What Difference Does Jesus Make?
Luke 19:1-10 (NKJV)

Please turn with me in your Bibles to tonight’s scripture text in the Gospel of Luke, chapter nineteen, verses 1-10.

Luke 19:1-10 (NKJV)

1 Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

2 Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich.

3 And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature.

4 So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way.

5 And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.”

6 So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.

7 But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, “He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.”

8 Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”

9 And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham;

10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

PRAYER
INTRODUCTION

What difference has Jesus really made in your life? It may have been many, many years ago that you walked down the aisle and made your great confession of faith and were immersed into Christ.

But has Jesus really made any difference in your life?
Has anything really changed?

One of the beautiful, undeniable truths in the gospels is that Jesus truly did make a difference in the lives of those who genuinely put their faith and trust in Him.

A blind man could come to Jesus and leave seeing.
A lame man could come to Jesus and leave walking.
A deaf man could come to Jesus and leave hearing.
A leprous man could come to Jesus and leave cleansed and whole.
A demon-possessed man could come to Jesus and leave “set free.”
A sinful man could come to Jesus and leave forgiven.

Peter, Andrew, James and John would have spent their whole lives drawing up fish nets on the Sea of Galilee had Jesus not turned them into “fishers of men.” JESUS MADE A DIFFERENCE IN THEIR LIVES!

The adulterous woman would likely have gone through life engaging in one immoral relationship after another had Jesus not forgiven her and offered her a fresh start! JESUS MADE A DIFFERENCE IN HER LIFE!

Jairus likely would have gone through life as a grieving, broken-hearted father had Jesus not brought his daughter back to life. JESUS MADE A DIFFERENCE IN JAIRUS’ LIFE.

Saul likely would have spent his whole life persecuting Christians had Jesus not transformed him into one of the greatest preachers who ever lived. JESUS MADE A DIFFERENCE IN PAUL’S LIFE!

I ask you again, “What difference has Jesus made in your life?”
In this 19th chapter of Luke’s gospel, we meet a man who is certainly no stranger to us.

Remember that song we all learned in Sunday School as children, “Zacchaeus was a wee little man, and a wee little man was he. He climbed up in the sycamore tree, for the LORD he wanted to see.

And as the Savior passed that way, He looked up in the tree, And he said, “Zacchaeus, you come down, for I’m going to your house today, for I’m going to your house today!”

Now the perception we had of Zacchaeus as children is far different from the kind of man Zacchaeus really was.

Zacchaeus was a tax collector. And in Jesus’ day, tax collectors were hated because they were Jewish citizens working for the Roman government.

The Roman government imposed taxes on the Jewish people for everything.

- They taxed their land.
- They taxed their crops.
- They taxed them for every livestock they owned.
- They taxed them for the privilege of voting.
- They even imposed a Temple tax.

As if paying these taxes weren’t enough, the Roman government allowed Zacchaeus and all tax collectors to “grossly over-tax” the people. In fact, it wasn’t unusual for a tax collector to charge four times as much tax as was owed.

Now what did Zacchaeus do with all that extra money he received by ripping off his own people? Look at verse 2......

v. 2  Now behold there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, AND HE WAS RICH! (repeat)
Zacchaeus was probably the richest man in Jericho. He and his family probably wore nicer clothes and lived in a nicer home than anybody else in town.

Zacchaeus was DISHONEST.......DESPISED......DEPLORABLE......and DESPICABLE!

**What possible difference could JESUS make in the life of such a man?**

**Jericho** was located on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea approximately 15 miles northeast of Jerusalem. Now this isn’t the same Jericho as the one that was destroyed in Joshua’s day. The city of Jericho was built approximately 4-5 miles from the ruins of the original site. It is recognized as the oldest city on earth.

Typically people could walk in and out of the city of Jericho every day without ever arousing even the slightest attention. But on this particular day JESUS WAS COMING TO TOWN. Throng of people began gathering along the main street in Jericho just to get a glimpse of Jesus.

Zacchaeus was curious about what all the commotion was about, so he got up from his tax table in the temple to see what was going on.

VERSE 3 tells us that because the crowd was so large and he was so short in stature he couldn’t see Jesus. So as any young Sunday School student can tell you, Zacchaeus climbed up in a sycamore tree to get a better view.

When Jesus came to the tree where Zacchaeus had perched himself, he looked up and told Zacchaeus to quickly come down out of the tree, for today I must stay at your house.

**Little did Zacchaeus realize at that moment that his life would never be the same again after his encounter with Jesus that day.**

**Let’s consider three ways Jesus made a difference in Zacchaeus’ life that day.**
I. Jesus Made A Difference In Zacchaeus’ Character

1. Look at verse 8 again..........  

8 Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”

2. The scripture doesn’t give us any of the details about the conversation that took place between Jesus and Zacchaeus that day, but this 8th verse implies that Jesus confronted Zacchaeus about his dishonest character.

This dishonest character had infected every part of Zacchaeus’ life.

*He was very wealthy! But how had he acquired all that wealth? Through DISHONESTY!*

*He was a citizen of Jericho! But how did the townspeople view Zacchaeus? They saw him as THE MOST DISHONEST MAN IN TOWN.*

*His family lived more lavishly than everyone else in town! But how were they able to afford that lavish lifestyle? Because of Zacchaeus’ DISHONESTY!*

3. Dishonesty is a character flaw. Dishonest people cannot be trusted in relationships, in business, or in financial affairs.

4. But it is very obvious in this 8th verse that whatever Jesus said to Zacchaeus that day made a difference. Because Zacchaeus was willing to give half of his possessions to the poor and pay back four times the amount he had cheated people out of on their taxes.

5. Zacchaeus wasn’t just remorseful for his dishonest ways, he was repentant. True repentance involves taking action to right the wrong.

6. For Zacchaeus “righting the wrong” meant paying back money he had received through deception.
7. Just imagine if you will, Zacchaeus going from house to house in Jericho. Each resident opens their door and sees “the most crooked man” in town standing there.

   They scornfully say to Zacchaeus, “What do you want? Haven’t you hurt us enough already?”

Then imagine the puzzled looks on their faces when Zacchaeus hands them a bag of money and says, “I’m not here to take more money away from you, I’m here to give back what I took from you. In fact, you will find four times the amount I took in the bag.”

8. Pretty soon everybody in Jericho is talking about Zacchaeus! “Has he been to your house yet?” “What has happened to Zacchaeus?” “He’s a totally changed man!”

9. JESUS MADE A DIFFERENCE IN ZACCHAEUS’ CHARACTER!

Next we see..................

II. Jesus Made A Difference In Zacchaeus’ Family

1. Look at v.9 again.......  

   9 And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham;

2. Up until Jesus came to his house that day, Zacchaeus had “built his house on sand” and by “house” I’m not talking about the physical structure he lived in, but rather his “household” ..........his family.

3. Zacchaeus had “built his home” on money and material possessions. He had “built his home” on worldly things that can vanish in a single day.

4. But that day Jesus gave Zacchaeus a “new foundation” upon which to build his life and the lives of his family. And that was a personal relationship with Christ Himself.
ILLUSTRATION

Years ago when I was ministering at the Harvey’s Point Christian Church in Kell, Illinois, a lady in the community began attending our services. Her name was Betty Hooten.

Betty had such a sweet personality, but the Lord and the Church had never been a serious part of her life. After several months, Betty came forward one Sunday at the invitation to receive Christ as her Lord and Savior.

As joyous as that was, something even more wonderful happened after that. In time Betty’s husband, Gary, and their five children all started to come to Church services on a regular basis. In time I had the privilege of baptizing every member of the Hooten family.

JESUS MADE A DIFFERENCE IN THE HOOTEN FAMILY!

Jesus made a difference in Zacchaeus’ character.

Jesus made a difference in Zacchaeus’ family.

And thirdly………..

III. Jesus Made A Difference In Zacchaeus’ Eternal Destiny

1. Re-read vs. 9,10………

9 And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham;

10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”
2. For Zacchaeus, Jesus was the difference between ......
   - eternal joy and eternal sorrow.
   - eternal reward and eternal punishment
   - eternal life and eternal death.

3. Sadly most of the people in this world have bought into Satan’s lie that they will go to heaven after they die because they were basically “good, decent, moral people.”

4. The truth is no one is saved by his or her own goodness. We can only be saved by receiving God’s gift of salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ who was GOOD ENOUGH TO GO TO THE CROSS AND OFFER HIS LIFE AS A SACRIFICE TO SAVE YOU AND ME.

   Jesus brought salvation to Zacchaeus and his household that day! Jesus made a difference in their eternal destiny!

CONCLUSION

What difference has Jesus truly made in your life?

   Has Jesus made a difference in your character? Has He made a difference in your habits? In your priorities? How about your relationships? How about the way you spend your money and the way you spend your time?


   If not, then why don’t you let Jesus come to your house today! Why don’t you let Jesus truly make a difference in your life!