wednesday night.

If you're not involved in any thing on Wednesday nights, man, I want to encourage you to come. We're going through a series right now called Better Man, and it's just unpacking a lot of stuff in our lives. And what I love around the table is we've got guys who are just sharing, and it's not like, sappy stuff. It's not weird. We're not beating on drums and wearing feathers in our hair, nothing like that.

It's just good stuff that we're encouraging across generations is one of our values here. Mentoring across generations, see older people encouraging and speaking wisdom into young people's lives. And what I love is to see these young guys who are doing it better speaking back into some of the older guys' lives. You know how that works. It's a beautiful thing.

Hey, today we're starting a new series. I'm proud of you guys. You hung with us through some pretty dense topics that Darren alluded to. Today I promised rainbows and butterflies, and while not literally rainbows and butterflies, I want to share a message that I've not preached for about 30 years. I first heard a guy, old black preacher, I think it was Evie Hill, but don't hold me to that.

Preach this sermon. And I loved it. I said, I can take that. Solomon said, there's nothing new under the sun. So I said, I'm going to take him at his word, and I'm going to take that message that Evie Hill preached, and I'm not going to be able to do nearly as good a job as he did with it, but loved how he shared and what he shared and the context he shared.

And so today we're looking at Jesus speaking into the margins, people living on the edges of being noticed or cared about and how Jesus went into those places. But the first thing we're going to do is I'm going to ask you to sing a little song with me. It was the first psalm, hymn, and spiritual song that I learned as a kid. Maybe you learned it as well if you grew up in school, but it goes like this. Zacchaeus was a wee little man, and a wee little man was he he climbed up in the sycamore tree for the Lord he wanted to see.

Let's stop right there. How many of you guys are familiar with this song? How many of it? Is this a brand new song you've never heard of in your life? Okay.

Very good. We've got several new learners here. Well, let's do that first part again just to get everyone on the same page. Zacchaeus was a wee little man and a wee little man was he he climbed up in the sycamore tree for the Lord he wanted to see. And when the Savior passed that way, he looked up in the tree.

Did you all do the motions when you were in Sunday school? Looked up in the tree and he said, zacchaeus, you come down. For I'm going to your house today. For I'm going to your house today. Good job, everyone.

Great job. Pat yourself on the back. You're all good singers. This song comes from a scripture. We didn't just make it up here.

It comes from a scripture. It comes from Luke, chapter 19. I'm going to throw the scripture up there so you guys can follow along with me. I'm just going to read the story. Here's how Luke records it.

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through, and a man was there by the name of Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector. He wasn't the young buck at the H R block branch at Walmart. He was the chief tax collector. And he was wealthy.

He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short, he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. And when Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today. So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

All the people saw this and began to mutter, jesus has gone to be the guest at the house of a sinner. 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 him back four times the amount. And 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 save that which was lost. The Son of man came to seek and save what was on the margins.

Have you ever considered how it happened that Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, well dressed, professional, wealthy man, ended up in that tree? What caused an adult male to cast reputation and his, I don't know, adultishness to the wind and climb a tree? To get a picture of this, I want to take us back to the first century Palestine, the dusty backwater of the Roman Empire, to a country called Israel, in a small town of Jericho. When we go to Israel, we will visit Jericho, and there we meet Zacchaeus. He's a professional tax collector with a lucrative government contract to collect taxes and take a very healthy commission off of the taxes he has collected.

So Zacchaeus has finished his coffee. This morning. He's tied his nice corinthian leather sandals on his shoes, on his feet. And he opens up his daytimer, and he looks at his daily schedule to see who he's collecting taxes from today. And the first thing on his list he sees is he has only four appointments.

Okay, great. Four appointments, in and out. We'll get the taxes, we'll deposit our money in the bank account, we'll go check out the new Chariots at the Chariot shop and see what's on the latest on the line. In and out, back home for dinner by six. It'll be a good day.

The first house he comes to then, on his way out of town, is in obvious disrepair. The paint is peeling, the gate on the fence is broken, and he steps up to the porch and he knocks on the

door. Behold the taxman cometh. Pay your taxes or lose your house. From inside the house comes a voice.

Who is it? It's Zacchaeus. I'm here to collect the taxes. Moment of silence. And then the door creaks open and a man comes to the door.

His eyes are milky, he's obviously blind. He goes, Zacchaeus, I don't have the money. You see, my seeing Eye dog died last week, and I've not been able to get into town and beg, and so I just don't have the money. If you can give me 30 days, I got a friend who says he'll help me get town and I can maybe raise the money for taxes, and by the end of the month I should have enough for you. And if Zacchaeus's face showed impatience, the blind guy didn't see it.

Zacchaeus, okay, I don't have time for this. I'm going to go check out Chariots later. Okay, 30 days, but I'll be back. You better have the money. I'm not taking no for an answer the next time.

And so he leaves the house and walks just a few blocks down the street. And he comes to another house that doesn't look much better by any means. The railings on the porch are broken, and there's leaves scattered in the corners, and some overgrown weeds, dried weeds in the front yard. The glass in the front door is grimy, and he knocks loudly. Tax guy render under Caesar.

What is Caesar's? After a few moments, the door opens slowly, and a frail looking old woman comes through the door. Her skin is yellow and parched, and her hair is dry. She goes, oh, Mr. Zacchaeus, I don't have the money.

I did have the money. I swear to you I did have the money. But you see, I've got this disease. I've had it for twelve years, and this past month it got real bad, and I had to spend all my money on a doctor. I don't have any insurance, so I've had to use the money.

I'm sorry, but if you can give me 30 days, maybe I can raise it somehow. Maybe I can get the money for you somehow, Zach. He's like, okay, I gave your neighbor 30 days. I'll give you 30 days, too. But I'm telling you what, in 30 days, have the taxes, or you're out on the street.

He goes back out on the street and makes his way down. Comes to the third house, his third appointment, and there's a woman standing in the yard just looking across the street into the graveyard on the other side. And he starts to say something to her. And then, what was that? The woman says, that was my husband.

He's possessed by so many demons that he's changed his name. Calls himself Legion. Now, I've tried to get him into help, but no man can help him. No man can combine him. No man can hold him.

And I know I should leave him and move on with my life, but he's the husband of my kids. He's the father of my kids. He's my husband. I love him. Another scream, and Zacchaeus backs out the door.

I'm not dealing with demons today, he says. I'll be back in 30 days. Then it wasn't just but a short jump before he comes to his last stop of the day. On the door is a black wreath. When he knocks, the door is opened by a woman dressed all in black.

Her eyes are swollen and red from weeping. She goes, oh, Mr. Zacchaeus, I got your notice. I knew you were coming, and I had the tax money ready, but my son died yesterday.

I had to spend all that money just paying for his funeral. If you give me 30 days, I think I can get the money back for you. Zach is like, okay, why not? Okay. He heads back to Jericho, wondering if this was the least productive day he's ever had in his life.

30 days pass. The next time we see Zacchaeus, he's opening his appointment book, and he sees, I've got four houses to visit, the same four houses that marked the least productive day of my entire taxing tax collecting career. But today is going to be different. Today, no sympathy. They're going to pay up, or they're going to get thrown out.

So he walks down the first street, and he turns into the address, and it looks quite different. The fence has been painted, and the gate has been repaired, and it looks just fresher somehow. And he goes and knocks on the door. A gentleman opens the door. Yes.

Can I help you? And Zacchaeus says, oh, I'm sorry. The guy that used to live here must have sold his house. Do you know where he is? And the guy says, no, no, I've lived here all my life.

You're Zacchaeus. I recognize your voice. Zacchaeus says, Wait, the guy who lived here before was blind. The guy goes, yeah, that was me. My buddy came and took me down to the center of town, and while I was there begging, I heard a commotion, and I asked what was going on, and they said, Jesus is coming through.

And I had heard about Jesus. Master Zacchaeus. Have you heard about Jesus?

When the commotion got loud, I knew he was close, and so I cried out, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And the townspeople said, Shh, be quiet. Don't make a ruckus. He's an honored guest. But ignored him.

Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. The mayor came over and said, Be quiet. You're disrespecting our guest, and you're bringing dishonor on our town. But I yelled even louder, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.

And he did. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me I once was lost, but now I am found. Was blind, but now I see that Ikea has walked off that porch. You don't see that every day. A blind man who can now see wow.

Comes to the next house. There's this lovely woman on the front porch watering geraniums. He's like, Excuse me, where's the lady that used to live here? Did she die? And the woman said, oh, Mr.

Zacchaeus. Yeah, that's me. I got to be honest when I told you 30 days, I really expected that I would die. I didn't expect to be here in 30 days, but I heard Jesus was coming to town.

I gathered all the strength I could, and I made my way into the city, because I knew that he was my last hope. If he could just touch me or if I could just touch Him. Do you know Jesus, Mr. Zacchaeus?

When I got there, the crowds were so large, and I was so weak, I nearly got trampled. But I saw an opening, and for just a moment, I lunged through the crowd, and I attempted to grab his hand, but I missed. And he kept walking, but my fingers just grazed the edge of his garment. And immediately I felt something change. I was healed.

And then he turned to me and he said, what just happened? And I was so terrified. But then he said, daughter. He called me daughter. Mr.

Zacchaeus, I've not been a young girl for many, many years, but when he called me daughter, I felt like I was back in my father's arms, being loved and cared for, he was better than being healed. But look at me. I'm healed. I've got a job. I hired the blind guy down the street to come and do some repairs on my house.

Well, he used to be blind.

Here's your money. And as he left, he could hear her humming. What a beautiful name it is. What a wonderful name it is the name of Jesus Christ, my King.

A blind man who can see, a sick woman who is healed. He comes to the third house, the one he was very nervous about. He knocks on the door.

Good looking guy. Opens the door almost as good looking as Bob Kern opens the oh, she got herself a new man then, didn't she? The guy said, yeah, she did. Yeah, she did. From over her shoulder, a woman's face appeared.

Oh, Mr. Zacchaeus, I need to apologize to you. You said I said that no man could hold him and nothing could help him, and yet he met Jesus. Do you know Jesus, Mr. Zacchaeus?

When Jesus came to our house, the demons left. My husband was returned to me. Look what the Lord has done. Look what the Lord has done. He touched his body.

He touched his mind, and he saved him. Just in time, Zacchaeus leaves. A blind man sees. A sick woman is healed. A man possessed by demons is freed, and he knocks on the fourth door.

Little boy answers, and Zacchaeus all of a sudden can't talk. His throat closes up, and he can barely squeak out. Is your mother here? Yeah. Mama, some man is here to see you.

Woman comes to the door, dressed in naper and wiping her hands. She goes, oh, Mr. Zacchaeus, I've had it on my calendar. I knew you were coming today, so I baked a pie. I can get you a piece of pie and give you your taxes, but I want you to hear the story about Jesus.

Do you know Jesus, Mr. Zacchaeus? Little boy says, Let me tell it, Mama. Let me tell it. Says, When I was little, my dad and my brother died, got sick, and they died.

And my mom has been worried sick that I was going to get the same thing. And she prayed and prayed and prayed that I would not get sick, but I did. And then she sat by my bedside and she prayed and prayed and prayed that I would get well, but I didn't. I died.

His mom then interrupts. We were in the funeral procession. We were heading out of town to put my little boy's body in the ground. And as we were going out of town, Jesus was coming in from the other side, leading his whole procession of people, and he touched my son and turned our funeral procession into a party. The little boy says, when he touched my body, I felt a jolt of something, and I sat right up.

And it terrified the funeral director so much that he dropped the casket. And he felt bad about dropping the casket, so he gave my mom the money back, and here's your taxes. The woman said, Great is thy faithfulness, O God, my father, all I have needed thy hand hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.

As Zacchaeus heads back out on the road, he's thinking to himself, the blind see, the sick are healed, the demon possessed are freed, and the dead are brought back to life. And someone jostles him. He goes, hey. The guy says, Zacchaeus, Jesus is in Jericho.

Jesus is coming to town. And Zacchaeus just stops right where he is. And he thought about his own blindness and how he only sees his own needs and not others. He thinks about the soul sickness of his own heart and where it's led him today. Thinks of the way that think about the way he's possessed and controlled by greed and indifference to need.

His life ultimately has ended up dead and lifeless. And his little feet start running.

He takes off running as he gets close to the town. He's like, oh, no, I'm too late. The crowds are too big, and Jesus is too far away and I'm too small. And then he sees a tree. It's been years since Zacchaeus has climbed a tree, but he knows in an instant what he's got to do.

So he kicks off that Corinthian leather sandal, and he strips off his velvet robe, and he starts climbing. And he climbs and he climbs, and he gets out on a branch.

And then Jesus looks up and he says, we know it Zacchaeus. You come down because I'm going to your house today.

Do you know Jesus? Jesus finds us where we are, doesn't he? Blind and sick, possessed, dying. We live in these places, don't we? We're surrounded by people who live in these places.

Jesus says, I want to go to your house. I want to change your life. Do you know Jesus? Today, as we prepare for a time of communion, I just want to remind you that we are able to take the bread and the cup this morning because Jesus came to us. He humbled himself and found us living on the margins and the edges of our life, frazzled and frayed and hopeless.

And he heals us, and he brings us into his family. He calls us daughter. He calls us son. He frees us from the things that hold us captive and begins to build new life in us. And when we take the cup and the bread this morning, that is what we are thankful for.

Can I pray? Heavenly Father, we thank you for Jesus.

Lord, if there's anyone here this morning who does not know you, Lord, I pray that they would not leave this morning without seeking you out.

Amen.

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