

Sovereign Grace in the Sycamore Tree

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Bible Text: Luke 19:5

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Please turn with me in your Bibles to Luke 19. God's word comes to us this evening from this chapter, Luke 19. We will read the first 10 verses

1 And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. 2 And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. 3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. 4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. 5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. 6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. 7 And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. 8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. 9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Thus God's holy infallible and precious word.

Dear congregation, the Lord Jesus was on his final journey going to Jerusalem where his great work would be accomplished, the great work of redemption on the cross of Golgotha and as he makes this final journey, he passes by Jericho. Jericho, that city with such a great history and so much significance. Wasn't it through Jericho, children, that the armies of Israel had had to pass many years before in order to take this land of promise? Wasn't it at Jericho that Israel won such a miraculous victory, not by sword or spear but simply with the shout of the human voice? Wasn't it at Jericho that God had shown his powerful grace in converting the woman, Rahab, that harlot from Canaan and making her a daughter of Abraham and a mother and Israel?

Well, today we don't see Joshua passing by Jericho, we see the greater than Joshua. He's coming now not with a physical sword or physical shield or spear, but he's coming now in humility and in grace. He's come not to conquer a physical enemy but rather to do

battle with principalities and powers in high places with sin and death and hell. He has not come to secure a physical inheritance for the people of Israel but rather an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, laid up in heaven for his people. And at this time, he doesn't show his sovereign grace in saving a harlot but rather someone even more sinful, Zacchaeus, in order to show that he is the God of sovereign grace and he is the same yesterday, today and forever.

So let us look at this passage under the theme "Sovereign Grace in the Sycamore Tree," and though the whole passage will be our text, let me just read with you verse 5, "And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house." Sovereign grace in the Sycamore tree. We'll see, first of all, surprising grace; secondly, seeking grace; thirdly, saving grace. Sovereign grace in the Sycamore tree: surprising grace, seeking grace and saving grace.

It was spring in Jericho. It probably was one of those warm spring days as you would often have it there in that area close to the Jordan River, not far from the Dead Sea. In about 7 to 10 days would be the Passover and pilgrims were marching down these roads here and coming past Jericho. As I already said, Jericho had had a notable history and even though the Lord had said that Jericho should not be rebuilt, it had been and at this time, it was one of the most important commercial cities; an important trade route ran through Jericho and the tax collector's booth at Jericho was one of the most important financial centers in the land of Israel at this time.

I imagine Zacchaeus who was chief of the tax collectors sitting there at the tax collector's booth and people if they knew Zacchaeus, which I'm sure they did, they would have despised him. They would have agreed with the Lord Jesus when he called Zacchaeus a lost sinner as he does in verse 10 of our passage, "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Zacchaeus was lost: they all would have agreed that Zacchaeus was lost. A tax collector during this time was someone who cooperated and collaborated with the enemy Roman Empire. Not only that, but he also would have extorted people. The Romans were very liberal this way and if they said, "We want you to collect this much money," let's say \$100 equivalent then the tax collector could ask whatever he wanted, 200 and keep 100 to himself and people had no recourse to deal with such extortion. So they used their authority and their power to oppress their own countrymen, collaborating with the enemies. And Zacchaeus was not just one of the publicans but we read here that he was chief of the publicans. He had climbed the ladder among the publicans and reached the very top. Josephus tells us that there were 3 chiefs of publicans in Israel at this time and probably Zacchaeus was the most important of those 3 since Jericho was a very important city.

Undoubtedly, among this corrupt elite, he would've climbed that ladder through corrupt means and every time people would have heard the name Zacchaeus, they would have muttered under their breath. They would have frowned. If they saw him on the street, they would have turned aside, "That man is lost." It's one thing to be a Roman, it's another thing to have gone to the other side, so to speak. The text tells us that Zacchaeus

was rich. He had amassed a lot of goods using his power to that end. He probably had whatever money could buy. He had what we would say lots but he was lost. Just in the previous chapter, the Lord Jesus had said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man like Zacchaeus to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Not only would the people have viewed Zacchaeus as lost but with respect to the Lord, Zacchaeus was also lost. What's interesting is that Zacchaeus' name, do you know what Zacchaeus means, children? It actually means "blameless one; upright one." Could it be that Zacchaeus' parents were godly or at least had high hopes for their son, Zacchaeus and named him a name that would have been accepted by the Pharisees: upright one, just one, pure Israelite in whom there is no guile? Now you can see what has become of this blameless one. He is not blameless at all. No, quite the opposite. You understand now why I say that Zacchaeus in a certain respect was worse than Rahab. Yes, Rahab was sinful but Zacchaeus should have known better. Rahab was sinful but she was a Canaanite. She had lived as a foreigner to the covenants of God. She had not grown up with the Scriptures like Zacchaeus. We would say in our day, Zacchaeus had a baptized forehead. He was raised within the orb of the covenant and he had despised the riches of the covenant of grace and the very thing that Rahab had lacked in the days of her unregenerate life, Zacchaeus had at least had those. He had had the Scriptures. He had had parents who named him Zacchaeus and undoubtedly had sought to raise him in accordance with the Scriptures and in the fear of the Lord. But he had rejected all these things. He was lost.

Now, if you would have asked Zacchaeus if he agreed with that designation, he probably wouldn't have but he would agree with one thing and that was that he was short. He was small of stature. That's what our children know as well about Zacchaeus, don't you? The text says that he "was of little stature." Maybe he was about 4 feet tall and when he was in the press, when he was in the crowd of people wanting to see Jesus, his eyes could not lift themselves up above the shoulders of other people. He was short and he would have known it. In fact, he had sought maybe all his lifelong to overcome this. Maybe this was part of the reason why he had climbed up this corporate ladder to reach the very top, to overcome that shortness, being small of stature. But there is one respect in which we should be able to relate to Zacchaeus because all of us are small of stature when it concerns the Lord. There are too many people ahead of us in line, aren't there? All of us with respect to the demands of God's law. As was Zacchaeus, we are too short. This is what the Bible says about us in Isaiah 28, "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it." We are short with respect to the glory of God. In fact Paul, also a Pharisee, he later on would acknowledge that all have come short of the glory of God.

Are you perhaps one of those people who is seeking to overcome your smallness of stature, this handicap that you have? And you're thinking if only you could stretch yourself just a little further. If you could just reach a little higher. If you could just climb a little faster that somehow you would measure up? Well, the word of God says that with respect to the righteousness that God demands, none of us will ever be able to extend ourselves. No matter how hard we try, no matter how far we reach, no matter what we try

to do, we are out of the way. We need to come to the point where we're not only too short, where we're not only having obstacles in our life or some predicaments or some genetic makeup that we have to overcome but, no, we have to come to the point in our life where we agree with what the Lord says about us and to us. It's not just that we are too short, we are lost.

Zacchaeus had lost his original righteousness in Adam and he had by his actual sin, only increased his guilt more and more. He had altogether become guilty. You know, this word "lost," it's actually the word for "perishing." Lost is what a doctor says when he's been operating on a person and trying to resuscitate them but life ebbs away and he says, "We've lost him. We've lost her." Lost is what you say when you stand before the tribunal and you've sought to defend yourself before the judge and in the end, you have to throw up your hands and say, "The matter is lost. All the evidence is stacked against me." Lost is what you say about the people in downtown Paterson or New York City who are wasting their lives, who are addicted and can't help themselves. They are lost. They are perishing. But lost is also what applies to you and to me by nature. We are perishing. Our souls are perishing. They are lost. Think of a boatload full of people and the boat is sinking. These people are lost at sea. They are perishing and who can weigh the value of a lost soul? We see the lost around us, the lost in our families, the lost in our neighborhoods and the lost in our church and perhaps when you look at your own soul as God looks upon it and writes over it "lost," it's something to weep about.

Zacchaeus, short yes, but above all lost. Lost in the eyes of the Pharisees. Lost in the eyes of the Jews. But especially lost from the perspective of the Lord. He had lost God and God had lost him from a certain perspective. But you know, though Zacchaeus was desperately lost, he was not yet eternally lost. And though you too here tonight might be desperately lost, so entrenched in sin or perhaps so wrapped up in your own religion, your self-righteousness, you may be just as lost as Zacchaeus yet as of today, you are not yet eternally lost. Though you are lost, you can still be found.

The possibility is not yet entirely gone and the same was true for Zacchaeus as well. Surprising grace was our first point. You know, grace is always ultimately surprising. It's amazing, like John Newton said, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch," a lost person, like Zacchaeus, "like me." You know, it's as if the Lord seeks the worst in order to give them his best and thus to magnify the greatness of sovereign grace.

Surprising grace. But secondly, seeking grace. I already said that Zacchaeus was short and he had within him this desire to see Jesus who he was. That's what we read. He had this desire to see Jesus, who he was. Maybe he had heard that this Jesus was so unlike the other religious teachers who would turn aside from anyone like himself. Jesus was a friend of publicans and sinners. Maybe he had heard how this tax collector, Levi, in Galilee had been called by Jesus to be a disciple and how Jesus had received Levi. At any rate, something in Zacchaeus was intrigued, was interested, was curious. He wanted to catch a glimpse of this Jesus just to see who he was and when the press hinders him and when his small stature is an obstacle to him, he climbs up into a sycamore tree to see this Jesus, who he was.

Indeed, as the passage says, Jesus was to pass that way. Oh wonder of all wonders, Jesus was passing past that sycamore tree. "Zacchaeus." Do you hear that? Zacchaeus must have been startled. Who was calling his name? You know, even though Zacchaeus climbed up into this tree for to see Jesus, we don't read that he did see Jesus. All of a sudden we hear someone calling his name. We hear Jesus seeing Zacchaeus, "Zacchaeus," he calls with no evidence that Jesus had ever met Zacchaeus or that he knew humanly speaking who he was. But Jesus did know this Zacchaeus for he was to pass that way and you see who the real seeker in our passage is. Some people would say Zacchaeus is a seeker, he's seeking to see Jesus, who he is and from a certain perspective that's true but there is another seeker in this passage and he is an irresistible seeker. He is an effectual seeker. His seeking always meets its target. The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost.

You know, many people today they speak about Jesus as Savior. Jesus the Savior. They speak about him and indeed he is, he's a glorious Savior. He's a wonderful Savior but, you know, Jesus is beyond being a Savior, he is a seeker. You know, if Jesus had people seek and then he would save them, then matters would be lost but Jesus does both the seeking and the saving. Yes, it's true Zacchaeus was curious, he was inquisitive, he is what the Puritans would say an inquiring sinner. He is asking about Jesus. He wants to know more. He wants to see Jesus, who he is but, you know, there are many inquirers who never find him. If they find, if they catch a glimpse of Jesus in the Gospel, it's one of those passing glimpses and oh yes, they've seen Jesus. They've heard about Jesus and then they lose interest. Yeah, they might talk about it. It was a stage in their life. They did that sort of thing but they have moved on from then and so it would have been in Zacchaeus' life, just a passing interest, a passing curiosity if it had not been for another seeker, the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, even though Zacchaeus had climbed this tree, the Lord Jesus had come down from heaven to seeks Zacchaeus. Even though Zacchaeus had left Jericho and run up this tree, the Lord Jesus Christ had left the bosom of his Father to come and to seek sinners like Zacchaeus. He is the seeker of this passage. He has come to seek the lost.

So he calls Zacchaeus by name and notice just a few things about this call. First of all, it's a personal call. Notice he doesn't say, "You there, up in that tree." He calls Zacchaeus by name. He knows his name. He singles him out of the crowd, "Zacchaeus, you. I know you. I know your name. I know your down sitting, I know your uprising. I understand your thoughts afar off. Zacchaeus, you may have never seen me, you may have climbed the sycamore tree for to see me out of curiosity but, Zacchaeus, I know you. I know your name. Zacchaeus, blameless one." Oh, how that must have sounded. "Zacchaeus, blameless one." That's what Jesus calls him. Such a contradiction. Such a disjunction. Zacchaeus was everything but blameless. He was full of blame and yet the Lord calls him there. "Zacchaeus, I know you just like I knew Nathaniel when he was under the fig tree, I know you, Zacchaeus there in the sycamore tree. I have known you from before the foundation of the world. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me. Zacchaeus, I know you with a special knowledge."

Dear congregation, we need a personal call of the Lord in our lives. I know there are many that dispute that today. They want to keep things general and generic as long as you agree with the Scriptures and things like that. No, the Lord calls people individually, singly, personally. He calls you by name. No, it's not that he calls your name audibly in a vision of some sort. No, but you know what he does is he draws your portrait in his word, in the preaching of the word. He draws many portraits. Just read the Scriptures. We hear about all sorts of people: the weary, the heavy laden, the poor in spirit. These are names that the Lord gives in the Scriptures and he calls them, each one of them. Have you ever heard your name called in the Scriptures? In the preaching of God's holy word? Why is it that so few hear their name called?

There was a converted Jew, his name was Adolf Saphir. If you can ever get your hands on anything he has written, it's very worthwhile. This is what he says. "It's because we do not know ourselves that we do not recognize our name when Scripture or when Christ utters it but when the Spirit brings us to be of the same mind with Jesus, we hear him call us by a name which exactly describes who we are." You know, so many want to be called by the name "blameless one," I have attained the righteousness which is according to the law. Or "religious one" or "upstanding member of the Free Reformed Church." Oh, we have all these names and we want to be called by those names but the Lord doesn't call people like that, he calls the lost. He calls the weary. He calls the heavy laden. He calls the wretched. He calls the poor. And he calls on every page of the Scripture, he utters these calls and the problem is that so often we don't agree with what the Lord says about ourselves. The Holy Spirit needs to open that up to us and then we say, Yes, that malefactor, that thief on the cross, that harlot, that publican, that Paul, that Saul, that's me."

It's a personal call, "Zacchaeus," but secondly notice how it's an urgent call. The Lord doesn't say here to Zacchaeus, "There's something I want to discuss with you." He doesn't say to Zacchaeus, "Let me give you a few options." No, listen to it, he says, "Zacchaeus, make haste." You know, he's speaking here as a king to a subject. There is no time to waste. The matter cannot wait. It's urgent. There is no time to delay. "Zacchaeus, make haste." Why is it that so many in the church delay? They delay to repent. They delay to believe. They put it off like Agrippa for a more convenient season. When the Lord Jesus Christ calls, he calls in a way that is urgent. There is no time to waste. Today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. "Zacchaeus, make haste."

Thirdly, it's a humbling call. "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down." Why is it that Zacchaeus had to come down from the sycamore tree? Well really it's this: that Jesus had no use for him up there in the tree. Jesus needed him down at his feet where he could use Zacchaeus. He needs Zacchaeus on the ground. You know, Zacchaeus has been climbing all his life to make up for his shortness of stature, climbing the ladder, climbing the tree and now he says, "Zacchaeus, come down. Make haste. Come down. That's where I must deal with you, down here on the ground before me at my feet," and that's how it always is. We must come to the feet of the Lord Jesus, right there where he can use us. Right there where he can speak to us. Right there where he can see us and where his gaze goes right through our heart. There where he can instruct us. There where we look up at him

and look at his face and hear his lips and receive his orders. You know, kings, they speak to their servants and their subjects and so too here, "Zacchaeus, come down." It's a humbling call.

Fourthly, it's a royal call. "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down for today I must abide at thy house." Notice how Jesus says that. He doesn't invite himself in the sense that, "Zacchaeus, I'm looking for a place to stay. Could I perhaps use your house?" No, he says, "Zacchaeus, I must abide at thy house." Do you see how the Lord Jesus Christ takes control of Zacchaeus' home? You know, Zacchaeus was used to coming into people's homes and taking control of their money and of their riches and of their wealth. In fact, I'm sure he had evicted a lot of people in his life. "Your house is now mine. You owe too much and you can't pay. I'm taking your house." But now the tables are turned and Jesus, the King, is claiming Zacchaeus' house. "I have come to take control. Zacchaeus, nothing remains outside of my reach. I must abide at thy house." And Zacchaeus hears this personal, this seeking call of the Lord. You know, the Lord is still calling. The Lord is still seeking sinners even today. As long as we are in the day of grace, the Lord Jesus says, "Behold, I, even I do search out my sheep and seek them out." And how does he do it? Well, he does it in Providence, often through affliction, a stopping us upon our self-chosen ways, the paths that we have chosen for ourselves and he puts a barrier there and we are stopped and he uses that to focus us on our own impossibilities, on our own inability with respect to himself. He is the Lord of heaven and of earth. He is the Lord of our life.

But the Lord also stops us and calls us, especially through the preaching of his most holy word. When we come to church, he seeks sinners. He calls them by name. He draws the portrait of sinners under the preaching of the holy word and he says, "Sinner, poor and needy, come, come down and make no delay. It's urgent. Come down for today I must abide at thy house." You know, so many come to church out of curiosity. They want to catch a glimpse of Jesus from afar. It's as if they're in a sycamore tree of their own making and there they are hiding behind some leaves and yet, they want to catch a glimpse of Jesus but they're not necessarily here for Jesus. To catch a glimpse, a royal, a discovering, a searching glimpse of them and of their hearts. But you know there have been many a sinner who has come to church simply out of curiosity and the Lord has drawn their portrait and called them so effectually under the preaching of his holy word that they came down. They made haste and their whole house was the Lord's.

The Lord is still seeking sinners today. Do you agree with the Lord's verdict over your life that not only are you too short with respect to the demands of the Lord but you are lost, perishing? The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Is the Lord Jesus passing by Pompton Plains today, through his word and Holy Spirit? Are there sinners perched in fig trees perhaps having come out of curiosity but the Lord is calling them and saying, "Lost sinner, make haste. Come down for today I must abide at thy house"?

Thanks be to God, he is not only the Savior but he is the seeker and the Savior as we will see in our third point: saving grace. The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that

which was lost. The Lord Jesus does no half work. Imagine that, if he only sought sinners and they had to do the savings themselves. But no, he comes to seek and to save and so too Zacchaeus. He says it in verse 9, "salvation is come to this man's house." How do we see that salvation was there in the case of Zacchaeus? Well, we see it from 3 things: first of all, the urgent submission. The urgent submission. Zacchaeus made haste and came down. That's how it says it. "Zacchaeus made haste," verse 6, "and came down." Imagine that. Never before had he listened to anyone like that and now here his heart had been so radically changed that he obeys. He submits. He subjects himself to this royal Lord. And he does it immediately and urgently. He comes down. His resistance is gone. His pride he leaves up here in the sycamore tree. It's sovereign grace that is bringing this rich man through the eye of the needle. Do you know what? What is impossible with men is possible with God.

This man comes through the eye of the needle not because he was small of stature. No, but he had been made poor in spirit there by the Savior's effectual call. There he comes. He must decrease and the Lord must increase. There is in a moment under this effectual call of the Savior, there is this smashing of Zacchaeus' pride. All his objections, all his life of sin and shame, the Lord smashes it simply with the sound of his voice, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down." In a moment it's all gone. Just think of that. How did the walls of Jericho fall down? It was through the shout of the people but here the Lord Jesus doesn't even shout. This divine Son of God, all he has to do is call a name and he smashes the walls around Zacchaeus' life. They're all gone. There in a moment, this man is born again. Not of the will of man nor the will of the flesh but of God. He submits his whole entire life to the Lord Jesus Christ. The power of God is the only thing that can do such a thing. Zacchaeus is reborn.

So first of all we see an urgent submission but secondly, notice the joyful generosity in Zacchaeus' life. It's interesting, isn't it, the Lord Jesus comes into Zacchaeus' house and he doesn't even point out Zacchaeus' sin. He doesn't say a word about Zacchaeus' sin. He just comes into Zacchaeus' house. It's like the light when it comes into a dark and dusty room that has been dark for years, the light shows up all the dust and the dirt, doesn't it? So too with the Savior. Here he comes into Zacchaeus' house and everything is opened up. Everything is real as it really is. No more hiding. No more covering. No, everything is clearly visible.

Notice what Zacchaeus says, he says, "Behold, Lord." It's an interesting phrase, "Behold, Lord." That's what happens in the life of a person when the Lord Jesus Christ comes into your life and into your home. You say what Zacchaeus says, "Behold, Lord." The Lord sees it and you know it and you want him to see it and you can't hide it anymore and you say it with the Psalm that we sang together, "Search me, O God, and know my heart." Oh, it's painful. It's so painful to acknowledge that sin and that shame but oh, you don't want it any different. You want it to the surface. You want to make it right as much as in you lies. You want the power of the Holy Spirit. You are not ashamed. Yes, you are ashamed from a certain perspective but on the other hand, the Lord has made you new and you say with Zacchaeus here, "Behold, Lord. Behold, Lord." That is the language of a man or a

woman whose life is open. Who is transparent with respected to the Lord's gaze. "Behold, Lord."

Notice, all his life long, he was clutching onto his money, clutching his riches, hoarding it, gathering more and more and more. What does the grace of God do to Zacchaeus? "The half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." You know, grace changes the person. Oh, not that everything immediately is set right. I know it's a long process. So often it's years before the Lord reaches into our most innermost recesses of our hearts but eventually it does. The grace of God is powerful that way and it changes people. If you are greedy and the grace of God comes into your life, you become generous. If you are by nature and by your character a grumbler and everything you're grumbling about, when the grace of God takes hold of you, then you become at least in a measure, you are changed and you become a cheerful person from out of the grace that God supplies in your life. A person has a bad temper and who is angry and there are harsh words on his lips every moment, when that person has the grace of God come into his life there is a change. Oh, I know he can backslide. I know it's not all overnight. Here we see a dramatic change. Undoubtedly Zacchaeus still had to struggle with indwelling sin, we know that from other passages as well. "The good that I would I do not and the evil that I would not that I do."

It must have been true for Zacchaeus as well but notice the change, "half of my goods I give to the poor." What a witness that must have been when Zacchaeus knocked on the houses there in Jericho and there was a widow and he had robbed her and he said, "Widow, I have robbed you for 200 shekels. I restore you fourfold. Here is 800 shekels. I'm a changed man. The Lord Jesus Christ has taken control of my life and of my house and I must do it." And he'd see a poor man on the road and he'd say, "Here are some gifts. Here are some goods. Here, the Lord Jesus has given me his grace and I cannot but become myself a fountain of the same grace to others." Half of my goods. What a testimony.

What did the Pharisees do? Notice that, the Pharisees, this is what they do, they grumble and they say that this man has gone to be a guest with him that is a sinner. But do you know what? I think that they most of all grumbled because Jesus Christ in a moment was able to do what they could never do. You know, perhaps they had gone to Zacchaeus' house early on when he had left the synagogue and left the path of righteousness on which he had been growing up and they had tried to turn him back and said, "Zacchaeus, don't go there. You have to come back. You have to stay with the laws of Moses. You are, after all, a son of Abraham. You need to stay with the righteousness that is of the law." But it was all in vain. Do you know what Paul says? Paul says it exactly right, he says, "What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh." The Lord Jesus Christ could do with his word and with his Holy Spirit, he could do what none of the Pharisees, what all the Pharisees combined, what all their laws could never do with Zacchaeus. He could do it because his is the sovereign grace in the sycamore tree.

Urgent submission. Joyful generosity. But thirdly we see a glorious sonship. Listen to what the Lord says, "Today, salvation has come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham." Do you hear what the Lord Jesus says? He calls this Zacchaeus a son of Abraham. These Pharisees, they prided themselves, "We are Abraham's seed. We have Abraham as our father," and John the Baptist had to say that the Lord was able to raise up from stones children unto Abraham. They were the furthest things from the sons of Abraham. In a certain sense, they had not the faith of Abraham. But here was one who was a son of Abraham. You know, it's interesting when Zacchaeus was born again and the grace of God became too strong for Zacchaeus, right away the whispers of the Pharisees started, "This man has gone to be a guest of him that is a sinner." One author puts it like this, he says, "He had just for the first time in his sad life heard the melody of heaven, the sunshine of love, trusting sympathy when dark heartless and bitter suspicions marred the harmony and clouded the brightness which had visited him from heaven." You know, here he had been converted but all of a sudden, the persecution, despite the scorn, started and so it will be in your life too if the Lord changes you. It is through much tribulation that we must enter the kingdom of heaven.

But you know, Zacchaeus can bear it now because he has the Lord on his side and his Lord too, would be persecuted. In fact, he would be scoffed at and despised and Zacchaeus would share something of that. As Paul would speak about it, "The things that come after the suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ," those things that come after, Zacchaeus too would have some of that. But notice what the text says, "And Zacchaeus stood." He stood there, verse 8, "And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord." He stood. He could stand now because he had a righteousness which is not according to the law. He had a righteousness which is by the faith of Jesus Christ and he could stand. No matter what came against him. No matter what accusations the Pharisees made against him. No matter how they would continue to cast him out of the synagogue and bar him at the gate. He had the Lord Jesus Christ and he was by Christ's own saying a son of Abraham. He was now a son. He was heir with Christ. He was joint heir with Christ. He was a son and that's how it is when God effectually calls you. He makes you a son or a daughter of Abraham because you have that faith of Abraham and he brings you into the glorious liberty of the children of God. He is not ashamed to call such ones his brothers.

Here is Zacchaeus, such a surprising trophy of Christ's grace. He says to Zacchaeus, "I must abide at thy house." You know, later that day or the next day, we don't know when it was but the Lord Jesus had to leave Zacchaeus' house but in a certain sense, he abode there. He left his grace. He left his Spirit. He left his word. He left his call. He left the fragrance of his love there in Zacchaeus' house, "I must abide." And even though Jesus departed down that road from Jericho to Jerusalem, something abode in Jericho with Zacchaeus and his house. Tradition has it that later on, Zacchaeus became a minister of the Gospel in the city of Caesarea and we know that whomever the Lord converts, he remains with him until the end of the world. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever more. He had a work to do also on Zacchaeus' behalf and yet he would abide at his house. He saved Zacchaeus, the publican. He saves harlots and publicans. He said it himself in Matthew 21:31, that harlots and publicans go into the kingdom before self-righteous Pharisees.

As we close, 3 final applications. First of all, see here, dear congregation, the Savior of the lost. If you are here today and you're still trying by yourself to get rid of one more sin, to build up one more righteousness which is according to the law, to give yourself one more experience before you will submit to the call of the Lord, you have it all wrong. You have it all upside down and you can grumble and you can complain and you can point the finger at people like Zacchaeus and Rahab and the lost like that but you don't know that you too are lost. You are poor and miserable and naked. You are wretched. But see here the Savior of the lost. Zacchaeus didn't have to do one thing to earn Christ's regard, to earn his call. There he was in his sin and in his shame, hiding behind those leaves of the sycamore tree and Christ called him by name. See the Savior of the lost. He is still seeking lost sinners. He's seeking them today. He's seeking them under the preaching of the Gospel. You cannot be too lost for the Lord. You can be too self-righteous and yes, the Lord has to break us down and he has to get us to that point where we lose all that self-righteousness and we, as Luther says, we go lost at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ and no sinner who goes lost at the feet of the Lord Jesus will be lost because they shall be found. He is the seeker and the Savior of the lost. See the Savior of the lost.

Secondly, don't delay to obey. One last time, Jesus was passing through Jericho. He wouldn't pass that way anymore. In 7 more days, 10 more days maybe and he would be crucified and his footsteps would no longer pass through Jericho. "It's the last time, Zacchaeus, the last time the Savior is passing this way. Make haste." So many have objections. They have excuses. The Lord calls through his word and he calls these names, "Lost, wretched sinner, come down. Make haste." We have these objections. We have these excuses. But does the Lord really mean it? What if I'm not elect? What if I come down and it proves to be all in vain? We have so many objections, don't we? And the devil gives us even more. He whispers them into our ears, Your concern, your great concern needs to be that you don't delay. Make haste for your life's sake. That should be your overriding concern. Sinner, make haste tonight. Make haste, the Savior is calling. You cannot afford to stay there in the sycamore tree. No more preparation will do. No more experiences you can add. The Savior is saying, "Make haste. Do not delay."

But lastly, adore eternal mercy. Like I said, Zacchaeus came out of Jericho but the Lord Jesus Christ came from heaven. Zacchaeus may have wanted to see Jesus but Jesus laid his eyes there on Zacchaeus and he called him and he saved him with a perfect salvation. He was to pass that way. "I must abide at thy house." He came from heaven for Zacchaeus and for sinners like Zacchaeus. You know, if it had ended with Zacchaeus, he would have perhaps cast a glimpse on Jesus passing that way and he would've gone to his house and back to his tax collector's booth and, yeah, he would have seen Jesus, it would have been a memory, a snapshot in his mind that he would've carried along all his lost life. But thanks be to God, there was the Son of God who came from heaven to seek and to save Zacchaeus.

So here was this searching sinner and here was this seeking Savior and both were successful but because the Savior was seeking him, there's a hymn that says it this way,

"I sought the Lord and afterword I knew
He moved my soul to seek him, seeking me.
It was not I that found, O Savior true,
No I was found, was found of thee.
It was not I that found, O Savior true,
I was found, was found of thee."

Adore eternal mercy, dear friends tonight because Jesus Christ came not only to call Zacchaeus but he came to walk that way to Jerusalem for Zacchaeus. He came to carry that cross for Zacchaeus. He came to have his nails pierced and his feet pierced and his side pierced for Zacchaeus and there he hung on a cross. He had taken Zacchaeus out of the tree. One writer says it this way: he climbed into another tree for Zacchaeus and he stretched out his arms and he said to his Father, "Father, all that thou hast given me, I have kept them in thy name. I have paid for them. All whom thou has given me, I have kept and none of them is lost." You see, the Son of Man came to seek and to save and he went all the way to Calvary to prove it and there is the high priest of Zacchaeus. He hung there with Zacchaeus on his heart. That sinner Zacchaeus, he paid it for him and he still today saves to the uttermost. He saved lost sinners then and he saves them today and he will never lose them. Yes, by nature they are lost but he calls them. He takes them. He unites them to himself and he never loses them until all eternity. And Zacchaeus is now around the throne of God and his soul is praising this Savior, this seeker forevermore. It is sovereign grace, beloved, sovereign grace until the very end or there would be no heaven. But heaven will adore this Savior, this sovereign seeker and Savior of the lost forevermore. Praise be to the Triune God. Amen.

Let's thank the Lord.

Great and glorious Lord God, we confess to our shame that so often thou has called but we have been unwilling in our pride and in our self-seeking to heed thy call. But Lord, we pray that thou wouldst make it different in our lives that thou would call us irresistibly and sovereignly and smash our pride and break down all our walls and help us to hear thy call and to agree with the names that thou dost give for sinners and to say, Lord, I come, trembling, poor and needy, fearing at every turn but, Lord, I can no longer delay. O Lord, do what we cannot do of ourselves. Become too strong for us. Work mightily by thy Holy Spirit in each and every one of our hearts and may thy word not return unto thee void. Be pleased to look upon us in mercy, pardon all our sin and deal bountifully with our souls we pray and to thee shall be all the praise.

Lord, we pray thee to go with us into this week. Grant that thy people would be able to live lives that testify and witness that thy grace has become too strong, that from being people who held onto everything, they become instead people that above all testify in their life and in their walk that things have become different to the glory of the Triune God.

And Lord, do remember those who have yet no concern for their souls, who are not troubled with eternity or with their guilt or with their sin. Lord, bring thy word powerfully to bear upon them and let none of us, Lord, let none of us die in an unrepentant state but have mercy, Lord, before it is too late. And to thee shall be all the praise in Jesus' name alone, Amen.