

**Introduction:** As we celebrate Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and His resurrection at Easter, we have many spiritual blessings for which to be thankful. We begin with being grateful that we have a seeking and finding Savior, whose zeal to "seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10) gives us courage in our witness and work, just as *He* found courage to go to Jerusalem to His death in order to fulfill that purpose of "saving the lost."

**Monday: Luke 13:33-35, 19:1-6 & Romans 15:8-9.** Christ's mighty works as He approached Jerusalem, the healing of the blind man and calling of Zacchaeus, for example, actually have their roots in Luke 13:33-35, where Jesus weeps as He contemplates His coming death in Jerusalem. He longs to provide a refuge for that lost city – even as a "hen gathers her brood under her wings" (Lk. 13:34). Christ's grief arose from His knowledge that they would reject and crucify Him, and His heart went out to them in their unbelief, even as He longed to enter the greedy tax collector's house in Luke 19:1-6 to heal the scars of sin which He found there. He is a weeping Savior because He longs to see "salvation come to our homes" (Lk. 19:9) instead of seeing us pile up the deceptive riches of this world.

Meditate and Pray: Thank God that all the rich themes and songs of salvation throughout the Bible are summed up in Jesus Christ. *He* is the zealous Savior who longs to share the precious treasure of praise to God with the nations of the world. He "seeks and saves the lost" in order to create a choir who will sing with Him, just as Romans 15:9 promises! Thank Jesus that, because of His saving work, the Apostle Paul can now say of our conversions, along with that of the Gentiles of this world, that we are indeed "singing hymns to God's Name" along with our great Savior – see Romans 15:9. Sing about Christ's great seeking and healing grace with this old hymn from William Cowper:

1 Heal us, Emmanuel, here we stand,  
Waiting to feel thy touch;  
To wounded souls stretch forth thy hand,  
Blest Saviour, we are such.

3 Thou pitiedst him who once applied  
With trembling for relief;  
"Lord, I believe," with tears he cried,  
"O help my unbelief."

5 Like her, with hopes and fears we come,  
To touch thee if we may;  
Oh! send us not despairing home,

Send none unhealed away. (The Hartford Selection of Hymns from the most approved authors, 1799)

2 Our faith is weak, our strength is small,  
We faintly trust thy word;  
Sure thou wilt hear the mourner call  
And say, "behold thy Lord."

4 She too, who touched thee in the press,  
And healing virtue stole,  
Was answered, "Daughter, go in peace,  
Thy faith hath made thee whole."

**Tuesday: Luke 13:33-35 & 19:1-9.** The story of Zacchaeus displays many of Luke's favorite themes, such as the compassion of God, repentance, and forgiveness. This is a story of a tax collector who was lost, then found, and given the status of a "saved son of Abraham" (Lk. 19:9). But there were many obstacles to this salvation. There were heart-hardening sins which threatened to destroy this tax collector's life before Christ found him, such as greed, covetousness, self-satisfaction and the deceitfulness of wealth. In short, just as Jerusalem lived off of a false sense of security in this life, never knowing how poor, starved and unprepared they were for the next; just as the Pharisees scoffed when Jesus warned them about the impossibility of serving both God and money (Lk. 16:13-14), so Zacchaeus symbolizes many whom Jesus encountered, whose souls were asleep in the grip of the security which their wealth provided. And no wonder! Such people put their souls to bed in comfort each night, speaking to the most spiritually-neglected part of their lives: "Soul, take thine ease, thou hast many goods laid up for many years" (KJV paraphrase of Lk.12:19) "Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." How impossible for such greedy souls to see the light. Ah, well, with God, all things are possible, as we shall see this week.

Meditate and Pray: Thank God for the powerful, penetrating insights of Luke's Gospel, piercing into the heart conditions of men "who give their souls" for the pleasures of this life. We don't have to look far for the source of such penetrating words in this Gospel: the Christ whom Luke's Gospel portrays has eyes of fire which burn a hole, not just through our wallets, but through into our souls to discern what is there. Who can survive such a penetrating, heart-searching judgment from the eyes of the Son of God? Let us begin this week of notes confessing to the Lord: *"Lord, you alone see all that we hide from the view of men. You see our lusts and carnal desires. We are at a loss to escape your glance. Help us to surrender to your searching eye, even as Zacchaeus yielded to your command and came down from the Sycamore tree. Help us to receive you with joy into our homes and hearts, just like that short tax collector. Amen."*

**Wednesday: Luke 12:1-3, 12:13-15 16:14; 19:7 & 20:45-47.** The hypocrisy of these great, prosperous cities of Jericho and Jerusalem knew no bounds! Following their greedy leaders who "loved money" (Lk. 16:14), these people mutter at Jesus' keeping company with this "sinner" Zacchaeus (Lk.19:7), when it was *their* very cosmopolitan, materialistic, self-righteous religious culture that *produced* men like this tax collector. Can you not see the young Zacchaeus ... before unclean monetary associations with the Romans and their money warped his life? ... before the heart-hardening example of the Pharisees who "devoured widows' homes" even while making a show of their religion in their long, expensive robes (Lk.20:46-47)... before all this ruined his view of the religion of his fathers? Look at the young Zacchaeus, learning to lust for money from the example of these greedy false shepherds! How tragic when our blind spots speak louder than our words, and our obsessions with "getting by" and "surviving the rat race" speak louder to the next generation than our service to grace and truth. This was the spiritual inheritance which Israel and her leaders gave to Zacchaeus as a young man. No wonder he embraced defrauding his own people with the excessive taxation for which tax collectors were famous (and despised)!

Meditate and Pray: *Lord Jesus, as our children grow up and sin like their parents did, causing us to wonder at where they learned such behavior, while we so easily forget our bad example to them, please save them as you did Zacchaeus! Do not let their teeth be set on edge by the sour grapes their parents ate! Look at your sons and daughters of Abraham! See them wander in our land! So many who were taught your precepts and ways, yet now wandering on the broad way to destruction! Come down the road through Jericho again... seeking and finding the lost. Please also send your Spirit and move the next generation to climb up out of the mire and dust of materialism and greed to look for you from the Sycamore trees you place in their path. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts... that they will find you one day... for the promise is theirs as it has been ours: "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you will find." Amen.*

**Thursday: Luke 19:1-2, 7 & Luke 18:9-14.** If the culture of these cities of Jericho and Jerusalem was so greed-ridden, why did the inhabitants of these cities have such a deep-seated hatred of tax collectors like Zacchaeus, when he was just another greedy person in that greedy culture and generation? The answer lies in the purpose of the Roman occupiers to hire men like Zacchaeus to *intentionally* impoverish Roman colonies like Judea, in order to keep them from being a threat of civil strife or rebellion.

As Tim Keller points out in his book *Counterfeit Gods* (p. 54): Israel was a conquered nation, under military occupation. Their conquerors, the Romans, levied oppressive taxes on each colony as a means for transferring most of the nation's wealth and capital to Rome and its citizens. This left the colonial societies impoverished, which kept them subjugated... (this) tax system depended on officials who were charged with extracting, for their Romans overlords, the tax income from each region targeted for collection. Everyone despised them. The people called Zacchaeus a "sinner" (vs. 7), which meant apostate or outcast. If you want a sense of how these functionaries were regarded, think of what people thought of the collaborators who, under the Nazis, oppressed their own people during World War II.

Meditate and Pray: Thank Jesus that He intentionally looked up the most impossible cases of lost souls to save the "worst of sinners." His parable about the justification of the tax collector in Luke 18:9-14 is no accident! But even more glorious is Jesus' work to save Zacchaeus, for, in this short little man who had to climb a tree to see His Savior, we have the conversion of one who is literally called an "arch-tax collector" (Lk. 19:2)! As Tim Keller points out, Zacchaeus didn't care about the stigma attached to his wealth, or how he acquired it: He had sacrificed everything in order to get money. No one held out any hope for him – until the moment he met Jesus! Hallelujah!

**Friday: Luke 4:14-18, 19:5-7 & John 16:8-11.** As we see Zacchaeus promptly respond to Jesus' command to come down and welcome Him into his home, we must not forget where the *responsiveness* in Zacchaeus heart comes from. It is *not* that Zacchaeus had potential and spiritual openness to make the right decision' for salvation through Jesus Christ. Rather, it is always the Holy Spirit who goes before our Savior, preparing hearts to receive Him. From the beginning of Christ's public ministry in Luke 4:14, it is the Holy Spirit who has gone before Him, "anointing Christ" to preach the Gospel (Lk. 4:18) and making smooth and successful paths on which He would walk in order to successfully seek and find the lost. We may be sure in the case of Zacchaeus that this same seeking Spirit was effectually calling Zacchaeus even as Jesus approached the Sycamore tree. Perhaps the first hints of the work of the convicting Spirit of John 16:8-11 began years earlier. For years, Zacchaeus sought to suppress the guilt and sense of sins which the Spirit produced in him. But in the end, as in the case of all whom the Lord seeks, the lowly, despised tax collector must surrender! Grace and Salvation are stronger than the sins of even the most hardened and most despised! Hallelujah!

Meditate and Pray: Thank God the Father for the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit, who "applies to us the redemption purchased by Christ." Celebrate this great heart work with the words of Hymn # 339 in our Hymnal:

*For your gift of God the Spirit,  
power to make our lives anew,  
pledge of life and hope of glory,  
Savior, we would worship you.  
Crowning gift of resurrection  
sent from your ascended throne,  
fullness of the very Godhead,  
come to make your life our own.*

*He who in creation's dawning  
brooded on the lifeless deep,  
still across our nature's darkness  
moves to wake our souls from sleep,  
moves to stir, to draw, to quicken,  
thrusts us through with sense of sin;  
brings to birth and seals and fills us  
saving Advocate within.*

*He, the mighty God, indwells us;  
his to strengthen, help, empower;  
his to overcome the tempter  
ours to call in danger's hour.  
In his strength we dare to battle  
all the raging hosts of sin,  
and by him alone we conquer  
foes without and foes within.*

*Father, grant your Holy Spirit  
in our hearts may rule today,  
grieved not, quenched not, but unhindered,  
work in us his sovereign way.  
Fill us with your holy fullness,  
God the Father, Spirit, Son;  
in us, through us, then, forever,  
shall your perfect will be done.*

**Saturday-Sunday: read Joshua 6:26-27, 7:20-21, 1 Kings 16:34 & Luke 19:8-10.** Nothing Jesus did was merely an isolated moment of saving grace. Jesus did not practice “random deeds of kindness and grace.” With His every step, Christ went forth in power to reverse the curse of sin. Every saving event in the Bible is a momentous over-turning of the curse of sin and Satan. For example, think back to the curse of Joshua on the city of Jericho in Joshua 6:26. Under the inspiration and authority of God, Joshua pronounced the Divine ban on the rebuilding of Jericho. That ruined city, full of idolatry and sin, was to stand as a monument to Divine justice, which destroys all wickedness and sin. Hundreds of years later, a wealthy man from Bethel, that center of calf-worship and false religion throughout much of the Old Testament, rebuilt Jericho’s foundations, walls and gates and lost two of his sons in the process (1 Kings 16:34), just as Joshua had predicted.

Do you now see how accursed this city, through which Jesus passed in Luke 19, was? Therefore, when “salvation came to the house” of Zacchaeus, the most unlikely and inveterate sinner of all in that sin-cursed city, this was a momentous act of God’s forgiving power. Only the Son of God in human nature could come down to that sewer of a city and snatch “the worst of sinners” up into the family of faith!

Meditate and Pray: Thank Jesus that, according to Luke 19:10, it is Jesus’ intention to walk through *all* the cities of this world to show the same miraculous power again and again in the lives of many like Zacchaeus. His arm is not short to save. May the Lord renew our prayers for lost loved ones, and our confidence to witness and work for the salvation of folk like Zacchaeus, whom many in the world view as beyond redemption. Make Hymn # 335 your prayer for the evangelistic outreach of your church:

Gracious Spirit, dwell with me:  
I myself would gracious be;  
and with words that help and heal  
would thy life in mine reveal;  
and with actions bold and meek  
would for Christ my Savior speak.

Truthful Spirit, dwell with me:  
I myself would truthful be;  
and with wisdom kind and clear  
let Thy life in mine appear;  
and with actions brotherly  
speak my Lord’s sincerity.

Mighty Spirit, dwell with me:  
I myself would mighty be;  
mighty so as to prevail,  
where unaided man must fail;  
ever by a mighty hope,  
pressing on and bearing up.

Holy Spirit, dwell with me:  
I myself would holy be;  
separate from sin, I would  
choose and cherish all things good,  
and whatever I can be  
give to him who gave me thee!