

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA, PCA

The Seeking Savior

By

Rev. Todd W. Allen

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Luke 19:1-10

Text Luke 19:10 - For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Have you ever been lost? Being lost is one of the most forlorn, lonesome, and desolate experiences imaginable. I vividly remember at the age of 19 being lost over the North Atlantic during World War II in the dead of winter. The North Atlantic is a treacherous body of water where the weather is most unpredictable. Sudden storms can blow a plane off course and the radio reception is undependable. Ordinarily in those days ground control wouldn't clear a plane on a flight plan over the North Atlantic. It is simply too dangerous. But on this trip back from Paris our pilot wanted to take the short route home and also have the distinction of being one of those rare birds that have flown the North Atlantic. So he talked the British control at St. Morgan, England into allowing him to make the trip. We were flying empty and had cabin fuel tanks in the 4 engine C-54 aircraft we were flying, which would give us an extra safety factor on the non-stop flight to Goose Bay Labrador. The weather was good and they let us go.

It was just shortly after we had passed the point of no return that we ran into a vicious storm. The point of no return is that point in your flight plan when you have used up over one half of your fuel and cannot turn back. The storm was so furious that the pilot could not hold the airplane in the horizontal flying position. We were bounced around like a chip on a wave at sea. As radio operator my job was to keep in touch with ground control and get radio fixes on our position. But in that storm there was absolutely no radio contact. For hours we didn't know where we were or what direction we were headed. All of the instruments went haywire. All I got on the radio was a very loud buzz. The navigator couldn't get a fix either because he couldn't see the stars. In addition to that I got very sick due to being bounced around so badly. It looked hopeless. In the dead of night, nothing but blackness and the fury of the storm raging all around us. It was all we could do to stay airborne.

But God was with us. Suddenly the storm was over. We flew out into a crisp blue sky with stars twinkling above us. Our navigator got a fix on the stars and we

found that we were over 500 miles off course. We did not know at that moment but learned about an hour later when I finally got radio contact with Goose Bay, Labrador that we couldn't land there due to ceiling zero conditions, so we had to attempt Stephenville, Newfoundland with what little fuel we had left. We finally made it after over 15 hours in the air. They told us later that we couldn't have gone to a further destination with the remaining gasoline in our tanks.

Yes, being lost is a frightening thing. I'll tell you something worse than that. To be lost and not know you are lost. At least in that aircraft we were aware of our predicament and were able to take the proper steps to get to safety. But as I look back on that experience what frightens me to think about it is not just the fact that I might have died in a crash at sea but that I was not a Christian in those days and was not even sensitive to my lost condition, and if I had died at sea I would have died isolated and separated from God forever. At least now if I die I am found out of my lostness and I know I would spend eternity with the Lord.

Perhaps a better story to illustrate lostness would be one out of my childhood. When I was about 5 years old my mother took me to a department store and somehow we got separated from each other. You can imagine her frantic search for me. And where did she finally find me? In the toy department engrossed with the Lionel trains that go around and around on perfectly splendid scenic routes through forests and glens and tunnels with automatic switches and stop, look and listen signs. Those Lionel trains have always fascinated me, though you scarcely ever see them anymore.

Spiritually man is lost something like that. He is lost and doesn't even know it. He is fascinated by some interest or another and is oblivious to his broken relationship with his Creator. This is more deadly than the lostness I related over the North Atlantic. A man awakened to his lostness is able to begin a search for the way out of his condition. To know that you are a sinner alienated and separated from God is to be awakened to your great need, your need to be saved, the need to be reconciled to God.

What is the cause of man's lostness? What caused the Lord Jesus to say in verse 10 of our scripture ¹⁰ **"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."**

The term lost is due to the fall of man in Adam. Adam acted on behalf of all men. He was the federal head of the human race. It pleased God to test Adam under a set of ideal conditions. Placed in a beautiful garden with every need fully met, possessed of a keen intellect and all the faculties of his soul in a state of innocence and righteous equipoise he was given one test of obedience. There was one tree in the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which he must not eat fruit from upon pain of death. That was the test. Nothing more. No special taste for the fruit of that particular tree was in Adam. He

had no compulsion to seek for its fruit. He had no need for it at all. The only thing we know about that tree was that it was pleasant to the eyes. It wasn't repulsive looking so as to frighten off Eve, just an ordinary looking tree, much like the other trees of the garden, perhaps not even as attractive. What may have made it attractive was its forbiddenness, and because it was supposed to be a tree of some hitherto unknown branch of knowledge -- the knowledge of good and evil.

There is no man living today who could be tested under the same such ideal circumstances. For one thing, no man is sinless and capable of standing a test of his moral rectitude and obedience to God on behalf of himself, much less of others. Such a test today would lack the necessary qualification of sinlessness in the person tested, and that for the simple reason that in Adam all are sinners. All the sons and daughters of Adam inherit a nature that is sinful. The Bible says there is none righteous, no not one.

It is this sinfulness that imparts to all men a lostness. We are born lost to God's fellowship and communion, lost to the Kingdom of heaven. Man is a lonely wanderer, a vagabond. He is cut off from God and therefore from his rightful destiny.

This means that men have no sure reference point for themselves. In my illustration of being lost over the North Atlantic, what was it that made our five-man crew lost? Would you say the storm? Well, the storm contributed to our lostness and perhaps was the cause of it, but what really made us lost was that we couldn't get a fix on our position. We had lost our two means of ascertaining our location. We had maps, but the maps needed something else. We needed to know where we were on the map. And how do you know where you are on the map? By getting a fix, either from radio signals from two stations on earth or two stars fixed in outer space.

Spiritually man is cut off from the light of heaven so that he cannot get a fix on himself from above. He may try to get a fix from something on earth. Man wants to know where he is headed, but there is nothing about eternity on this earth that can give him a sure fix. He is in a terrible state of lostness. He doesn't know for sure where he came from and he certainly isn't sure of where he is going. He is just careening through life with no anchors, no handrails. He is like a shooting star.

How does man cope with this lostness? Well, he has many ways he tries to do it. He starts out with a security blanket, and all through life he tries to garner security blankets: some visible, material object, his family, his friends, his money, his property his success. All of these things give him some sense of direction and location. He has a home and puts an address on the front door. He has reference points on his map of the world. He joins clubs, associations, even a church, all to locate himself. If he asks himself, where am I? Where am I going? He can say to himself -- I am at such and such an address. I have such and such a connection here

and such and such a connection there. I own this and have my name stuck on a nameplate over there. That's me. I know who I am and where I am. And with that answer to himself mister average lost man puts his anxiety to rest as best he can. But he still has no assurance of anything beyond death's door. Nevertheless in his soul he longs for that missing reference point, that certainty of being accepted by his Creator and belonging somewhere out there beyond this brief life. Every person has eternity in his soul even if he can't exactly identify it. We were made for more than this earthly life.

And many are so fascinated with some special interest, some hobby, some business enterprise, some new toy – a boat, a car, an airplane, a sport, or with some engrossing sin -- that they never allow themselves to think about their lostness. Many go the agnostic route or atheistic route saying to themselves there is no God and no hereafter. Don't study it. Don't think about anything beyond this life. When you're dead you're dead. Others opt for some religious program of works righteousness designed to please God. They believe there is a god who can be placated or served in some way that will give them acceptance in paradise.

Now can you understand why Jesus said, I am come to seek and to save that which was lost? Jesus Christ is the seeking Savior. His mission and his alone accomplished God's redemption plan for lost men.

The obvious question is, how did he do that? Well he did it by taking up the terms of the covenant God made with Adam, a covenant that Adam failed to keep. Jesus Christ came to perfectly obey and fulfill God's first covenant with Adam. Like the first Adam he was innocent and sinless because his virgin birth bypassed the generations of Adam and original sin. Not only did he perfectly keep the law by never violating it he also satisfied the broken law by offering himself as a substitute sacrifice to satisfy the just penalty for sin on behalf of his redeemed people.

The scripture says that the Law brings a curse. Since every sinner from Adam onward has violated the law and failed to keep it all men deserve the curse of the law. In pronouncing a litany of curses for various infractions of the law Moses concluded by saying: **'Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.'** And all the people shall say, **'Amen.'** Deut. 27:26

The good news of the gospel of God is that **Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"—¹⁴in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Gal.3:13-14**

In the salvation of Zaccheus we have an example of how Christ seeks us and applies that salvation to his elect people. Zaccheus had his security arrangements in this world. He was the chief publican in Jericho and he was rich, but he went looking for Jesus. He wanted to see him. He had heard of Jesus, the miracles he had done and how he went about doing good.

Men who are willing to seek Christ intently with all their heart will find Christ seeking them. After Zaccheus had climbed up in that sycamore tree as Jesus passed that place the Scripture says, **He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house."**

Christ invites himself to our quarters. He desires to meet us where we live. Zaccheus responded in a saving way for the word says, **And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly.**

Why did Zaccheus hurry to Jesus and receive him gladly to his home? Because he believed in him. In his heart he was persuaded that Christ was his contact point with God, that Jesus was the way to God.

Note that Zaccheus responded to Christ without delay and with gladness. He had a childlike faith and he exercised it. But we have the guarantee from Christ's own lips of Zaccheus' salvation after Zaccheus stood and said to the Lord, **"Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much."** ⁹And Jesus said to him, **"Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham."** ¹⁰**"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."**

Salvation comes to us through faith in Jesus Christ, which in turn causes one's whole life to be changed. Zaccheus, the penny pinching, shrewd tax collector who knew how to play both ends against the middle and come out on top, who could be the high bidder for the Roman franchise to tax the citizens and still collect enough to satisfy the tax payers and the Roman authorities and become rich in the process, now says he is going to give half of his goods to feed the poor and promises to pay back fourfold anyone he has defrauded. Can this be Zaccheus of Jericho? Yes! But now a new Zaccheus, a new man in Christ. His works prove his faith is true blue. His works do not save him yet his faith has transformed his philosophy of life. He now has a new direction to life. He has a destiny with God and he doesn't need to depend on his security blanket any more. He can be a happy, outgoing, honest person. He is redeemed. He is no longer lost but has been found.

Has the redemption of Christ touched you?
Do you see in Christ the God man, the Savior, the touchstone of God, the rock of our salvation, the bright and morning star? Has Christ made a difference in your

life? Are you a new person in Christ? Is your life style all changed as was Zaccheus' following his new found faith in Christ? Even though changing his way of life after he met Christ did not save him he showed his faith in Christ was genuine by wanting to keep the Law and even repented of his past sinful conduct and was willing to make restitution where he had defrauded or wronged anyone.

In the name and on behalf of Jesus Christ I invite you to receive him today as your Lord and Savior. He invites you to receive him in the same way Zaccheus received him and come to know the same salvation that Zaccheus came to know by responding to the invitation of Christ.

INVITATION -- every head bowed, every eye closed. How many of you can say today, I know I have faith in Christ and that I am a new person in Christ? It has made a difference in my life as it did in the life of Zaccheus? If you can say that will you lift up your hand.

Some did not raise your hand. Perhaps you just didn't care to raise your hand or perhaps it was because you really don't know whether you have saving faith in Christ. You aren't sure, but you would like to be sure and want me to pray for you this morning. If you want to be remembered in our closing prayer today, lift up your hand. Say by lifting your hand, preacher, pray for me. I want to be a Christian. I want to be saved.

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FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VILLA RICA
519 MAIN STREET
VILLA RICA, GA. 30180
770-459-5276

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