

**MINISTRY BY MAIL**  
**Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship**  
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**Sexagesima Sunday, February 12, 2012**

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 498:1-4, 395:1-2, 404, 400, 496

Lessons: Ezekiel 34:11-24, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, Matthew 25:14-30.

Sermon Text: Luke 19:1-28

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Jesus tells us today *“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”* Zacchaeus, a short man who climbed a tree to see Jesus was one whom Jesus invited into his kingdom.

Because the crowd with Jesus was looking for him to establish an earthly kingdom soon, he had to tell them – again – that was not the kind of kingdom he came to establish. But he reminded them – and us – that believers in Jesus have much work to do before he does come to welcome all believers into his kingdom in heaven. Although true Christianity is concerned about what happens after an earthly death, Christians have much to do on earth.

Today,

**AS JESUS APPROACHES JERUSALEM FOR THE LAST TIME,**  
**PEOPLE ARE CONFUSED ABOUT HIS REAL MISSION.**

1. From the story of Zacchaeus, we see that Jesus came to save the lost.
2. Many expected Jesus to set up an earthly kingdom at this time.
3. Jesus’ parable helps dispel the idea of an earthly kingdom and reminds believers they have work to do before Jesus comes.

Zacchaeus was a Jew, a physical descendant of Abraham. He was also one who had some curiosity about Jesus. He must have heard about Jesus since *“He wanted to see who Jesus was”*. That does not immediately tell us he believed in Jesus as the Savior. He was a short man and couldn’t see over the heads of others in the crowd so *“he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.”*

*“When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.’”* It was God’s will that Jesus would tell him this. He was a tax collector. *“All the people saw this and began to mutter, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a ‘sinner.’”* Knowing Jesus, we know that he would have continued his teaching there. We can rejoice that Jesus wants to come into our homes, too, into our lives, into our hearts each day. That happens as we look into and read, study and memorize the Word of God. When Jesus came into Zacchaeus’ life, this led to repentance. Although people despised Zacchaeus as a tax collector and thought poorly of Jesus for going to his house, we read *“But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.’”* We do not know how people benefitted from this humble confession and the generous deeds which came from this confession of sins and his desire to amend his life. Because Zacchaeus was *“a son of Abraham”* Jesus came to save him. But all who believe are spiritual children of Abraham, as Paul writes in Galatians 3:6-7: *“Consider Abraham: ‘He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.”*

When Jesus said ***“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost”*** we remember that Jesus came to save us, too. We were lost in sin. It is by God’s love and grace alone that he has rescued us, just as he rescued Zacchaeus. We had no part in our being saved, as the song reminds us: “Amazing grace! How sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; Was blind, but now I see.” It is by God’s Word that we have been saved, just as was Zacchaeus, by hearing and believing what Jesus had to say to him.

Luke goes on and makes a connection between this event and the attitude of the people who were following Jesus. ***“While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.”*** Jesus was heading up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, which would be his last. It was at this Passover that he would be crucified, as he had recently prophesied: ***“Then he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken.”*** Luke 18:31-34

But those with Jesus were expecting him to go to Jerusalem and set up a kingdom. Perhaps they thought he could overthrow Herod and the Roman government. That isn’t such a far-fetched or impossible thought when you realize what has happened in places such as Egypt and Libya in the last year and is happening in other African and Middle Eastern countries: the people – mostly ordinary citizens – are rebelling and hoping to overthrow long-established governments.

Jesus’ kingdom, however, is not to be an earthly kingdom. It was never meant to be and it never will be. He had been preaching about the Kingdom of God for all his ministry and not even his closest disciples always fully understood what he said. Luke two chapters earlier reports: ***“Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, ‘The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.’”*** Luke 17:20-21 Jesus unmistakably told Pontius Pilate at his trial: ***“My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.”*** John 18:36. Jesus’ kingdom is now his ruling in the hearts of all who believe in him. His ruling will be evident to all who ever lived on the last day when he returns to judge the living and the dead.

The kingdom of God is within you. Christ will not have an earthly, temporal kingdom. Yet many visible churches seek to gain power in the world. They seek to be important influences in the world, and they “lobby” government and seek the favor of men in order to do great things on earth. Under our government in recent years, “faith-based organizations” are sought out and rewarded for doing great earthly, temporal things for people. This is part of what has been called “the social gospel”. This parable has a command and an example of what believers should do on behalf of the kingdom of God. True Christian churches must be concerned first of all about what happens to every human being after death, and must preach the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, a message of repentance and belief in Jesus as Savior.

Because the people misunderstood his kingdom, Jesus speaks of his kingdom and especially of the preparation work which all who believe in him must do.

He doesn’t talk about setting up an earthly kingdom in Jerusalem or Israel. He will not appear in Jerusalem at some time in the future to judge all people. Matthew tells us ***“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.”*** Matthew 25:31-32 Paul tells us ***“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.”*** 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. But the people were expecting some kind of earthly kingdom. Little did they know – or understand if they HAD been told – that Jesus would be crucified like a horrible criminal and buried just before the coming Passover Sabbath day.

So in the parable, Jesus makes it clear that his followers have work to do.

***"He said: 'A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return.'"*** This kind of event in which a king was appointed by another country was familiar Jewish history. Herod the Great, king when Jesus was born and father of the current Herod, the king who would condemn Jesus, had gone to Rome in 40 BC to plead with the Romans to restore him to power. There he was elected "King of the Jews" by the Roman Senate. He was not popular with the Jews, just as in the parable. In Jesus' parable, the nobleman then ***"called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas."*** A mina was equal to about 50 days wages. So ten minas would be about half-a year's wages for a typical worker, quite a sum of money. Each is told ***"Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.'"***

***"But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' 'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' 'The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' 'His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' Then comes the wicked, lazy servant: "Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.' His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' 'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!' He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away'."*** The "piece of cloth" in which he wrapped his money, called in the King James Version "a napkin" is really a handkerchief, a towel for wiping the perspiration from the face. That reinforces the laziness of this servant. He didn't work very hard.

To make an application of this part of the parable, we must realize that every one of us has been given gifts to use in God's kingdom. Those may be the kinds of gifts you heard about in our Epistle lesson today. Those may be gifts of being able to talk about the Word of God and especially the Gospel message to people, including even our children and grandchildren. Every one of God's children has a calling in his kingdom. Jesus gives gifts, generous gifts, both spiritual and physical to his followers, to all who claim to follow him and those gifts are to be used to do his work. We might ask ourselves every day: What do we do with those gifts? What did I do today for Jesus' kingdom? So we see also that Christ's disciples who are waiting patiently for him are also actively working for him during his absence.

The Jews did not really want Christ as any kind of king. That became obvious at Jesus' trial when the Jews said ***"we have no king but Caesar"*** John 19:15 and when they said ***"Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews."*** John 19:21.

Jesus' last words in telling this parable are prophetic, both for judgment day and for his coming days in Jerusalem: ***"But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them--bring them here and kill them in front of me."*** All enemies of Jesus – Jews and Gentiles – will be killed eternally in hell on judgment day. ***"After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem"*** despite what is waiting for him there – death. He died for us, in our place!

May we in this parable find encouragement to be about our heavenly Father's business as we wait for the final revealing of Jesus' kingdom. Amen.