

Luke 19:1-10 *Communion* –
"I Must be A Guest in Your Home Today"

Sermon

Hobart, November 7th, 2010

Launceston, November 14th, 2010

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Old Testament Reading

Ezekiel 16:2-6

²“Son of man, confront Jerusalem with her loathsome sins. ³ Give her this message from the Sovereign LORD: You are nothing but a Canaanite! Your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite!

⁴ When you were born, no one cared about you. Your umbilical cord was left uncut, and you were never washed, rubbed with salt, and dressed in warm clothing.

⁵ No one had the slightest interest in you; no one pitied you or cared for you. On the day you were born, you were dumped in a field and left to die, unwanted.

⁶“But I came by and saw you there, helplessly kicking about in your own blood. As you lay there, I said, ‘Live!’ And I helped you to thrive like a plant in the field.¹

¹*Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. 1997, c1996 (electronic ed.) (Eze 16:6). Wheaton: Tyndale House.

Gospel Reading

Luke 19 :1-10

¹ Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town.

² There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was one of the most influential Jews in the Roman tax-collecting business, and he had become very rich. ³ He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowds. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree beside the road, so he could watch from there.

⁵ When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! For I must be a guest in your home today."

⁶ Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. ⁷ But the crowds were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled.

⁸ Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have overcharged people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!"

⁹ Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those like him who are lost."²

²*Holy Bible : New Living Translation*. 1997, c1996 (electronic ed.) (Lk 19:1). Wheaton: Tyndale House.

INTRODUCTION:

I. GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER

A. CAME OUT AT IN 1967, AT THE HEIGHT OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE IN THE USA

1. Starred Katherine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy as the parents
2. Katharine Houghton as their daughter Joey,
3. Sidney Poitier as Dr. John Prentice the black fiancé that the white daughter has brought home for dinner to announce to her parents their engagement.
4. Poitier, the handsome boyfriend, had impeccable manners, flawless diction, several doctors' degrees, an internationally distinguished job
5. Everyone played very stereotypical roles for the times:
 - a) the parents – typical white, hypocritical liberals of the 60's;
 - b) the daughter – an idealistic little rich girl;
 - c) the young doctor was purposely created idealistically perfect so that the only possible objection to his marrying Joey would be his race.³
6. There have been many books and movies based around similar themes
 - a) One of the most famous being "To Kill a Mockingbird"
 - b) Similar ones more recently have been focused on the acceptance of homosexuals and other ostracised minority groups

³ "Masks We Wear... Masks We Makes Others Wear..." Rev. Steven Michael Smith
[smsmith@ADAMS.NET]

S.P.S:

A. LAST TIME WE LOOKED AT OUR NEW NAME:

B. WE SAW HOW OUR OLD NAME REPRESENTED WHO WE WERE

1. Or at least who we thought we were
2. But *Grace Communion International* pictures who we are continually growing to be

C. WE SAW HOW THROUGH THE GRACE OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE LOVE OF THE FATHER WE HAVE BEEN BROUGHT INTO COMMUNION TOGETHER WITH GOD BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

1. That God in his grace is transforming us to live that same life of grace with one another
2. That in the end, the whole universe will live in God's grace and communion, in perfect love, peace and graciousness.

D. TODAY:

1. We are going to be looking at Luke 19:1-10
2. and exploring the word "communion" some more
 - a) Focusing on the Greek term for it, Koinonia
3. and learning some more about the gracious life of inclusive fellowship that Jesus lived, and invites us to share with him, and with all of our fellow human beings

E. PRAYER

BODY:

II. KOINONIA - TABLE FELLOWSHIP

A. IN OUR LIVES WE TEND TO HAVE CIRCLES OF RELATIONSHIPS

1. From our immediate family, our closest friends
 - a) to those we are casual friends with, and other more distant family members
 - b) Then in our wider circle; we have people we work with, and perhaps some of our neighbours
 - c) And beyond that circle are acquaintances, people we have only met once or twice, and the relationship hasn't developed any further
2. Inviting someone home for a meal, is not something we do with people in our wider circles
 - a) Sitting down to share a meal is a more intimate, close encounter, normally reserved for those we are comfortable with, and have a deeper level of trust and acceptance with
 - b) As Steven Smith says;

to eat with somebody, to break bread with somebody, is not just an ordinary thing. It makes a statement. We work with people, we play with people, we collaborate with people, we do all kinds of things with people, and then, there are people we eat with.

B. HE GOES ON TO ASSOCIATE THIS EXPERIENCE WITH THE GREEK WORD KOINONIA

The roots of this felt experience, I think, is embedded in the Greek word koinonia. Koinonia in Greek means "fellowship, table fellowship, breaking bread with somebody, a shared commonness." Koinonia is also the New Testament word for "communion," for the New Testament community believed that in the common meal, in the breaking bread with one another, Christ became present.

Koinonia in the early Christian church was not simply a two-way horizontal experience between the people around the table.

In addition to sharing horizontally, there was a conviction that the Lord was present. There was a vertical quality to that dialogue, as Luke reminds us in the story of the disciple going to Emmaus after Easter. "The Lord was made known to them in the breaking of bread."

C. THE LORD'S SUPPER, "COMMUNION" INVOLVES NOT ONLY PHYSICAL BREAD AND WINE AS SYMBOLS,

1. and the communion of the people of God assembling to share them
2. But it also involves the presence of Jesus as well as we join with him in "koinonia"
3. Sharing a meal, and particularly the Lord's Supper makes a bold and clear statement about who we are in close relationship with
 - a) and it reminds us of our calling to extend the love and grace of God to all people, without discrimination

D. IT IS SAD THAT DOWN THROUGH THE YEARS, AND EVEN TODAY

1. some become divided and separated over this act of "koinonia", fellowship, sharing and communion
2. In the early church some refused to "break bread" with Gentiles
 - a) This is one of the major issues in Galatians, where Paul mentions his having to rebuke even Peter over his withdrawing from the Gentiles

Galatians 2:11-16

¹¹ But when Peter came to Antioch, I had to oppose him publicly, speaking strongly against what he was doing, for it was very wrong. ¹² When he first arrived, he ate with the Gentile Christians, who don't bother with circumcision. But afterward, when some Jewish friends of James came, Peter wouldn't eat with the Gentiles anymore because he was afraid of what these legalists would say. ¹³ Then the other Jewish Christians followed Peter's hypocrisy, and even Barnabas was influenced to join them in their hypocrisy.

¹⁴ When I saw that they were not following the truth of the Good News, I said to Peter in front of all the others, "Since you, a Jew by birth, have discarded the Jewish laws

and are living like a Gentile, why are you trying to make these Gentiles obey the Jewish laws you abandoned? ¹⁵You and I are Jews by birth, not 'sinners' like the Gentiles. ¹⁶And yet we Jewish Christians know that we become right with God, not by doing what the law commands, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be accepted by God because of our faith in Christ—and not because we have obeyed the law. For no one will ever be saved by obeying the law.”

E. PAUL COMES BACK TO THIS AT THE END OF GALATIANS 3:

²⁶ So you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have been made like him. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all Christians—you are one in Christ Jesus.

1. Clearly God has called us to be united with all Christians, no matter who they are, through Jesus Christ
 - a) And we are also called to reach out to all types of people to bring them Jesus' invitation to communion with him, and us

F. GOD IS ABOUT INCLUDING PEOPLE, NOT EXCLUDING THEM

1. He wants all to come to him through Jesus, and for all to share in the bread and wine of communion, and life with him
2. and he wants all to be included in the coming wedding supper of the lamb

G. THE GOSPEL WRITERS CHOSE THE STORIES OF JESUS THEY INCLUDED BASED ON THE ISSUES OF THE TIME

1. Exclusivism was one such issue
 - a) So it is no wonder there are many stories that show how inclusive Jesus was
 - (1) **and how strongly he acted and spoke against exclusivism and discrimination, especially against the poor, the weak, the ill and those who had fallen into ditch morally, including extortionists and prostitutes**

2. Smith:

Now some in the early church thought this exclusivism was a drastic misunderstanding of the gospel. .. And to argue that point, they drew on the common memory of stories of Jesus which tended to illustrate this problem of koinonia, or table fellowship.

One such story they selected and repeated was this story about Jesus and Zacchaeus.

III. LUKE 19:1-10

Luke 19 :1-10

1 Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town.

1. Jericho was the Chicago of the ancient near East. It was where all the trade routes came together.
 - a) It was like a hub or distribution centre for trade in the Near East, not just Israel

2 There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was one of the most influential Jews in the Roman tax-collecting business, and he had become very rich.

B. THIS ISN'T JUST AN ORDINARY TAX-COLLECTOR

1. Zacchaeus is a primary, a chief tax collector.
2. He was one of the top dogs, as it says, "one of the most influential Jews in the Roman tax-collecting business"
 - a) Harpers Commentary;

As a chief tax collector (the expression occurs nowhere else in Greek literature), Zacchaeus is part of a corrupt system of economic oppression..⁴

3. Smith;

You know that tax collectors were despised for a couple of reasons; one is they were Jews working for the Roman Empire, so they were viewed as traitors and collaborators. And the mere fact that they collected taxes was a constant reminder to any Jew of oppression at the hands of Rome. They

⁴Mays, J. L., Harper & Row, P., & Society of Biblical Literature. (1988). *Harper's Bible commentary* (Lk 19:1). San Francisco: Harper & Row.

were a red flag on the streets, reminding every citizen of Israel, of oppression.

The second reason that tax collectors were despised is that they made their income by over-charging. A tax collector in Israel in that day had to agree upon a certain amount that he would collect for the Roman government on a regular basis. Anything he collected on top of that he could pocket. So the common view of the tax collector was that he was a swindler and a thief!

They were gouging the public. One scholar with a flair for the right word referred to a tax collector as "the nadir of nastiness." Hence, to a Jew, a Jew working for the Gentiles became a Gentile; He was outside of the hope, wearing the mask of "beyond redemption," "utterly despicable."

3 He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowds. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree beside the road, so he could watch from there.

5 When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. "Zacchaeus!" he said. "Quick, come down! For I must be a guest in your home today."

4. Out of all the people, Jesus chooses to invite himself to sit down at a meal with one of the most despised and corrupt, powerful and wealthy people in the community

a) Doing so publicly, it is no wonder he got often condemned for communing and fellowshiping with tax-collectors and sinners, including at this time

6 Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. 7 But the crowds were displeased. "He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner," they grumbled.

Luke 15:1

1 Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. ²This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such despicable people—even eating with them!

5. At that time Jesus responded with the parables of the shepherd leaving the ninety-nine sheep to find the single lost one, and the parables of the lost coin, and the lost (prodigal) son.

C. SO WE SEE THE RELIGIOUS PEOPLE JUDGED AND CONDEMNED JESUS AND THE PEOPLE HE ASSOCIATED WITH

1. But notice the attitude of the condemned and despised Zacchaeus...

8 Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have overcharged people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!"

2. He shows a great change of heart and mind in the presence of Jesus

a) He responds to Jesus graciousness and friendship, his non-judgmental, inclusive invitation to share a meal and fellowship with grace and love towards the needy and to those he had wronged

3. It is also interesting to note that another story just before this is the tax-collector who prays, "God be merciful on me a sinner" in contrast to the Pharisee who self-righteously looks down on the tax-collector

a) and the story after that is about the Rich man seeking eternal life, to whom Jesus said;

Luke 18:22

²² "There is still one thing you lack," Jesus said. "Sell all you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." ²³ But when the man heard this, he became sad because he was very rich.

D. BUT IN CONTRAST TO THE RELIGIOUS RICH MAN, THIS UNRIGHTEOUS RICH MAN, ZACCHAEUS IS PREPARED TO GIVE HIS WEALTH TO THE POOR:

9 Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a son of Abraham. 10 And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those like him who are lost."

IV. THE GOSPEL GOOD NEWS

A. WHAT IS JESUS CONVEYING HERE?

1. What is the message Luke intends for his readers?

B. AT THE HEART OF IT ALL IS ACCEPTANCE

1. Jesus shows his acceptance of this unacceptable man
2. He shows that God is all about grace and communion
3. Martin Luther refers to his own conversion experience hearing God's word say to him, "Do not call unacceptable what I call acceptable. Do not pronounce unacceptable what I call acceptable."
 - a) Luther came to understand that he no longer had to fearfully strive to make himself acceptable, but that in Jesus God had already accepted him totally through his grace

C. LACK OF SELF ACCEPTANCE

1. Henri Nouwen wrote that more than popularity, pride or success;
self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the 'Beloved'.⁵
2. David Seamands,
calls low-self-esteem "Satan's deadliest weapon" because it paralyzes our potential, destroys our dreams, ruins our relationships and sabotages our service.⁶
3. Leanne Payne considers our inability to accept ourselves one of the three main barriers to spiritual and emotional wholeness in Christ.⁷

⁵ Henry J.M. Nouwen, *Life of the Beloved*, Crossroad, 1992, p.21

⁶ David Seamands, *Healing for Damaged Emotions*, Victor, 1981, pp.48-56

D. IT IS IRONIC

1. that Jesus singles out the person that would have been regarded as the most unacceptable, immoral and despicable in all of Jericho
2. and that he calls him "Zacchaeus" which means Zacchaeus in Hebrew means "righteous," "the innocent one," "the good one," "the pure one," "the pious one," "the upright one."
 - a) Clearly he wasn't!
 - (1) **But Jesus treated him as righteous and pure, because through God's eyes,**
 - (2) **through what Jesus was going to do on the cross, Zacchaeus was righteous and acceptable**
3. And that is who we are, in spite of what we may think of ourselves, or what others may think, because that is what Jesus calls us
 - a) To him, and through him, we are acceptable to God
 - b) Who are we to contradict him!
 - c) And he continually invites himself into our lives to have communion with us every day

E. THE MESSAGE ENCOURAGES US IN TWO DIRECTIONS:

1. To know, that even when we have done blatantly unacceptable things towards God and our fellow man
 - a) That God is always reaching out and inviting himself into our lives, into intimate communion and friendship
2. Secondly; that the Godly life we are called to participate in consists of reaching out and inviting all kinds of people into that same communion and friendship with God, and his people
 - a) And he continually sends us out to share that same acceptance and love with all people, particularly those who view themselves or who are viewed by others to be "unclean" and "unacceptable"

⁷ Leanne Payne, Restoring the Christian Soul Through Healing Prayer, Crossway, 1991, p.31

b) To invite them all to God's table of grace

3. Ashley Linne;

The ultimate goal for all followers of Christ is to live a life in which beliefs and love run so far in our beings that we become *incarnations* of love and live in "redemptive subversiveness," as Fowler puts it (Stage 6).⁸

F. "INCARNATIONS OF LOVE"

1. This means, letting Jesus live his life of love through us, as he lived the love of the Father when he lived as one of us

G. "REDEMPTIVE SUBVERSIVENESS" IS A DESCRIPTION OF WHAT JESUS DID.

1. Living in a way that goes against the tide of human nature, of greed, self-interest,
2. going against the mindset of too many religious people, of exclusivism, intolerance, discrimination and condemnation
3. Redemptive subversiveness turns upside down the problems and injustices of peoples' lives by acts of grace and love.

H. ASHLEY LINNE ADDS SOME MORE ABOUT THIS "REDEMPTIVE SUBVERSIVENESS!"

Even as Jesus opposed, throughout the Gospels, the unjust and unredeemed structure of the social, political, and religious world, he also called into question the compromise arrangements that most of us make that have become our conventional understanding of justice.

Isn't there a kind of 'redemptive subversiveness' to what Jesus did there in Jericho? "Zacchaeus, come down, I've got to have dinner with you!"

And it was absolutely subversive; it was politically, socially, morally, and religiously subversive. He called into question all the compromises that everybody makes. He unmasks them. And that makes people angry.

1. Linne then talks about an intriguing term called, "relevant irrelevancy"
 - a) Doing the little things that seem irrelevant on the surface, but that are the truly important and relevant things

⁸ Ashley Linne, <http://ashleylinne.wordpress.com/2009/06/28/stages-of-faith-development/>

The second thing we see is that Jesus' words and actions are characterized by what Fowler calls a "relevant irrelevancy," simple actions that have profound meaning.

Think of Mother Theresa. Sixty-four years ago on September 10th, 1946, in a school bus filled with little girls driving through the streets of Calcutta on the way to a retreat; she looks out the window of the bus and sees people put out on the streets to die. And she stops the bus and gets out, and she drags a few of them off to care for them, to wash them, to clean them and to tell them God loves them.

Now can you think of anything more fundamentally irrelevant than what she did?

What, in the name of all the social structures of Calcutta, has that got to do with anything?

And in the same way, can you think of anything more irrelevant for the great, oppressive, power structures of the day in the Roman government and Jewish Temple establishment, then for Jesus to say to Zacchaeus: "Come down, I'm going to have dinner with you." Absolutely irrelevant.

On the other hand, can you think of anything more relevant? Isn't it true for you, that in just such a concrete, specific situation of oppression and suffering, simple actions can have profound meaning?

**V. WE SEE THEN THAT WE ALL ARE
CONFRONTED WITH CHOICES:**

**A. THE RICH YOUNG MAN CHOSE TO REFUSE JESUS'
INVITATION TO LIVE THE LIFE OF GRACE AND FAITH,**

1. of incarnational love, trusting in Jesus, rather than his possessions
2. The crowd reacted to Jesus redemptive subversiveness with anger, and eventually Jesus was crucified for living this way

**B. BUT ZACCHAEUS, AND THE TAX-COLLECTOR IN THE
EARLIER STORY;**

1. Joyfully accepted Jesus' gracious, subversive and outlandish invitation to koinonia, to table fellowship
 - a) To sit and eat together, even though he was so despised, and had such a terrible track record and reputation
 - b) Linne asks;

Zacchaeus made haste and came down and received him joyfully.

Why was Zacchaeus so joyful when everybody else was grumbling? I imagine that if I were Zacchaeus, in order for me to be joyful, I would have to allow into me some of that grace that Jesus communicated when I constantly wear the mask and reiterate to myself, "I'm no good, I don't have any worth, I'm awful, I'm a sinner."

Somehow I would have that terrible task of trying to take off that mask, and accept the fact that I am accepted.

Do you know anything harder in the world to accept than the fact that you are accepted?

2. This is one of the key messages of our passage
 - a) Zacchaeus was unacceptable;
 - (1) **Unacceptable to society, and to himself**
 - b) Jesus changed that with his seemingly irrelevant act, and his redeeming subversiveness
 - (1) **and Zacchaeus's life changed**
 - (2) **He found acceptance in Jesus, and that led him to joy and peace, and the freedom from self-condemnation that freed him to let go his old ways**

(3) Living with redemptive subversiveness himself, being ready and eager to give back quadruple what he had taken to those he had harmed

8 Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have overcharged people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!"

9 Jesus responded, "Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a son of Abraham. 10 And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those like him who are lost."

CONCLUSION:

C. GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER;

1. Jesus!
2. He has accepted us, and invites himself into our lives

D. BEING ACCEPTED WANTS AND ALL IS WHAT GRACE IS ALL ABOUT

1. Seeking and saving the lost like Zacchaeus is what God is all about, what Jesus subversively came to engage in
 - a) We are invited to accept Jesus' request to come and share life with us, in spite of our sinfulness and unworthiness, our lostness
2. This what the life we are called to share and participate in is also all about
 - a) And it is what communion is all about
 - b) Sharing in what Jesus did, and continues to do
 - (1) **in engaging in irrelevant acts of relevancy and redemptive subversiveness**
 - (2) **Seeking and inviting the lost into community with God and with his people**

3. Catherine LaCugna makes clear;

The goal of Christian community, constituted by the Spirit in union with Jesus Christ, is to provide a place in which *everyone* is accepted as an ineffable, unique, and unrepeatable image of God, irrespective of how the dignity of the person might otherwise be determined: level of intelligence, political correctness, physical beauty, monetary value.⁹

E. THIS IS WHAT WE MOVED TO MORNINGTON TO DO

1. And it is something we have been starting to do with Kevin's leadership
 - a) And it is something we plan to do more of with some guidance and encouragement from Mal

⁹ Catherine Lowry LaCugna, *God for Us*, HarperCollins, 1991, p.299

2. Please be praying, thinking and talking about how we as a church community can reach out and share the communion of God with others

a) It would be good if we can take time over the next months to discuss and plan to do so more effectively

F. PRAYER

COMMUNION:

G. THE LORD'S SUPPER IS OUR TABLE FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS

1. Jesus is always seeking communion with you and me
2. He wants us to include him in our lives, at our tables, in everything we do
3. He wants us to be assured of his acceptance and love

H. HE WANTS US TO LIVE IN HIS COMPANY, HIS PRESENCE, AND THAT OF THE FATHER THROUGH THE SPIRIT

1. As we take the bread and the wine, we remember what a redemptive subversive act his sacrifice on the cross was
 - a) How that seemingly irrelevant act is the most relevant act of human history
2. The wine reminds us of His death
 - a) how it has removed the curtain of division, and brought us into intimate communion with God
 - b) Jesus presence, as one of us, our High Priest, at the right hand of the Father in heaven;
 - (1) **Guarantees and makes possible our acceptance, and gracious welcome in God's presence**
3. The bread reminds us of his body, that we are all included in
 - a) That makes us one with him, and one with each other
 - b) It reminds of his life as one of us, as one with us, living the perfect life of love and faith towards his Father
 - c) And as we eat the bread we remember that he lives his life of redemptive subversiveness, and irrelevant relevancy, in and through us
 - (1) **Reaching out to invite other Zacchaeus's to join him in his life of sharing and communion**