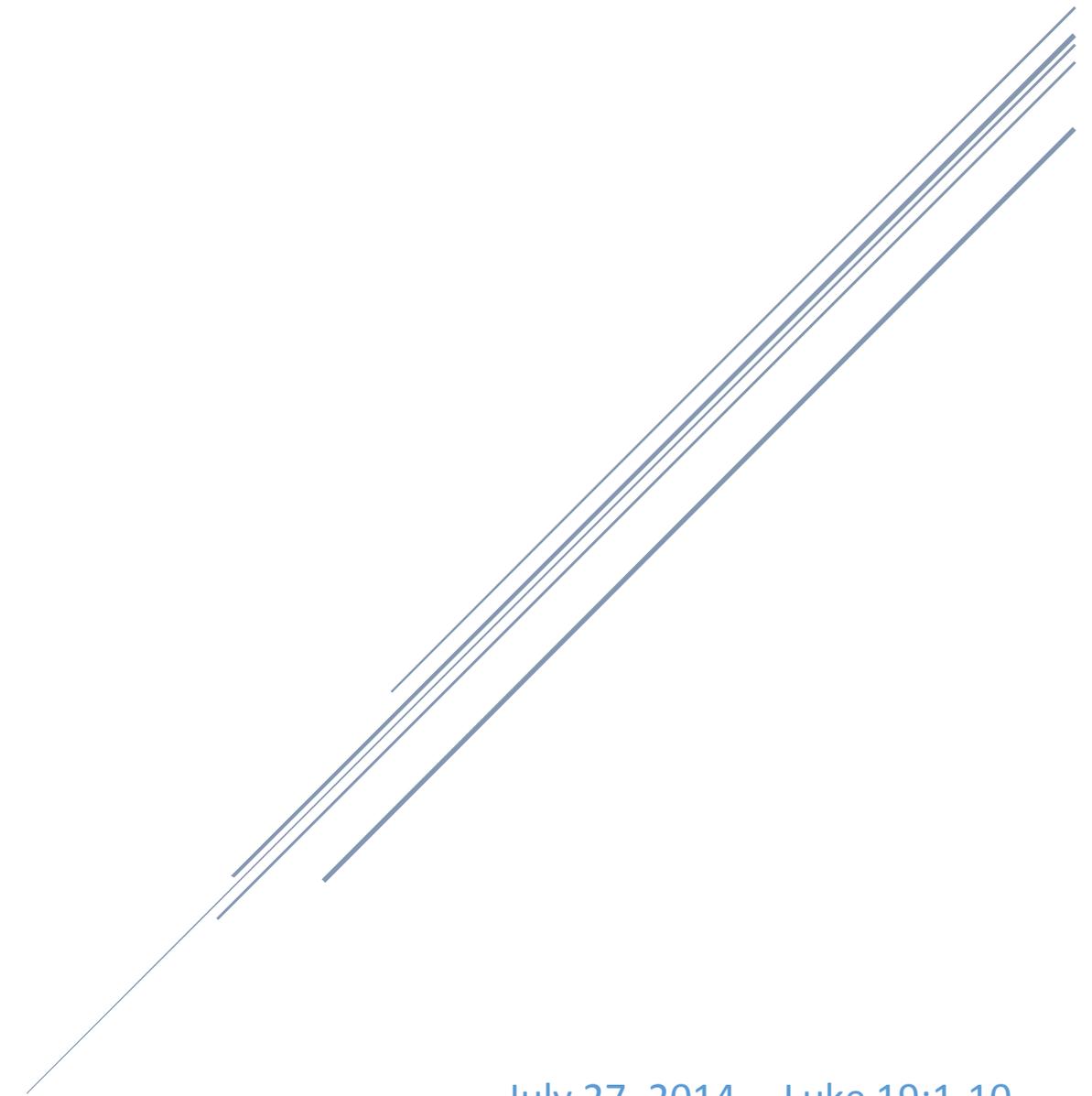


ZACCHEUS' CHAIR:

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?



July 27, 2014 -- Luke 19:1-10

From a talk by Jim Walker of Hot Metal Bridge Ministries

Last week – What did we learn?

Well, we learned that Zaccheus was a big jerk – a traitor—greedy, selfish, and crooked. He’s a tax collector. And he’s rich. He’s cranky, lonely, hungry – narcissist.... He’s oh, so rich, but he only has one chair in his house, right? He’s small of stature – he’s short.... And at the moment he’s out on a limb because he wanted to see Jesus – literally, he’s up a tree.

We learned that Jesus and His whole entourage came to Jericho -- Like Kingdom of God rolling into town: Matthew, Peter, James, Thaddeus, and Joanna, Suzanna, all the Mary’s, the women...

Jericho is really crowded – Zaccheus couldn’t see Jesus – he’s short, remember? He gets knocked down. He gets up, dusts himself off, and he sees the tree, and there’s only one thing to do – climb the tree!

So when we left off last week, Zaccheus -- he’s out there, right? And he’s kind of – he really hasn’t been in a tree before, and he wants to see this 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!”

So Zaccheus...kind of freezes as he realizes everybody in Jericho is staring at him. It’s weird.... So he tries to be cool, getting down out of the tree. And he gets down and he stands up and looks right at Jesus. Jesus puts his arm around him and says, “Zaccheus – hey. I want to come stay at your house tonight.”

Can you believe this? I mean – helloo! He wants to stay – I mean, I’m not a very political guy. I prefer none of the above – I’m registered independent voter, so don’t get me wrong...

But just say...just say...you’re really big into Obama. You got the bumper sticker and you got the shirt and you got the hat...and you got the thing - the ‘always classy’ yard sign outside wired up on your fence, and suddenly Obama comes to the Valley!!

And he’s walking down the street like Obama does...and you come out of your house and you’re like – boioiiinnggg!!! -- IT’S OBAMA!!!! AAAAAUUGGHHH!!!! I’m your biggest fan! Over here! Over here! OVER HERE!!

And Obama walks up to Rush Limbaugh! – “Hey, Rush! I want to stay at your house tonight.”

WHAAATT??? Nooo!! Jesus – ME! I got the shirt! I got the hat! It says ‘Jesus!’!!

But no. Jesus blows our minds with how much He loves. His grace just blows our minds: He puts His arm around the most despicable person in all of Jericho -- the thief -- the traitor...The greedy selfish narcissist. He puts His arm around him and says "Come on, let's go stay at your house today."

And everybody in town, they're like, "Pssshhh! -- That's not Jesus! Call me when the 11:15 Jesus gets here -- 'cuz the 11:00 Jesus -- that's the wrong Jesus!" And they go back into their houses. The only people left are Jesus, Zaccheus, and whole entourage. They start walking down to Z's house.

Now, this is the part where I always wish I could've been there. This must've been blowing Zaccheus' mind. They're walking and Zaccheus was like, "OK - Jesus of Nazareth and all the guys and all the Mary's are coming over to my house... OK. Hope I have enough food. Hope I have enough napkins. Hope I have enough -- AAUUGGHH!! I hope I have enough CHAIRS! -- Oh, no! Wait a second, Jesus is going to walk into my house, and he's going to see my chair!"

And if you've been paying attention to the drama, that's not just a chair! That's Zac's SIN! That's his shame -- it's his loneliness! It's his narcissism -- it's everything! It's -- it's -- just blphtlthh!! It's just there! And Jesus is going to walk right in and go, "WHAT?!?! Wow -- umm, uh, Zaccheus, dude, that's umm -- whew -- boy...that's ugly." So where does this go from here? What happens?

Jesus walks into your life -- He comes into your house. Jesus comes into your house and what does He do? He looks at your chair... He looks at all your sin, at all of your stuff, right? And He picks it up...and starts to beat you with it!! "Come back here! Come back here!" No....actually...not -- that was me ... joking.

No -- here's the gospel ok? Here's what blows my mind and should blow your mind as well... Jesus walks into our lives, he sees our chair, he sees our shame and our sin and all that, and He goes, "...Ok," and He sits right down in the chair, right? -- I'm not done...

Then the guards put a bag over His head and start punching him in the face; Prophecy! Who's hitting you now? Then they tear off all His clothes and they take a cat o' nine tails -- a scourge -- and they beat Him with it.

Wait -- then they put the sin, they put the shame -- the cross -- they put the cross on His back, and He carries the cross all the way through the streets of Jerusalem, and He gets out of town to the place of the skull -- He gets to Golgotha, and they take that cross and they nail Jesus to the cross, and they raise it up; and He just hangs there! He hangs there and He cries out, "*Eloi Eloi lama sabachthani?*"

That means “My god, My God, why have you forsaken me?” ...and He dies. And the man on the right – they break his legs, and the man on the left – they break his legs too, but to Jesus...what they do is...they take a spear and they jam that spear right up into His side...and when that spear reaches in...when it reaches into His side...blood and water.... Blood and water... Jesus is dead.

But that blood...that flow ... that love of god... that sacrificial love of God flowing out of Jesus’ side...covers over... It covers over everything. It covers over our sin. It covers over our shame. And it is gone. It is – as far as – as far as the east is from the west ... it is gone! Sin is forgiven. The love of God covers over us, by the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross – for us all...

So...so Zaccheus knows that Jesus is going to see the chair. So Zaccheus makes sure that he’s the first one into the house. And so he walks – runs almost – into the house, and he makes a beeline to the chair, and he puts the chair in the corner and he stands there in the corner like this, right?

And everybody comes in – Jesus and James and John and Peter – the Mary’s – don’t forget the Mary’s! They all walk in -- and what’s the first thing they see? They see this big table full of food...and they all just gather around it, “Hey..hey, everybody, gather around...”

Everybody’s gathered around the table and Jesus – I don’t know – he’s a carpenter! Out of nowhere comes a chair! He takes a chair and he kind of slides it in..., “Peter – Peter, here, I got a chair for you.”

And he grabs another chair out of nowhere and he slides it right in there. One for John, and then there’s one for Suzanna, and there’s one for Mary, and of course all the Mary’s...

And here’s the deal...there’s a chair...He produces a chair...He brings the chair -- and there’s a chair for you. There’s a chair for you right at the table. And Jesus holds the chair out and says, “Hey, come on! Come sit at the big table – it’s gonna be great! It’s gonna be a big feast.” And He produces all these chairs... He puts these chairs all the way around the table...

Everybody’s around the table and Peter – he’s kind of hanging out with Jesus and he looks over and he sees Z...kind of standing there...

Maybe this is how you feel sometimes.... He’s kinda standing there in the corner, and all of Heaven’s over there gathered around the table... And Zaccheus is like... “Uh...I don’t know about this...”

And Peter goes (*go over to table*), “Hey everybody! Prepare the way! Move down one! Make room for Zaccheus! ... Come on, man!”

Jesus comes over and He grabs his chair and he slides the chair right into the table like this... And He holds out the chair for Z, and he’s like, “Come on, man! Come on! Zaccheus, Come on...stop!”

Zaccheus in the corner...I mean...poor Zaccheus; he just falls apart. No one has ever done this for him. Ever. He walks up to the table...the great cloud of witnesses, gathered for the Great Feast. He puts his hand on the chair and he looks at Jesus and He says, “I’m so sorry...Lord, here and now I give away half of all I possess to the poor; and if I have cheated anyone,” -- he’s probably cheated a few -- “I’ll give them back 4 times the amount.”

And he sits down at the table while the whole table just erupts in applause. Peter puts his arm around him, John puts his arm and Mary and they put hands on Zaccheus and they pray for him...

Jesus puts his hand on him and he says, “I tell you the truth. Today, salvation has come to this house; for this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to save and to seek what was lost.” Jesus walks over and takes some bread; He breaks it, “Body of Jesus for you.”

He walks over and He grabs the goblet from the shelf – remember the goblet? – He grabs the goblet and he takes some wine, he pours it and hands it off.

Zaccheus takes the bread...he hadn’t realized how hungry he was....He takes the cup – he hadn’t realized how thirsty he was. Hungry for communion with God -- Hungry for communion with the love that has created this whole universe. It’s here and now; ready to feast with us. That’s the good news. That’s the good news of the Gospel.

Today I want to invite you to the table. There’s a great banquet table at the end of days...where everyone is gathered. There’s a chair, it’s got your name on it. It’s an invitation – you don’t have to take it. You don’t have to sit there if you don’t want to; but the gift is there. You just have to say, “Yeah, I’d like to sit there.”

Here’s the coolest thing. Jesus is today, He’s yesterday...He’s forever. That means wherever Jesus goes, this great table goes. So if Jesus is in this room...that great table is in this room. There’s a chair in the Kingdom of God – not just after you die – but in the Kingdom of God in this very room; a chair, an invitation for you to be part of the body – to be part of the Kingdom...part of the love of God that is here and now; and if you’re hungry like Zaccheus, my prayer is that you’ll answer that invitation with a, “Yeah...I’ll sit there.” Amen.