

Why Jesus Came (Luke 19:10)

Big Idea: Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

One of the most frustrating experiences of my life happened, of all places, in Florida. We'd just arrived, and we were due for dinner with some friends. I'd been there before, so I thought we'd be okay. We headed out and started walking to where we were supposed to meet people, but I got lost.

Usually, getting lost is no big deal. We live in the age of smartphones. It's almost impossible to get lost now. But I managed. One of my friends at the restaurant got tired of waiting for us, and he started texting and calling me incessantly, so much so that I couldn't look at the phone.

The combination of travel, lostness, and my friend calling and texting every few minutes combined to make it a very frustrating experience.

Have you ever been lost? It's not a good feeling. It turns out that we have good reason for not liking the experience of being lost. Science writer Michael Bond is a bit of an expert in the traumatic subject of lostness. He wrote an article in Wired Magazine called "Why Humans Totally Freak Out When They Get Lost." It says:

Children lost in the woods is a common motif in modern fairy tales and in ancient mythology. Usually in fiction there is some kind of redemption: Snow White is rescued by dwarfs and even Hansel and Gretel, facing certain doom in the gingerbread house, find their way home. Reality is often more grim: During the 18th and 19th centuries, getting lost was one of the most common causes

of death among the children of European settlers in the North American wilderness.

What does this have to do with Christmas? Because Jesus once tied his coming to lostness. The very reason Christmas happened is because of our lostness. In Luke 19:10, Jesus said, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

A little background.

Jesus was just days away from his own death. So we're on the tail end of Jesus' time on earth, not at the beginning. He had an encounter with someone that explained Jesus' whole reason for coming to earth, though. If you understand this story, you understand Christmas.

So here's our condition.

There are two things about Zacchaeus in the story that make him relatable to us, and one of them isn't that he was short. That is a cool detail, and it adds a little extra flavor to things, but here's what makes him so relatable to us.

First, he had a lot.

Verses 1 and 2 say, "He entered Jericho and was passing through. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich."

In a lot of ways, Zacchaeus had it made. Taxes were collected at three places inland: Capernaum, Jericho, and Jerusalem. Zacchaeus had one of the big three. That means that he was in a very good financial position. Zacchaeus sat on top of collectors

who worked under him. “He was the kingpin of the Jericho tax cartel and had the scruples of a modern-day crack dealer. He was filthy rich in the fullest sense of the term. Not a likely candidate for the kingdom.” (Kent Hughes)

I know you and I probably aren’t rich like that. But we have a lot. I remember traveling to Honduras a few years ago and then returning home and going to Costco. It hit me then how good we have it.

We have a lot. Even if you’re worried about money, you still have a lot. Writing in the Atlantic, Arthur Brooks recently observed, “Money is one of the things Americans worry about most in the world.” And yet only 11% of Americans live in poverty.

And yet, according to a recent survey, more than half of Millennials with a net worth greater than \$1 million feared losing their wealth “a great deal” or “somewhat,” as did more than a third of similarly wealthy Baby Boomers.

Brooks concludes, “For millions of people, then, worrying about money is not a reflection of whether their basic needs are being met. In fact, this anxiety reflects deeper concerns that money can’t solve.”

That leads me to the next detail about Zacchaeus that makes him relatable to us:

Even though he had a lot, he was still missing something.

Zacchaeus would have been rich, but he was hated by his countrymen for being a tax collector. But maybe he heard that one of Jesus’ own disciples was a tax collector. Curiosity got the best of him, and when he heard that Jesus was coming, he climbed a tree to get a good view.

But was it only curiosity? It’s possible – maybe even likely – that although Zacchaeus had a lot, he still found it all unsatisfying.

That's the story of our lives. As one person told me, "I have the condo, I have the car, I have the career, and I still don't have what I'm looking for."

That's Why Jesus Came

Friends, that's why Jesus came. That's why Christmas happened. Jesus came for people like Zacchaeus, people like you and me.

Jesus saw him. Jesus went to his house. Zacchaeus had a life-changing encounter with Jesus. And when people began to grumble, Jesus said, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

My experience of being lost in Florida is a picture of life without God. It's a picture of Zacchaeus's life. It's a picture of ours.

Why did Jesus come at Christmas? He came to seek and save people like us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ did not come into the world to seek his own honor, but to seek and to save the lost; not to get anything for himself, but to give everything to those who are lost ... His coming was infinite goodness, returning good for evil, coming down to our lost estate, and determining, by superabundant affection, to save us from it. Our Savior is embodied grace, incarnate love; and his mission is grace itself. Let us never forget that he came to save the lost, –not to save the good and the excellent. (Charles Spurgeon)

That, my friends, is why Jesus came. Jesus came to seek and save the lost.

If you, like me, have a lot but know you need more, if you sense your need for a Savior, Jesus came for you. Go looking for him, and he will find you, because you're the very reason he came.