

## Generous Giving: Giving Out

5<sup>th</sup> Sun. after Epiphany – 02/05/23 – PWAP #2

Pastor Keith Besel - Mt. Calvary Luth.

Text: Luke 19:1-10

vv. 8-9a, “**And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, ‘Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house...’.**”

### **Introduction**

- ✘ In this, our second Sunday of our *People With A Purpose* journey, we reflect on another of Jesus’ encounters as He journeys toward the cross outside of Jerusalem.
  - ➔ Our overall theme is *Generous Giving*. Last week, as a woman washed Jesus’ feet with her repentant tears and anointed Him with oil, we learned that our first response to the fact that Jesus *Gave Up* His life to gift us with forgiveness and salvation is that we humbly *Give Up* our lives and gifts to Him in worship and praise and in service to others in His name.
- ✘ Today we enter a story where Jesus once again shatters all of the religious protocols when He gives attention and affection to a man considered by most to be a Jewish traitor.
  - ➔ Zacchaeus is a tax collector. At that time, tax collectors generally made their income by extracting money from their neighbors and giving that money to a foreign, occupying, often harsh government. It was an occupation fraught with public corruption.
- ✘ So, if we were good Hebrews our jaws would drop to the ground and our eyes would bug out at this story to hear words like “salvation” and “son of Abraham” connected to Zacchaeus. These words imply a relationship with God – something no one believed Zacchaeus deserved.
  - ➔ Yet Jesus is the one who spoke these words after Zacchaeus publically announced his intent and action to no longer be a corrupt taker, but instead to be a *Generous Giver* in Jesus’ name.

### **I. Generous Giving is a Lifestyle**

- ✘ As we learned last week, *Generous Giving* is not only financial in nature. As with all Christian stewardship, it is a lifestyle of deep love for Jesus and extraordinary generosity as we embrace opportunities of service in Jesus’ love and name.

### **II. The Generous Giving Triangle**

- ✘ Using what we learned about last Sunday through the image of the *Generous Giving* triangle, we understand the first side as being relational when we *Give Up* all we have and are in our deep love for God. Today we learn that the second side is missional as we *Give Out* in expressing profound love for those who are not yet believers and followers of Jesus. And next Sunday we will explore the financial, third side of the *Generous Giving* triangle of *Giving In* as an expression of love for those who are part of God’s family in His Church.
- ✘ Just as each side of the triangle exists only because of God’s profound love for us and all people, so the idea we focus upon today of *Giving Out* is characterized by the missional nature of Jesus’ profound love that He works in all of us for those who are not yet Jesus’ followers. So *Giving Out* is missional just as Jesus is missional, as He said in verse 10, that He “came to seek and to save the lost”.
  - ➔ Richard C. Halverson, who served as chaplain to the United States Senate in the 1980s and early 1990s said, “All through Scripture there is an intimate correlation between the development

of a man's character and how he handles his money". In other words, your giving gives away who you truly are at the core.

### III. Zacchaeus' story – an account of "Giving Out"

✘ This brings us to the story of a man whose character was shaped by the way that he handled both his and other people's money: Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector.

→ The tax collecting system worked this way: If he is ruthless, he will have wealth. If he can be bribed, he will have wealth. If he is dishonest, he will have wealth. Any wealth he has will be attained at the hardship and excessive expense of others. Verse two says that Zacchaeus is "rich". So it's no wonder that people are afraid of him, despise him, and put him down.

→ And yet, verse three tells us that Zacchaeus "was seeking to see who Jesus was". He's a seeker. He's curious. But he is also "small in stature" (v.3). So as Jesus approaches his town of Jericho, Zacchaeus runs ahead of him and climbs up in a sycamore tree. It's not that Zacchaeus is trying to do this in secret. He just really wants to see Jesus.

✘ And of course Jesus knows all of this as the Son of God. So what does Jesus do? He stops, looks up in the tree and makes direct eye contact. "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today" (v. 5). Whoa! Everything just got very real; radically different for Zacchaeus.

→ I mean Zacchaeus is used to people turning the other way; maybe even running away from him, not stopping for him; not singling him out and certainly not speaking to him voluntarily. He's the man people love to hate. Yet, with a look and a word from Jesus, verse six says that Zacchaeus "hurried and came down" from the tree and "received [Jesus] joyfully".

✘ Something profound; even miraculous is happening here. And yet most of the people there are completely clueless and blind to it all. Instead, they grumble and complain and accuse Jesus. "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner", verse seven says. They're used to condemning Zacchaeus, but now they put Jesus in the same category with him.

→ Yet Jesus is about something far more important than these superficial accusers are at the moment. His grace intersects Zacchaeus' disgrace as Jesus models *Generous Giving* when He displays His profound love for someone who is not yet His follower. Others are clueless but Jesus knows that Zacchaeus' life is being transformed at this very moment by the one who has come into his house. And now the one who receives the redeeming gift of God's most *generous giving* responds to God's miracle in his life by becoming a *Generous Giver* himself.

✘ Zacchaeus had to shock all those around him as his new nature publically comes out. "The half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold" (v. 8).

→ This is no ploy; no scheme only to "make himself look good". No, this is the kind of *Giving Out* to others that only flows from one who is now connected to Jesus for salvation. This is the kind of *Giving Out* to others that Martin Luther describes as the Christian life after conversion that consists of faith and charity. Zacchaeus is not giving to earn Jesus' love and respect. He joyfully *Gives Out* to others because he is found by a Savior who seeks and saves lost people.

→ It makes me think of the phrase that we all joyfully confess and sing in the hymn Amazing Grace, "I once was lost but now am found" (LSB, #744, v.1).

✘ It truly is a dramatic and miraculous turn around; a complete transformation: As a tax collector, Zacchaeus' orientation and life was to take, keep, and hoard, which is the default position for all who are steeped in sin. Left to my own devices, my first inclination is to take care of me with little or no regard for anyone else. I strive to assert my wishes; my will to try and feed my sinful

desires. And this directly affects my orientation toward God as well. I may say out loud that I believe and follow Him, but too often my will overshadows and blocks out His will. To go on like this unchecked means a life of selfishness that basically ends in destruction.

→ But we see with Zacchaeus' encounter with Jesus that his life's entire orientation is changed around. Paul describes this in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come".

✘ *Giving Out* to others – especially those who are not yet Jesus' followers; this is the new orientation of life for Zacchaeus ... and for you and for me as well.

→ Jesus of course knows that this change in Zacchaeus is real, because Jesus is the one who brought it about. And so, He makes the connection between *Giving Out* and the "new creation" that Paul is talking about. Verse nine, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham", that is an heir by faith alone in Jesus alone. Elsewhere, in Matthew 6:21, Jesus taught about this using a different image, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also". In other words, your giving gives away who you truly are at the core.

#### **IV. *Giving Out* helps me think/act differently.**

✘ So, what does this have to do with you and me today? Consider this important question: When Jesus watches me give, does He come to the same conclusion about me that he did regarding Zacchaeus? Does my giving first express my gratitude as a recipient of God's incredible, *Generous Giving*? And how does the Zacchaeus account help me think and act differently about *Giving Out* to others in Christ's love for those who are not yet His followers?

→ As you consider those questions, consider also how much connections to lost people mean. Jesus comes to "seek and to save the lost" (v. 10). It's His mission; who He is at the core. He is intentional when he stops, looks up and makes eye contact with Zacchaeus. He is intentional when he invites Himself to Zacchaeus' "house" (v. 5). Jesus did not isolate Himself from those whose lives are dominated by sin. He is drawn to them out of love and compassion, desiring that none would be lost, but all will be saved.

→ Yes, His intentional, *Generous Giving* toward Zacchaeus confirms the truth that God deeply loves lost people. If you intentionally avoid contact with those who are not Christian, then friends, you are missing out on one of the great beauties of being a Christian! because *Giving Out* to others necessarily includes connecting to lost people; to those who are not yet Jesus' followers.

✘ So, spend a bit of time looking in the mirror of your life with me. When I look at the close relational connections in my life, do I see intentional connections to unbelievers? As a recipient of Jesus' *Generous Giving*, do I want to be the Lord's intentional missionary to family and friends who are not yet Jesus' followers.

→ Out of that personal reflection, consider Christ's desire that you and I invite others to join us in knowing and loving Jesus as Savior. Jesus invites Zacchaeus to receive Him in his home. And then Zacchaeus follows Jesus' lead; introducing his household to his special guest. You see, when Jesus says in verse nine, "Today salvation has come to this house", He's not talking about a building of wood and clay and stone. He's describing an extended family, and likely close friends as well. *Giving Out* to others includes inviting lost people into an event, an experience, a community; where they will be introduced to Jesus, through Jesus' followers.

✘ And there is even more still to this teaching of *Giving Out*. When Zacchaeus gives generously to the poor and defrauded, he does not separate his wealth from his mission. He does not separate his wealth from the opportunities he sees to advance the cause of Christ in seeking out the lost all around him.

- So, we too as Christian stewards, have been blessed by Jesus with great wealth, each of us in our own unique way. How can you; how can we then *Give Out in Giving Generously*, from our wealth to advance the cause of Christ, in our own homes; in our immediate communities; and even around the world?
- There is a very real sense of urgency to this that Jesus shows us and intends for us all to see. He did not put off going to Zacchaeus. He seized the moment when He passed that sycamore tree to stop and engage Zacchaeus for salvation “today” (v.9). He told Zacchaeus, “hurry and come down” (v.5) for He did not want Zacchaeus to be “lost” for even one more day.
- ✘ Paul speaks to this missional urgency in 2 Corinthians 6:2 when he writes, “Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation”.
- ✘ *Generous Giving* is not just some abstract concept. For it includes the very real response of *Giving Out* to others – especially those who are not yet Jesus’ followers.
- It is true for Zacchaeus. It is true for you and me. It is an urgent issue for all of us as God’s *People With A Purpose*, *Giving Out* as He has first given salvation to us! Amen.