

## Jesus Came to Seek and Save the Lost, Part 1

Luke 19:10

Well, as we come to God's word this morning and consider the significance of the resurrection for us today, I want to direct your attention to a single verse in Luke's gospel, which is Luke 19:10. Luke 19:10. You can turn there in your Bibles. And Luke 19:10 says, "The Son of man came to seek and to save the lost."

That final sentence, "The Son of man, came to seek and to save the lost," in one sentence, Jesus has summarized the mission of the Christ. He's boiled down the mission of the Messiah down to its bare essence. His whole life, his entire life's work, everything he has said and done, every miracle he has performed, every demon he's cast out, every sickness and disease that he has healed, every truth that he taught, proclaimed, preached, to all comes down to this: Jesus came to earth on a search and rescue operation. He came to seek lost sinners. He came to save them from the gravest danger known to man.

That is the faith that hovers over every single man, every single woman, every, every boy, every girl, which is death. And not just physical death, the dying of the body, but a spiritual death, an eternal death, suffering the just wrath of a holy God for sins in hell, a due punishment for sinning against a holy and perfect God.

That's what he came to do, is to seek and save. A rescue mission, to search out and rescue those who are under this condemnation, facing this grave danger. And that mission statement, Luke 19:10, we understand that that would be an utter failure if Jesus could not overcome his own death, would it not? In fact, in only one week after making this very statement, Jesus himself would be hanging on a cross, dying.

So such a grandiose mission statement about saving the lost, ring pretty hollow, wouldn't it, had not Jesus risen from the dead? His, had his body remained in the tomb, his entire Messianic project would have been an object of total scorn, a cause of mockery, a cause of laughter. It'd become the running joke. Ultimately, the whole story would be

relegated to dust, dustbin of history had he not risen from the dead.

But here we are 2000 years later and we're still talking about it, aren't we? Why is that? Because Jesus has risen from the dead. Because that tomb is empty. God robbed the grave. He raised his son from the dead and after Jesus appeared to his people, God took him up to heaven, forty days later. He had him sit down at his right hand. He is there awaiting his return. He's interceding for his people. He is building his church. He is actively reigning, ruling from on high until God sends him back to claim what is his and to put the world to rights and distribute justice and recompense and reward.

So since the tomb is empty, and since Jesus Christ has risen from the grave, since he has conquered death, it would really serve us well to go back and pay close attention to what he has said, and listen very carefully to all that he has taught. And this sentence in Luke 19:10, "The Son of man came to seek and save the lost." That is a summary of his entire life's work. And so, because it's a

summary, there's a lot that we're going to do this morning that's going to summarize the elements in that verse, in that mission statement.

You may notice in your Bibles that that sentence begins with a subordinate conjunction, which is the word "for." So it's not just "the Son of man came to seek and say the lost," it's "for the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost." In other words, the "for" provides an explanation of what Jesus has said previously.

We see in verse 9, namely this, "Today salvation has come to this House since he also is a son of Abraham." And then it's followed by the explanation. "For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost." To the many people who were listening in on this occasion, the explanation was entirely necessary. They need to understand this because what was happening in front of them didn't make sense.

It wasn't obvious to them that this deplorable character such as Zacchaeus, whom they all knew in Jericho, he's the chief tax collector. He's basically like the tax

commissioner over the whole city in the region of Jericho. This man had betrayed his own people to get a chance from the Romans to get this tax franchise of the entire district. He got the chance to rob his own people, the Jews. And he hired subordinates to shake people down, take away their hard-earned income, roughing some people up who didn't participate or cooperate.

So it's hard for everyone who's listening into Jesus on this occasion to see how this Zacchaeus could be a "son of Abraham," that is on his way to heaven. How can this be? It actually offended them, deeply offended them that Jesus would receive this man's hospitality. Even worse, as we read in the passage that he'd seek it out.

So Jesus explains his actions here. He's trying to help the people resolve the tension that they feel by telling them all about his mission. "For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost." That is really good news. It's really good news for anyone who knows that he's lost, right? For those who don't see themselves as lost, well, the news is not so good for them. They don't find it

to be particularly good news at all. You might say it's lost on them.

The scene before us is a bit familiar. We kind of remember going back to Luke chapter 5, you can turn there if you'd like to, Luke 5:27. But same kind of sentiment among the people when Jesus saved another tax collector and this one was named Levi. Levi, we know him as Matthew. He wrote a gospel, the Gospel of Matthew.

But in Luke 5:27, it says that "after this Jesus went out. He saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax booth and he said to him, 'Follow me.' Leaving everything, he rose and followed him, and Levi made him a great feast in his house. There's a large company of tax collectors and others." Put that in air quotes, those are the sinners.

"And they're reclining at the table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, 'Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?' Jesus answered them, 'Those who are well have no

need of a physician, but those who are sick. I've not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.'"

You can hear it's the same kind of thing that's going on in our text in Luke 19:10. It's only those who know that they are sick. They are the ones who are glad to see the physician. If you don't think you're sick, you're offended when the physician shows up and wants to examine you. It's only those who know that they are lost. Only they await a seeking Savior, and it's only they who welcome him with joy and with gratitude when he comes.

So since Jesus has risen from the dead, and since he has in fact overcome death, since he's conquered the grave, it really does behoove us to consider very carefully what he has said, what he has taught. His mission statement is a really good place to start.

Whom does Jesus seek and save? You say? That's easy. The answer's right there in the text, the lost. The word "lost" there is a verbal noun. Verbal noun is known as a participle. It's from the verb *apollymi*, *apollymi*, which in

the active voice means to destroy, to kill, to bring to ruin, or to bring to nothing. *Apollymi*. That's the kind of lost we're talking about here.

It's far worse than remember as a child when you lost hold of your mom's hand in the grocery store and you felt that terror stricken feeling of being lost. And sometimes you ran up to a complete stranger and hugged the leg and realized, "Oh, it's not mom!" Far worse than that. This kind of a lost is to be given up to destruction. To see yourself on a conveyor belt of life heading into a mist, and you can't get off the conveyor and you don't know in the mist where that conveyor is going to fall off and you're going to fall to destruction. That is the idea here.

The participle here is in the perfect tense, so it's talking about one who's in a state of lostness. It refers to the fallen condition of sinners. He is talking here about the condition of fallen humanity. Those who are under divine condemnation because of their sins, those who are in a state of destruction of ruination, who are being brought to nothing. And this condition of being lost is so severe,

and so beyond any human remedy that people are hopelessly lost. They are about to be destroyed, completely ruined. Their fate is utter futility unless someone intervenes for them, unless someone interposes to save them.

Luke, in his gospel, he doesn't generally describe the lost with abstract language. He actually puts these stories about lostness in concrete terms. He paints the story of lostness and lost sinners with vivid strokes of living color. It's beautiful throughout this gospel to see how Luke narrates the story. So think about in your own mind's eye, think about a person that you would consider to be lost. Come up with a person, whoever it is, whatever condition that they're in. Maybe it's someone you know. Maybe it's someone you've seen as you've been driving by and you look and say, man, that person is lost. Maybe it's yourself remembering yourself before Christ. Whatever comes to mind for you.

A lot of images like that came to the mind of Luke. In all of his study, in all of his investigation of the facts of the gospel as he compiled this gospel narrative, as he

wrote this Scripture, he has illustrated the kind of person Jesus is talking about in a summary term like the lost, an abstract term like the lost, Luke puts it into living color.

I'm going to have you turn to a few passages in Luke's gospel as we go through this this morning, but for the sake of time, I'm not going to read every single one thoroughly. But if you let through your eyes, scan the passage while I kind of describe it or summarize it, it's going to help you imagine several categories of lost people whom Jesus came to seek and to save. This just helps to fill in the gaps of what does he mean here when he says he came to "seek and save the lost."

Imagine for somebody who's lost in a physical sense. Think about someone who is, seems to be so far gone physically, that that person is completely and utterly dependent. We've seen people like this who maybe through an accident, maybe through something that happened to them in the womb or happened to them through accident or disease that they have no real hope of living what we would call a

normal life. Might consider someone who is a, in a paraplegic state or vegetative state to be lost in this kind of a physical sense.

Well Luke portrayed people just like that and he showed the power of Christ to do things like heal the paralytic. If you look at Luke chapter 5 verses 17 to 26, you can see that he's done just that in healing a paralytic. May remember that the paralytic was only able to enter into the crowded house where Jesus was teaching because he had been lowered through the roof. They had to cut out a section of the roof and lower their friend on a pallet through the roof down onto the floor right in front of Jesus. And Jesus saved that man.

He saved him to such a degree that the man not only walked out of that house under his own power, which was absolutely stunning and a miracle, but he went further and forgave his sin. In fact, that's where he started. He considered the man's sin problem to be a deeper problem than any physical issue he had, and so he started there. He

said, "Son, your sins are forgiven you." But he also healed the paralysis.

Luke portrayed also someone in, we might say, a vegetative state, it was worse than a vegetative state. He, in Luke 7:11 to 17, he portrayed someone there as being dead. Dead and on his way being carried to the funeral. That's the widow's son who was dead. He was lying on a funeral bier and he is at the city of Nain and he's on his way to his own funeral. And Jesus stopped the funeral procession, touched the, the funeral bier and raised that man from the dead, gave him back to his mother.

Those of those who are lost pictured in Luke's gospel is being lost and we can consider them as lost in a physical sense. Jesus' power to seek and to save those is demonstrated clearly. He has the miraculous power of God to save that condition of person. Think about others in Luke's gospel who are lost in maybe a social sense. You can go back to Luke 5 again and verses 12 to 14.

People who are lost in a social sense are in a condition, either intentionally or incidentally, that no one really wants these people around. That is, socially they are excluded. They're lost in a social sense. They're, they're a social pariah, castaway, excluded from the community. And in Jesus' day, the quintessential example of this kind of a lostness, this kind of a person was a leper, those who had leprosy, any kind of a skin condition. Maybe not the, the, condition that we know is leprosy, but that condition and many others besides.

Jesus encounters this leper early on in his ministry, socially excluded due to a visible skin disease that was impossible to hide. They were required to live far away from everyone else, and thus, they were excluded from society, which was a huge blow. They were shoved to the outside, to the fringes and the margins of society, excluded from community life and religious life.

They couldn't come to the temple, couldn't offer sacrifice, couldn't go to synagogue, couldn't hear the, the reading of the law, the reading of the prophets, the

exposition of the Word. They couldn't be in church. We all kind of felt some of that during brief time in COVID, didn't we? Being cut out from the church, cut out. True grief to me to be cut out from the Lord's Supper, to not be able to participate in that together. Well imagine having a skin disease and being shut out.

Jesus encountered this man in Luke 5:12 to 14. This man was "full of leprosy." It says Jesus, with a touch, restored him completely. He sent him to the priests. They were the public health officials. Get a full medical examination so that he would be officially cleared. And so being officially cleared, he could be legitimately restored back into the community, restored back into fellowship and community and business and religious life, reenter society. So those are people who are lost in a social sense.

We can imagine people who are lost in moral terms. In some cases, moral terms referring to enslavement to sin, enslaved to greed, corruption, depraved, calloused people. In other cases, we can see on the other end of the spectrum, moral lostness due to a blinding spiritual pride

that they are bad to the core, but they don't know it because they think they're great. Those who consider themselves religious, innately good, morally superior to everyone.

Moral lostness is at either end of that spectrum. It's kind of ironic, but Luke, in Luke, chapter 7, if you go to Luke 7:36 and following, he brings together two such people on either end of that spectrum. In one narrative, he brings them together. Both of them morally lost, but at two opposite ends of the social spectrum.

Jesus is there having lunch at the house of a Pharisee named Simon, and this is a man who thought so highly of himself that he failed to notice how significantly he, he had he had insulted Jesus. He just neglected to show common hospitality. And you may, may think that's a small thing. Maybe in our day it is, but in that First Century world, Mid E, Middle Eastern society, to neglect to show hospitality was actually a calculated insult.

So here's Jesus insulted by this man. And Jesus noted the oversight says in verses 44 to 46, he uses the oversight of hospitality from Simon to Jesus, and he uses that to show Simon, by contrast, the evidence of true love in the woman who was kneeled before him. That notoriously sinful woman, she had crashed the party. She was known in town, probably because she'd made her living as a prostitute. That she'd been radically saved by the gospel at some point, and now she has come to worship Jesus.

She weeps over his feet. She, she realizes she has soaked his feet wet, so she wipes them, his feet with her hair and annoyances feet with perfume. She's come to worship Jesus. We see here that it's not her that's really found the Savior. It's the Savior who's found her.

He's revealed her, he's drawn her out, he's pulled her in. He sought her, he found her. And now he assures her at the end of that passage, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace." One Sinner morally lost as the carnal and the irreligious, at the carnal and the irreligious end of the spectrum. Jesus saw it, found and saved her. And the other

sinner, he's at the socially acceptable end of the spectrum. The religious end of the spectrum. He's, though, in the same state, morally lost. But he is blinded by religious pride that leaves him impolite, inconsiderate, insulting, even critical. Will the scales fall from his blind eyes? Will you see his corruption in time?

One more category we can mention. They're probably more. I just want to summarize a few, though. One more is the one who is lost supernaturally, lost supernaturally, handed over to demonic power. You can turn to Luke 8:26 to 39 and you see this one who's handed over to demonic power. He's under complete total control of demons because of demonic possession. And Luke describes this man who is supernaturally lost. He is severely demonically oppressed and possessed.

It says, Luke says that for a long time he'd worn no clothes, hadn't lived in the house but among the tombs. There's a parallel count over in Mark. Mark is so descriptive in Mark chapter 5. It says that no one, he says that "no one could bind this man anymore, not even with a

chain, for he'd often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, broke the shackles in pieces. And no one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day, among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out, cutting himself with stones."

This guy is in a bad, bad way. He's like a, a scene in Halloween or some, some haunted imagery. And when you look past the ghoulish aspects of this scene, you stop to remember, wait a minute, this is a fellow human being. It's an image bearer of God who is displayed this way. And you realize how pitiful this man is, how hopeless his condition is it. It's supposed to evoke our compassion for him, to see him as so terribly lost.

Jesus asked for this man's name. Demons took over and they answered, "Legion. For we are many." Legion is a Roman military unit, about 6000 soldiers. So the demons are using this name because thousands of them had flooded this man's body. This guy's about as lost as anyone could get. Physically, he's torn apart. Socially, he's excluded.

Morally, he's depraved. He is possessed by a legion of demons.

We can see people like that today, lying on the streets of our cities. They seem gone, don't they? Hopelessly lost, enslaved to drug use and degraded by horrible sins to get the drugs that they crave that are destroying them. They give up caring for themselves. They care, they don't care what anybody thinks of them. They've lost all sense of decency, propriety. What if all the homelessness we see in our time, great drug epidemic on our city streets, which sociologists and psychologists have judged to be either a social or a psychiatric problem. What if their diagnosis is way, way off?

What if these are cases, right in front of our eyes of demonic possession? No material solution to this, right? No amount of money you can throw at the problem. No kind of pharmaceutical that can deal with the immaterial or the supernatural. And that's the case in dealing with demons. It's true about dealing with the sin problem too, which is

underlying every single one of these issues. Only Christ saves the lost.

It's amazing to find out that Christ actually sought out this poor wretch, this demon possessed man. Turns out this man was the reason that Jesus and his disciples sailed across the sea of Galilee in the first place, so Jesus could find him and save him and then, amazingly, redeploy him as an evangelist to reach his own people.

So who did Christ come to seek and to save? The lost. No matter what category of lost, no matter how lost, no matter how far gone they are, no matter how far they have wandered, no matter how hopeless their condition seems, no matter how ruined they are, no matter what consequences they fall into, no matter how depraved they look, how degraded they've become. He came seeking the lost, and he came in order to save the lost.

All the pictures of these people that I've just briefly surveyed here, those suffering physical maladies, those who are cast out, socially separated, ostracized.

Those who are corrupted, morally degraded, and blind, those who are bound by malevolent supernatural powers. All of these are pictures; they're just meant to drive us to a deeper reality of the effect of sin. Sin breaks people. Sin corrupts people. Sin puts them under a supernatural power, a delusion. It intoxicates them with lies and distracts them by things that will destroy them.

All these pictures of lostness are designed to illustrate the condition, true condition of every single lost sinner. No matter how well they dress up in public, no matter how good they look on the outside, no matter what the surface condition appears to be, sin has a hold of the human race.

That picture of lostness includes me, it includes you too. And if you'll accept the diagnosis, no matter what the situation is, you will be ready to see the physician. You'll be ready to see him when he comes. You'll be ready to welcome the seeking Savior.