

WHY DO BE - Luke 19:1-10

What are famous movie one-liners?

If the Gospels were a movie based on the books word for word, what would the key line be? Out of the words of Jesus, what quote would still resonate with you as you pick the popcorn kernels out of your teeth?

I want to turn to Luke 19 tonight, because it is a passage that contains what many theologians consider **THE** most important statement made by Jesus in the Gospels. But it's not **THE** statement made by Jesus at the heart of this series. It's one of **THREE** declarative statements made by Jesus at the heart of this series WHY DO BE.

We get the **WHY** from **Luke 19:10**:
“the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.”

We get the **DO** from Jesus' declarative statement in **Matthew 16:18**:
“on this rock I will build my Church.”

We get **BE** from Jesus' statement about his disciples in **John 13:35**:
“by this everyone will know you are my disciples: if you love one another.”

*To build the church Jesus envisioned,
To love the world he died to save.*

This week – WHY. “The world he died to seek and save.”

Luke 19:1-10

In Luke is the last personal encounter we see Jesus have before entering Jerusalem and going to the cross. And the Holy Spirit inspired Luke to end with verse 10 – the reason he was going to Jerusalem, and the reason he came to Earth – **to seek and save the lost**.

He was “making his way through” Jericho. Another translation says he was “**passing through**.”

Jesus always found purpose in the place where he was.
WHY PRODUCES PURPOSE

It starts simple... “**he looked up**”
Before you save, you have to seek. It helps to look...

WHY SIMPLIFIES

“**Look up**” is can be so simple. Eye contact. A smile.
Proverbs 15:30 says: “*A cheerful look brings joy to the heart of another.*”
We want to do extravagant big things.
God wants us to focus first on doing little things with extravagant love.

WHY GIVES VALUE - To people. To passing by.
Every single person you pass... Jesus sought, saved, and died for.

WHY COMPELS YOU

*“Come down **immediately**. I **must** stay at your house **today**.”*
Jesus was compelled by his WHY.

Verse 7 – *“**All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”***

“They all” – speaks to the Jewish spirit of the day – narrow and tribal, “us and them.”
The culture feeds us lines in the sand that create “us” and “them.”
What do we do when we identify a “them?”
We retreat to our corners. We dig a trench and get to warfare.

But how much more does the Church as a whole draw lines with “the Church” and “the world?”

“a notorious sinner”

Being a sinner doesn't make him an object of Christ's **scorn**.
It makes him an object of Christ's **seeking**.

“Notorious” = he's a “well known” sinner.
It's out in the open. It's easy to look down on.

The parable that precedes this in Luke 18 is that of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector.
“I thank you that I'm not like other people... especially THIS GUY”
That “sinner” prayed: *“God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”*
Jesus says only one went home justified and covered in grace.
And it wasn't the Pharisee.

Jesus' point? Better to be a penitent, notorious sinner, than a prideful, naïve one.

LEPERS.

Were considered so sick and so contagious that they were booted from society and forced to live in leper colonies.

What is leprosy? It's a complex disease that develops over many years, but simply put:
it's being numb to pain or injury.

Lepers injured themselves or could be injured by an outside source and never know it.
Animals could eat their fingers in their sleep and they'd never wake.

I don't think it's a coincidence that in Luke 5, earlier in this same Gospel, Jesus heals a leper.
I don't think it's a coincidence that immediately after this in the same chapter that Jesus calls Levi- a tax collector just like Zacchaeus- to follow him and be his disciple.
Then for good measure he goes and throws a party at his place with his tax collector crew.

The Pharisees are triggered- scripture says they complained bitterly to the disciples –
“*why do you eat and drink with such scum?*”

‘**Such scum.**’ Spiritually they treated them like lepers. Unclean and to be avoided.
But I believe the account of the leper and Jesus’ rebuke of the Pharisees are both in Luke 5 for an important reason – spiritually it was the Pharisees that suffered from leprosy.

To be blind to your own sin and a common need for grace is to be a spiritual leper – numb to what’s killing you. You don’t see your own wound and need for healing. You aren’t aware of your own need for grace.

Again and again he **met the lost at tables.**

Two verses in Luke start with “**The Son of Man Came...**”

Luke 19:10 – to seek and save the lost.

Luke 7:34 – eating and drinking.

Luke 19 Jesus is saying why he came.

Luke 7 is other people talking... this is how they saw him when he came.

This was Jesus’ rep: eating and drinking.

So it’s safe to say when Jesus went to Zacchaeus’ house in Luke 19 that he did the same thing he did in Luke 5 at Levi’s... he sat down to eat and break bread with him and his friends.

What’s our impulse when it comes to “those people.” The “them” to our “us?”

We want to flip tables.

But Jesus didn’t do that.

Where did he flip tables? In the Church.

Out there? He hosted sinners at tables.

The Church will finally turn tables when it learns to host people at tables instead of flipping them

He seeks and saves us so we can share a table with him eternally.

HEAVEN – a wedding feast. A table will go on as far as the eye can see.

In **Luke 14** a man says “blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the Kingdom of God.”

Jesus replies with a parable of a banquet...

The host prepares a great banquet but his guests make excuses as to why they can’t come.

The servant reports this to his master and the master says to fill the banquet with the poor, the

crippled, the blind and the lame. The servant does this and there’s still room, so the master says

“*GO out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.*”

We are servants and we’ve been given our task by our master.

We’ve been called as servants of God to fill the banquet table of Heaven.

Our WHY is to take as many others with us to Heaven as we can.

The Church is an organization that exists for the people outside of it.

It's not some fortification that separates "us" from "them."

"Us and them" gets replaced by "seek and save."

Jesus had 112 interactions in the Gospels.

10 happen in the Church building.

The rest happen out there.

Mission statements for organizations give them their WHY.

Pamper's – happy, healthy baby development.

Nike – to bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete in the world.

Jesus – to seek and save the LOST.

The object of Pamper's why: babies.

The object of Nike's why: athletes.

The object of Jesus' why: **the lost**.

That's his mission statement.

Jesus says in John 17:18 – ***"The same way you gave me a mission in the world, I give them a mission in the world."***

Do you walk in the same mission? **Is Jesus' WHY my WHY?**

Not walking in the WHY God has for you is dangerous place to be.

It's notable in the Gospels that instances of Jesus' anger and frustration isn't directed at the lost.

When Jesus gets angry in the Gospels it's at the found who had become self-righteous, bought into the lie of "us and them," and lost the plot.

Thousands of people die daily, many not having heard a clear presentation of the Good News. Sure, they've heard of Jesus, but their knowledge is based on hearsay, half truths, and assumptions. Surely this is the greatest injustice we walk among daily, and it's on our watch.

How do we seek and save?

We build the Church.

The Church is an organization that exists for the people outside of it.

When Jesus says to seek and save the lost – we ask how.

His answer: build the Church.

When He says build my Church and we ask how...

His answer: have love for one another.

When we ask how is loving one another going to see the lost saved?

His answer: remember John 12:32

Jesus was going through Jericho to Jerusalem. To be raised on a cross to die.

Zacchaeus climbed a tree to pursue and see Jesus. Jesus was already going to die on a tree- the cross- for him.