



Life Group Study Notes

“The Table: Outsiders to Insiders”

Sr. Ps. James Lowe - July 14, 2019

Warm Up (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question to answer, or ask another. No right or wrong answers.

- Have you ever been locked out of your home or car? What did you do?
- Have you ever not been allowed entrance to someplace you wanted to enter? Why?
- What is the most recent event you wanted to attend but couldn't because it was sold out?

Word (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at www.bethelworld.org

Luke 19:1-10 ESV He entered Jericho and was passing through. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." 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, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Jesus wants to engage outsiders and make them as insiders.

Zacchaeus was an outsider. He was not merely outside the circle of Jesus' disciples, God's new covenant people. He was also outside the circle of godly Israelites, God's original covenant people.

He was a tax collector. Tax collectors worked for the Roman Empire, whose soldiers and officials occupied and controlled the land of Israel. Consequently, they were viewed by most Jews as collaborators and as unfaithful to God and his covenant.

In addition to being a tax collector for the Romans, he was also corrupt, which was not at all uncommon among those in his profession. They were often known to cheat the people by charging them more than was necessary. It was the means by which they could provide for themselves more than the minimal income they would otherwise receive.

Even though Jesus was only passing through Zacchaeus' town and was focused on his mission to go to Jerusalem, he took notice of this man and made time for him. Jesus engaged him as a person and didn't merely react to his stained reputation. Jesus was interested in him. So in spite of Jesus' pressing need to get to Jerusalem (and be martyred there), he went out of his way to go to Zacchaeus' home.

Jesus didn't care what other people thought about him because he was taking time to stay and eat at Zacchaeus' home. Jesus valued and cared about Zacchaeus more than he cared about his own reputation.

Jesus' values and decision were vindicated. Zacchaeus was so moved by Jesus' kindness that he had a major change of heart and mind. Zacchaeus must've already heard about Jesus' teaching and miracles, because he had earnestly desired to see and meet Jesus. One never knows what hidden spiritual work might be going on in the heart of a sinful "outsider."

Zacchaeus was so impacted by Jesus that he was moved to rectify his past wrongs by offering to go above and beyond the requirements of the Mosaic Law regarding restitution. Zacchaeus offered to pay people back four times the amount he had cheated from them. The law required him to pay back the amount cheated plus twenty percent (Numbers 5:7). More than that, he decided to give half of his wealth to the poor. What a transformation!

Who are we? Are we like Zacchaeus and in need of Jesus and a transformation of life? Are we like the crowd who obscures the view of a sinful outsider who wants to see and meet Jesus, and who criticizes the spiritual person who treats the sinful outsider with dignity and takes time to get to know him or her? Or are we like Jesus who engages the sinful outsider in hopes of seeing him or her become a faithful insider?

Who are you?

Discussion (10-15 minutes)

Choose one of the points below, and discuss how the lesson applies to our lives.

- Who do you relate to more at this time in your life: Zacchaeus, the crowd, or Jesus?
- What do you believe Jesus wants from you?
- Who could you possibly help get to know Jesus and become his follower?

Prayer (10-15 minutes)

Pray any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Thank God for caring about you and reaching out to you.
- Ask God to fill our hearts with love and concern for those who are outside the family of God.
- Ask God to show us if we are obscuring others from seeing and following Jesus.