

Series: Becoming like Jesus and Living for Others

Process over Product; Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-10

Sermon by Lead Pastor Paul Joslin

Waterstone Community Church, Littleton, Colorado

Sunday morning, February 1, 2026

A reading from Luke 19, verses 1 through 10: "Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short, he could not see over 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 to him and said, 'Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today,' so he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, 'He has gone to be the guest of a sinner,' 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 the lost,' the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Paul: Thank you so much, Sage. She is one of our awesome students, and we love having our students as a part of worship and leading us in scripture. We have been in this series called Becoming, where we have been having conversations about the start of the year and who we are becoming as individuals, but also who we are becoming as a church and as a body of believers called to this specific time and this specific moment to become more like Jesus and live for others. That is our mission. That is who we are as a church. That is everything that we want to run a lens through of how we operate and what we chase after and who we are trying to become. We want to become more like Jesus and live for others, and in this series, Becoming, we have been walking through some values we have as a church, some North Star principles that guide how we feel like we can live this out as a community, and so last week, Hannah covered this idea that we believe together is better. We believe that the church is meant to be a community, not a place where you just attend, but a place where you belong. We have looked at things like presence over programming, that we want to be about the Spirit of Jesus and presence with each other as opposed to just having great programs that you can be a part of.

Today, we have another value that I want to point us towards, but what we have done throughout this series is we have not started with a value and just preached through the value. We want scripture to be our authority, and so we are going to look at the story of Zacchaeus today, and it is going to lead us into the value that we are going to examine at the end of our time together, but here is where I want to call our attention first, because as we have been walking through this series about becoming, one of the questions that we have been wrestling with, that we have been dealing with, is this idea that you are always becoming someone. You are always being formed into someone. Your habits, your stress, your relationships, your wounds, your patterns. None of us is standing still. All of those things are working together to form us into someone. The question is, who are we becoming?

When you start thinking about that paradigm, I think that one of the ways as a pastor, I have seen people engage with the idea of transformation, is they place this expectation on themselves that looks

something like this. I have used an image similar to this one before, but our faith expectation is that as we grow to become more like Jesus, it looks like a straight line, up and to the right. As we follow Jesus, maybe that left corner down there where the axis would meet, then that is the place where you become a believer, and then from that point on, it is just trajectory curved upwards, and you are supposed to become more like Jesus. The places where you struggle, the messes you have, the questions you struggle with, all of those things are just supposed to like magically work themselves out through what the Spirit does in your life or through going to church regularly or attending Bible study or whatever it might be, and that by the end of your life, you have just had this trajectory curved up and to the right, but now most of us know that that is not actually how growth works. The reality is, that is our expectation, but reality looks way more like this, that as you are growing, there are moments where you like, “Oh, I finally had that breakthrough. I no longer struggle with this,” and then like two months later, you are like, “Oh, I guess I still struggle with that,” and you get to these places where the questions, they come back up, or you feel like you have fixed some sort of habit, or you finally figured out what God’s love does in your life, and you feel like you have arrived in some sort of space, and then you realize, “Oh no, I feel like I am just back where I started,” and growth and transformation feels way more like the squiggly line, with the ups and downs and the back-tracking and the steps forward and the moments of struggle and then coming to a new place and then realizing, “I still have further to go.”

If we are not careful, I think one of the things that happens to people as they try to become more like Jesus is that we think that when we look at these two paradigms, that God expects the straight line from us, and we think if we do not have the straight line, then we’re displeasing God, that He is upset with us, that He is frustrated, that He is angry that we are not showing up the way that we are supposed to, that when the setbacks happen or when the old habits show up again, then God is displeased or frustrated or angry. That growth means there is no more struggle, there is no more mess, and when that does not happen, we feel like we have to show up, hiding the certain parts of ourselves that are on the backslide, or that when we show up in a church community, we can’t be honest with each other about the places that we are struggling. I have said this before many times, but Christians are so, so good at saying, “Oh, I really used to struggle with that thing,” and we are so bad at saying, “I am struggling with this right now,” because I think we have this expectation that we are constantly supposed to be improving, and so we manage the appearances, and we try to hide the parts of ourselves that are struggling, and we try to make sure that we present to everyone else this picture that, “No, I am becoming more like Jesus,” and then quietly, behind the scenes, the people who know us best or the people we work with or the people who are in a small group would say, “I think you are struggling, but you just will not say it.”

To be honest with you, as a pastor I feel that pressure a lot. I try to be vulnerable. I try to be honest about where I am, but man, there is constantly this pressure to bring my polished self before you or to God, and to pretend like, “Oh yeah, that’s not as bad as I really think it is,” or “Yeah, I am still struggling in that area, but I know I am supposed to be more patient, I am supposed to be less angry, I am supposed to be more trusting, and so I will just present that side of myself to others,” and in reality, there’s much more turmoil going on internally. I think one of the problems with this paradigm is this, that many of us, we have a relationship with faith where we believe that faith is something we are supposed to master, that I am just supposed to become an expert at faith. I am supposed to become a master of the way of Jesus. I

am supposed to make sure I get it all figured out, I clean myself up, and I do not struggle anymore, and what we miss is that faith is much less about something we master, and faith is way more about something that forms us. It is something that forms us, not something that we master, and when we misunderstand that, we have a relationship with faith where honestly, we become exhausted, and we become worn out, because we feel behind. We feel like we should be further along that path, and what I want to tell you today is that becoming who you are becoming is not about achieving some polished, spiritual version of yourself. Becoming is about who you are becoming as you walk with Jesus, and sometimes that walk is going to look confident, and sometimes that walk is going to look incredibly clumsy. Sometimes that walk is going to look faithful, and sometimes it is going to look like you are barely holding on, and that is okay. I think that is actually the invitation that Jesus has for us this morning, and so if you have ever felt like your life looks more like the scribbled line than the straight line, if you have ever wondered whether or not God meets you in the middle of your process, if you have ever wondered whether or not you can belong in church or in Christianity or following the way with Jesus, if you are too unfinished, then I want to invite you into Luke chapter 19, where we are going to meet a man named Zacchaeus whose life looks way less like the straight line and way more like the squiggly one.

So, open your Bibles if you want to follow along there, your phones, or you can follow along here. It will be on the screen as well. Luke chapter 19, verse 1: “And when Jesus entered Jericho, He was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus.” Now here is something that’s really important about this story. The names in the story are incredibly important, so for instance, Zacchaeus’s name is, “clean,” or “pure.” That is what his name means, but then you notice what we are told about Zacchaeus, who was supposed to be clean or pure. “He was a chief tax collector and wealthy.” Now this means two things about Zacchaeus right off the bat. His name means “clean,” and it means “pure,” but then his person, how he is identified is as not just a tax collector, which we know tax collectors are already the bad guys in the story, but he is the chief tax collector of Jericho, a really wealthy and prominent city, which means that he is incredibly powerful and incredibly wealthy and absolutely despised and hated by everyone in town, because he has sold his soul for wealth and power and status. He has sold out and betrayed his people for the people of Rome. He has given up everything that he has been called to, that he has been raised in, his family, his friends, his culture, in order to achieve power and status for the empire that is oppressing his people. I mean, he is a traitor, and so he would be incredibly despised, but Luke surprises us, because in verse three, he says that Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was.

So, there are rumors spreading that Jesus is coming to town, He is coming through Jericho, that He is going to make an appearance in the city, and word begins to spread, because people have heard that Jesus is someone who does incredible miracles. He has incredible things to say. Everybody is coming out of their houses. They are flooding the streets. A parade is forming to watch Jesus walk through the town, and Zacchaeus is curious himself. He wants to see Jesus too, and so he leaves probably what was a very wealthy house, and he goes out to the streets to try to join the parade and the group of people that is following Jesus, and then as he gets there, it is not too hard to picture. You have been to a parade before, and as people are trying to jockey for position, they want to get closest, whether it is that they get a better view, or they want to get better access to the candy if they have kids. Like that is the strategy. No one will let Zacchaeus through.

They are making sure that their shoulders are tight against each other and that he can't get through to see, and we are told that he is short, but that is not the main point. The main point is that the crowd will not let him through. It is giving us a picture of what his life would be like. These people hated Zacchaeus, so much so that when he wanted to see the rabbi Jesus, they are like, "Uh-uh. Yeah, look at you. You are a little too short to see. We are going to make sure that this is as unenjoyable for you as possible," and so they are not making room for him, and some of you have felt that before. You've felt the curiosity, "I want to see Jesus. I want to experience Jesus. I have heard rumors about what Jesus could potentially do for my life," but then there is something keeping us back. There's something holding us from access to Jesus, and for some of us, it is internal. It is our doubt. It is our questions. It is our shame. It is our guilt that we feel like is blocking our way. For some of us, it is external, and maybe there are other people in your life who you feel like, "What if I showed up in church or if I showed up in small group with that unpolished self, with my true self? People would not accept me," and so they're blocking your access to Jesus. Maybe you grew up in a church where your pastor or your parents let you down, and you are wondering, "Is Jesus really worth it?" We have all experienced that reality where we are curious about Jesus, but we are not really sure if we want to get to Him or if we can get to Him. We have been kept away.

So, then we're told this, that Zacchaeus, this being his reality, they will not let him through, because he was short, and he could not see over the crowd. "So, he ran ahead and he climbed a sycamore fig tree to see Him, since Jesus was coming that way." So, he figures out where Jesus is going through town, and he runs ahead, which is an incredibly undignified thing for a man in ancient Israel to do. There were not very many marathon runners in ancient Israel, because what would happen is you would have to hike up your robe and expose the parts of yourself that you are not supposed to expose to people, and they would see your legs and your thighs, and so it was not proper for a man to run, and then climbing into a tree is something that is childish. A grown man does not climb into a tree, and so Zacchaeus in this moment is doing two things that make him completely undignified, but desperation will do that to you, and so he runs ahead in this completely undignified way, and he climbs a tree just so he can catch a glimpse of Jesus, and then he is told that as Jesus is making his way through town. Verse 5, "When Jesus reached the spot where Zacchaeus was, He looked up," and you have to imagine for a moment, this whole crowd of people is following Jesus, and suddenly as He is walking along and maybe teaching and talking to people and interacting with children and different people who need things from Him, He just stops under a tree and looks up and sees a wee little man hiding in a tree, and He just pauses, and He says one name, "Zacchaeus."

You have to also imagine at this moment, remember, the people that are following Jesus absolutely despise and hate this man, and they hear Jesus say this name, and there has to be a moment where they think, "Oh yeah, this is where the rabbi gets him. This is where the rabbi tells him off, points out all of his flaws and all of the things that are wrong with him, tells him how evil of a person he is for selling out to Rome," and they are expecting Jesus to come down hard on him, but instead, Jesus says this, "Come down immediately." Do you hear the urgency? "For I must stay at your house today." Jesus essentially invites Himself over to his house with urgency. "'I must stay at your house today,' and so Zacchaeus came down at once and welcomed him gladly."

Can you imagine the shock on the crowd? Jesus is here. He is teaching. He is preaching. He is performing miracles, and then suddenly He looks up to your enemy, and He says, "Oh, that is the person

is house that I want to stay at today.” You have to imagine the crowd is thinking, “Really, this guy?” This is the part, “You could stay with anyone, Jesus. I will let you stay at my house. You are going to stay with him?” But what we see is that Zacchaeus, he has come this short way. He has moved towards Jesus an inch, and then Jesus goes the rest of the way. Zacchaeus runs to find Jesus, to figure out where He is. He climbs a tree, but Jesus comes all the way to him and says, “I want to go to your house today,” and notice in the story, Zacchaeus has not repented of anything. He has not made a confession or a promise. He is a traitor and a sinner and someone who is unclean, and Jesus says, “That’s who I want to spend the night with. That is the person that I want to have dinner with. That is where I am going to sleep tonight.”

I want you to hold on to that image, because it is something that is deeply important for the story, and we are told that he comes down immediately, and he welcomes Him gladly, and I love that phrase, because you have to realize that it has probably been years since anyone has invited themselves over to Zacchaeus’s house. I mean, this is a person who has lived in isolation and loneliness, because he is so hated and despised, and he is overwhelmed with gladness that someone actually wants to have dinner with him, but not everybody is rejoicing. In verse 7, it says, “All the people who saw this, they began to mutter.” Began to mutter. “Jesus has gone to be the guest of a sinner?” You can hear the detestation in the voice, the muttering. We know what this muttering sounds like. It is the kind of judgment that happens under our breath. We are like, “Oh my goodness, like they are talking to that person?” Or “That person is someone who is a part of their family?” It is the muttering of judgment, of thinking that there is no way anyone with any respectability would ever be caught dead with that person. That is the muttering that is happening in the story, and then in that space, I want you to notice again the name. They do not call Zacchaeus by name. They put a label on him. “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

I think one of the things we love to do as people is that we love to slap labels on people. We love to look at other people who are different than we are, that have different values than we do, or have different ways of living than we do, and we just love to slap a label on them and say, “Well, yeah, this is what that person is,” and if we can just encapsulate them in some sort of box, put them inside of the box and slap a label on it and say, “This is what they are like. This is the type of person they are. This is their tribe,” then immediately we create distance from them. We say, “We do not have to love them. I do not have to understand their story, because they are a fascist. They are a communist. They are too woke. They are illegal. They are an addict. They are not a believer,” and so we can just say inherently, write them off, because they are a sinner. There is something wrong with them, and that is what they’ve done to Zacchaeus at this moment. They are judging Zacchaeus, and they are judging Jesus for being in this person’s presence, but you notice Jesus. He does not keep a safe distance from messy people. He moves towards Zacchaeus. He invites himself to Zacchaeus’s table. He wants to eat with him, and in that culture, staying at someone’s house, fellowshipping with them around a table, that meant acceptance and relationship and even giving that person honor. Do you understand the shock that people would have about Jesus approaching this man, this traitor, this sinner, and saying, “I want to eat with him,” but here is what is so important to the story. When we say that Jesus is not endorsing all of Zacchaeus’s actions, what He is doing is He is refusing to let Zacchaeus be defined by them. That is very, very different.

Then the story shifts to inside the home, and we are not told what happens at dinner. We are not told the conversation that Jesus or his disciples have around the dinner table with Zacchaeus. All we are

told is the response to Jesus pursuing this sinner. It says in verse 8 that Zacchaeus stood up, and you have got to imagine, it is this awkward moment. Like everybody is sitting around a table, and in those days, they did not have chairs. They are lying down, reclining, and as the conversation is taking place, suddenly something stirs in Zacchaeus where he has to rise up and stand up in front of everyone and declare something. It is the awkward moment, like in The Office, where Michael Scott stands up and says, “I declare bankruptcy,” and everybody is looking at him like, “What are you talking about, dude? This is awkward. This is not what we’re doing here.” That is Zacchaeus at this moment, and he says, “Lord, here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor.” So right out of the gate, right off the bat, he is saying, “Half of my wealth is walking out the door right now. There are needy people in the world that need what I have, and I’m just giving them half of everything I own.” Immediately, his wealth is cut in half. His security, his stability, everything that he has sold his soul for is just walking out the door, and then not only that, he says, “and if I have cheated anybody, if I have wronged anyone, if there is any injustice that I have done towards anyone else, if I have cheated anyone out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

Now I want you to do some quick math on that. Half of his wealth, he is just like, “I will give it away.” Then if I cheated anyone for a certain amount, let’s say I cheated them out of \$10, well I will give them \$40. This man is going into debt. He is giving everything he has away and then some, because Jesus has changed something about his heart. He is not simply changing his relationship with money. He is completely and entirely changing and reordering his entire life. He is saying, “If this is who Jesus is, if this is what he can do for me, then I will give all of it away and then some to be with Him.” Zacchaeus is not just tweaking his budget. He is giving everything away, and if you really understand the Old Testament, there is conversation about if you have cheated people out of things, in order to make things right, you do a fourfold restitution. There is some part of Zacchaeus that no matter how far away he has gone, he still remembers who God is, and what you see is that when Jesus steps close to you, even in your mess, He does not just come in comfort and say, “Oh man, you have made some mistakes, and things are bad. Like, we will just figure it out together.” No, Jesus steps in, and He provides the comfort. He provides the safety, but for the sake of transformation and change, and that is what happens.

Jesus’ response to everything Zacchaeus says is this: “Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house,’ and I think when we see that, we can think that this idea of salvation is that, okay, Zacchaeus gave all of his stuff away, and that means now he is going to heaven. That is not entirely what Jesus is saying. There are implications for eternal reality about salvation, but it has a present and temporal reality as well. What Jesus is saying is that something has happened in Zacchaeus’s heart. He has been rescued, he has been restored, and the community around him is going to feel the ripple effects of this for the rest of his life. He is changed. He is healed. He is being made whole, because this man that everyone labeled a sinner, Jesus gives him a new label. This man is a son of Abraham. He’s one of God’s people. The person who has been excluded, who has been told they are too sinful, they are too much of a traitor, they are too evil, they are too oppressive, they’re too wrong, Jesus says, no, you don’t understand. He’s the person who is actually in because of what has happened today, that he is part of the family of God. He is part of the community of God, and he is no longer to be excluded. Jesus relabels his name and his identity. He moves him from being called sinner to saint. He is saying he is one of the family.

Then Jesus wraps the whole story up and his whole mission in his life in verse 10, “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost. This is the heartbeat of the story, and this is the heartbeat of the gospel. Jesus does not just wait for the lost to find Him. He seeks them out. Wherever we draw the line, or however we expect the line to look, Jesus does not expect the line to be straight up and to the right. His whole mission, his whole understanding about what He had been sent to do was to seek and to save the lost.

Now we always label this idea of lost with a spiritual reality, that they are lost, and they do not know who God is, and that is true, but there is a deeper reality to it. What we are essentially saying is that they are lost, and they do not know the way to God. What the whole idea of loss is, it is not a derogatory statement. It is saying that you have lost your way. You are wanting to get back to God, you hope to get back to God, and you do not know how to get there. You do not know your right from your left. You do not know right from wrong. You are lost. It is as if all of us are just battering around the world and the universe, trying to figure out where to go and how to get there, and we are lost, and we do not know the way, and Jesus came to help and show us how we can become the people who we were always intended to be, to tell us how we can come home. He says, “That is the whole deal. That is why I came. That was my entire mission. That was the entire goal of my life, that the people who make mistakes, who rebel, who live in sin, who live absolutely horrible and detestable lives, that is who I came for.” That is the main idea of the story, the purpose of this story, what Luke is trying to tell us. You remember when I said, hang on to that moment about how Zacchaeus has moved part of the way towards Jesus, and just Jesus moves the rest of the way. If Zacchaeus moved an inch to get to Jesus, Jesus came the mile. That is the whole point of what is happening in this story. Jesus is saying, “I must go to the lost. I must go to the place where the lost are,” because grace meets us where we are.

For some of us, that needs to rewire your understanding of Christianity, because you have either been handed a version of faith or you have handed a version of faith to others that says you need to clean yourself up before you can come to Jesus, that you need to fix your life before you can step into a church, that you need to get your act together before God will accept you. I cannot tell you the number of times as a pastor, I have had conversations with people who have told me. “Oh, what do you do for a living?” they say. “I am a pastor, and they say, “Oh, okay, I don’t know what to do with that,” and I say, “That’s all right, let’s just have a conversation,” and then as we have a conversation, they say, “I do not think I could ever set foot in a church.” I say, “Why?” “Because I have done this, or this has happened to me, or I have made this choice, or I just feel like if I ever walked into a church, then I don’t know, like God would be so angry at me that maybe he would just end me right there.”

I do not know where that messaging has come from. I mean, I think some of it is the inadvertent message we have given to the world. I think some of it is our relationship with guilt and God, but so many of us live with this belief that in order to walk through those doors, to come into a church, to enter the presence of God, we have to fix ourselves in order to be accepted or loved or valued by the creator of the universe, and this story in Luke 19, and really all of the stories of Jesus’ life, is pushing against that reality. Luke 19 tells us the opposite. It says that Jesus comes to you. Salvation comes to you. Jesus entered Zacchaeus’ life before he was saved. Zacchaeus was still a sinner to everyone else, but Jesus was not afraid of his mess. Jesus was not repulsed by his story. Jesus did not keep him at arm’s length.

Jesus moved in and closed the gap, because grace meets us where we are. Grace meets us where we are, and that is the kind of church that we want to become Waterstone. It is a place where we understand that in our stories and in the stories of the people who are not here yet, that grace moves and meets us where we are, and it is why one of our values is this. It is that we want to be a church that pursues process over product. So many of us come to church, and we assume that we need to be a finished and polished product. Now at Waterstone, what we are saying is that no, following Jesus is a process. It is a process, so we do not expect anyone to have it all together. We bring our whole messy selves to church, honest, messy, hopeful. Waterstone needs to be a place where everyone is welcome, everyone is safe, but no one stays the same. When we say, “everyone,” that is not just some sort of posture that we want to slap on the walls or have a slogan on our t-shirts or anything like that. We want to live out that posture, because that is the posture of Jesus Christ. Everyone means everyone, and I want to be so explicit here, because I think what we assume when we say, “Oh yeah, everyone is welcome at church,” is we naturally go to the place, “Well yeah, everyone who thinks like me, everyone who believes what I believe, everyone who makes me comfortable, of course they would be welcome here,” but this is pushing a bit against that instinct. When we say everyone means everyone, we mean it the way Jesus meant it, no fine print, no footnotes, no asterisk, no “as long as they do this.”

Everyone means that the person who knows every worship lyric to every song and the person who is not even sure they believe any of this yet is welcome here, the one who walked into the church this morning smiling and reveling in the idea they get to worship God, and the person who sat in their car for five minutes because they were not even sure if they could make it through the doors, the one who has been here for fifty years, and the one who is here because they promised someone they would try church one more time. Everyone means the stable and the stretched thin are welcome here, and speaking of stretched thin, it means Cowboys fans like me are welcome here. It means Broncos fans like you, and it even means Chiefs fans if we can stomach it, and the people who do not care about football at all, they are welcome here, even if I do not understand you. Everyone means that I’m doing great, and the one who says, “I am one bad week away from everything falling apart.” Everyone means the single, the one for whom it is complicated, the married for thirty years, the recently divorced, and the widowed. Everyone means the straight and the LGBTQ are welcome here. Everyone means the rich, the broke, the I am doing fine, and those who are just pretending that they’re doing fine. It means the blue collar and the white collar and the I don’t know what collar I am; I am just answering e-mails all day collar. It means the skiers and the snowboarders are welcome here. The self-righteous progressive and the culture war conservative are both welcome to worship here, the ones who are convinced that this country is being ruined by those people, the ones who are convinced it is being ruined by those people. Everyone means craft coffee people and Folgers people, means the Apple people who judge Android people and the Android people who feel morally superior for not being sheep. Everyone is safe means those born in the USA, those who migrated here legally, and the undocumented. It means the vaccinated and the unvaccinated, and those who still want to re-litigate it in the lobby. We love you, but please don’t.

Everyone is welcome and everyone is safe means that this is a place for saints and skeptics and sinners, and speaking of sinners, cat people, you are welcome too. Everyone means everyone, and here is why I want to be so specific about that. It is because when we say everyone means everyone, we all have

this natural inclination to go to the place where we say, “Oh yeah, I want to, that person, I love them, they are so exciting to be around. They just, they make me feel safe,” and we have the exact same tendency to mutter about someone else, and just like the people in the crowd at Jericho, and say, “Really? That person is welcome here?” We have got to break through that inclination, that desire, that space where we believe that church is just for the people who have it all figured out, because church is not a clubhouse for people who already have it right. Luke 19 in the life of Jesus says that He walks straight toward the person everyone else is muttering about, and He says, “That is the person I want to stay with tonight.” Everyone is welcome and everyone is safe means that we are all in process, and that is the kind of church we want to be, but I also want to be abundantly clear that this process that you are in does not disqualify you from Jesus. It is actually the exact kind of person Jesus came to pursue, to seek and save the lost, but that also means something else.

The end of this value is equally as important. It says everyone is welcome, everyone is safe, but no one stays the same, and that is the other half of the value, and I want to say this with just as much clarity as I said, everyone is welcome and everyone is safe, because everyone is welcome, everyone is safe, process over product does not mean that anything goes, and it does not mean you stay exactly as you are forever. It does not mean that as a church we are affirming every desire, every pattern, every addiction, every way of coping, every way of treating people, every lifestyle. Everyone is welcome, and everyone is safe, but no one stays the same, because when Jesus enters your life like He did Zacchaeus, everything changes. Everything changes, and that is not legalism or judgmentalism or a bait-and-switch. That is the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is called discipleship. That is the promise that as you follow Jesus, He will make you more like Him, because you need to be less like you, because the Jesus who came to Zacchaeus’s house is the same Jesus who changes Zacchaeus’s heart. Zacchaeus gave up everything to follow Jesus.

That is how you know the change is real, because when Jesus enters your life, he does not just comfort you. He changes you. Jesus changes everything about you. Everything, and following Jesus will cost you everything. Zacchaeus does not get to bargain. He does not get to say, “Oh, Jesus, you’ve entered my life, and now I will give some of my stuff away, or I will like change this, but can I hang on to this?” He just changes, and I am sure that was a process. I am sure that did not just happen overnight. There was a lot of restitution and reconciliation that had to take place, but his entire relationship with his identity, his security, his power, he places on the altar before Jesus. Following Jesus will cost you everything. It will cost you your pride, your control, your bitterness, your secret sin, your self-justifying narratives, your need to be right, your need to be admired, the identity that you adhere to. It will change the stages of your life, and in some places, it will change by giving up something for God, and in other times, Jesus will call you to give up everything for God, but when He calls you to give up everything for Him, you will gain everything in return. You will gain life, a true life. You will gain freedom and family and wholeness and a future and a savior who seeks you when you walk away and who does not blame you or call you by a name or a label, but who gives you a new identity. That is the kind of church that we want to become.

One of my favorite authors, a person by the name of Ronald Rolheiser, tells this story in one of his books that I have loved. He tells the story of two monks, and one of the monks is an older monk, and one of the monks is a newer monk. He is just started the journey of trying to become more like Jesus, and then the younger monk, he comes to the older monk, and he says, “Essentially, Father, I am starting out on this

journey, and I feel like I have given up everything to follow Jesus, and I still feel like I am struggling.” He is essentially wrestling with the paradigm, right? He’s like, I expected to become a monk and just have this straight up into the right trajectory for my life, and I feel the pull of the devil. I feel the pull of lust. I feel the pull of temptation. I feel the pull of all of these things that I thought I would give up and I cannot get out of,” and he says, “Do you still struggle with that? Forty years ahead of me, fifty years ahead of me, is that still your struggle? Will this ever stop?” and the older, wisened monk says, “I actually, I do not wrestle with the devil the same way that I used to. The devil has grown old with me, and all of his arguments, all of his temptations, they have grown old too.” He says, “Now I wrestle with God.” The younger monk is flabbergasted. He does not really understand what he is saying. “You wrestle with God. How could you hope to wrestle with God and win? What is even the point of that” and the father says, “No, you misunderstand me. I wrestle with God not hoping to win. I hope to lose.”

What I love about that story is this. There are moments in our lives where transformation looks like fighting against temptation. It looks like fighting against the pull of the devil or pull against old patterns or habits or stumbling blocks, and we wrestle to overcome those, and that is transformation, but what the older monk had learned and what so many of us need to realize is sometimes transformation looks like the struggle is actually with God, not because He is our enemy, but because He is refusing to let us stay small. He is refusing to let us stay hidden. He is refusing to let us keep control. He is refusing to let us stay in the old patterns and lifestyles that harm us, and in those instances, the wrestling looks like not trying to win but trying to learn how to lose and finally let grace have its way with us. I think that is the invitation of process over product. It is absolutely we will struggle with the things of this world, but the bigger call is to allow grace to have its way with us,

So today, as we come to the table, your invitation is to come not as someone who has it all together. We are coming as people who are in process, people who need mercy, people who are being healed, people who are in need of saving, rescue, restoration, being made whole by the presence of Jesus. The invitation as you come to the table today is to allow the table to be messy. It is Jesus’ invitation, just like He gave to Zacchaeus, not that I will go and eat with you, but you are welcome at my table, which is a whole other level of invitation, and so as you come today, maybe you are curious, you are unsure, maybe you are even hiding. The table is a reminder that Jesus has come to you. If you feel like the crowd is muttering or judging or keeping its distance, this table is a reminder. Jesus is with you in the process, and you can bring your messy, hopeful, honest self to the table today.

As you come, if you are a person in need of gluten-free elements, they are available in the center back here and in front right up here as well, so the center aisles are gluten-free, and the side aisles are not. At Waterstone, communion is always messy. It does not really make sense. We wander. We talk. It is not something that has to be somber. It is a moment to quiet your heart and come to the table and understand the gospel of Jesus Christ, that He is for you, that He has sought you, and that He wants to save you, and if you are a follower of Jesus, then you are invited to that table, and so I invite you to pray with me now and then come as you are ready.

Heavenly Father, Lord, for those of us who are here today who feel like we have been caught in this process of struggle, of frustration, of doubt, of questioning of not really sure where we stand, Lord I pray that the story of Zacchaeus would remind us that we believe in a God who came to seek and to save

the lost, and that invitation is for everyone, that grace meets us where we are. God, for those of us who have forgotten that truth, I pray that your Spirit would remind us of that today. God, for those of us who have maybe held that expectation over others, may you break our hearts for the lost today. May we carry the posture of Jesus towards those whom we would rather judge. Lord as we come to the table, may we understand the grace of God that is for us, that while we were still sinners, Christ Jesus died for us, and so as we come to the table this morning, we pray that truth would rest on our hearts and our souls and our minds. Speak to us, Jesus, by the power of your Spirit. It is in Christ's name we pray, amen. You may come to the table as you are ready.

I want to close with just one quick and simple thought. If you read scripture long enough, you begin to see patterns and places where things are emphasized over and over again, and I mentioned today that Zacchaeus running is a really important part of the story, because men do not do that. There is another story in the gospel of Luke where someone who is not supposed to run does so, and it comes in the story of the prodigal son. Luke chapter 15, verse 20: "So, the son got up and went to his father, but while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him, and he ran to his son. He threw his arms around him, and he kissed him." That is the heart of the Father for the lost. It is why he sent Jesus to seek and save the lost. It is why Waterstone, that if we become more like Jesus, it is supposed to be our posture towards the world as we become more like Him. So, if you would, now please receive the benediction.

Heavenly Father, may we the people of Waterstone this week live into that calling. May we understand that this idea of us being in process is not just for us. Although it is good news for us, it is good news for the world, and so may we this week become more like Jesus and reach out to seek and to save the lost, in Jesus' name, amen. You may go in peace.

45:19 minutes

Edited by Tom Kenaston

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