

Our One Chance

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[0 : 0 0] Luke chapter 19, I'm well aware that we've had church and I don't even need to preach, but I'm going to, so that's the way it works. Luke chapter 19, beginning in verse 1, says this, he entered Jericho and was passing through, and behold there was a man named Zacchaeus, he was a chief tax collector and was rich, and he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not because he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way, and when Jesus came to the place he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus hurry and come down, for I must say stay at your house today. So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully, and when they saw it, they all grumbled. He's gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, behold Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold. And Jesus said to him, today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham, for the son of man came to seek and to save the lost. Now look at verse 11. As they heard these things, he, speaking of Christ, proceeded to tell a parable because he was near to Jerusalem and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. The changing of the life of Zacchaeus serves as a wonderful introduction to some truths about what we ought to be doing and what we ought to be doing right now. He told the parable that I want to talk about this morning because he was near Jerusalem.

He had been making his way near to Jerusalem. And there is a powerful passage in Luke chapter 9 verse 51 that's kind of a turning point of sorts in the life of Christ when it says, when the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. Do you know what it means to set your face?

That's what you say to football teams before they hit the field. Set your face. Put blinders on. Focus on the task at hand. We see chapters in the life of Christ. One of them was when he came out of the desert. Having been tempted by Satan a sermon for another day, but the temptations that he faced there in the desert were the same kind of temptations that people were going to continue to try to put upon him throughout his ministry. But he came out of the desert settled in what he was to do in ministry.

And he was not fazed when other people tried to tempt him to be something that he was not because he had already faced it. And now in Luke 9 51, he turns his face toward Jerusalem. That means he turned his face toward the cross. That means the focus of raising up the disciples and empowering the establishment and the foundation of the church and those type things had begin to make a turn toward the most important reason that he came to the earth. And that was the cross of Christ. At the time that he set his face, he was about 120 miles from Jerusalem. Now, as he speaks, he's in Jericho. Jericho is 20 miles from Jerusalem. He's getting closer. And the next event Luke records after this parable is the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. So he is there. So one reason that he tells this story is his location and the timing of what he was doing. The other reason he tells this parable is because of people's expectations.

Now in verse 11 that I just read, it says they. That they there is somewhat unclear. Because we know that the Pharisees and the Sadducees have always been critical of him. And so there's no doubt that it could speak to them. Is it the disciples that it's talking about? Is it the followers that it's talking about? Is it both or all of those folks? I believe specifically the disciples, but in a larger sense, all of those. The Messiah that they had hoped was about to enter Jerusalem. And they had connotations in their mind of what kind of kingdom they wanted to establish.

[4 : 57] You want to know why Peter tried to cut the man's ear off in the garden? One, he was messing with Jesus. You don't mess with Jesus. Number two, he didn't want anything to come in the way of the establishment of the kingdom. And he thought that that was what was happening. And so there's a combination of things happening here. And as he took over his kingdom upon his arrival, how would he do it? They had anticipated it. They had read prophecy about it. They had conjured in their mind of what it meant. So how in the world was it to take place? What he did in Jerusalem would be a surprise, even to those that he had given more detail to. And the delay of what they anticipated for his kingdom would need to be dealt with. And he deals with it in this parable. It's true for them.

Thank God, thank God, through the Holy Spirit of God, it's true for us. I want you to notice what it says in Luke 19, verse 12. He said, therefore, a nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. Some theologians believe that this is a speaking of a modern day event. Because when a ruler was established in a smaller entity that was under the influence of Rome, they had to go to Rome to get permission to be the ruler. And so to get his kingdom. And so he's hitting on a news bulletin of the day and speaking from that, a relevant illustration to where they are.

He said this, a nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and then return. Calling 10 of his servants, he gave them 10 menas and said to them, engage in business until I come.

But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him saying, we don't want this man to reign over us. When he returned, having received the kingdom, he ordered these servants to whom he had given the money to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by doing business. And the first came before him saying, Lord, your mena has made 10 menas more. And he said to him, well done, good servant. Because you've been faithful in very little, you shall have authority over 10 cities.

And the second came saying, Lord, your mena has made five menas. And he said to him, and you are to be over five cities. And then another one came saying, Lord, here is your mena, which I kept laid away in a handkerchief. For I was afraid of you because you're a severe man. You take what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow.

[7 : 36] He said to him, I'll condemn you with your own words, you wicked servant. You knew that I was a severe man, taking what I did not deposit, reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank and at my coming? I might've collected it with interest. And he said to those who stood by, take the mena from him and give it to the one who has the 10 menas. And they said to him, Lord, he has 10 menas. I tell you that to everyone who has more will be given, but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slaughter them before me. Well, that'll wake you up there at the end of the story, won't it? This parable is a prophetic foretelling of the accounting that is coming to take place in the future. It will take place for the disciples in which he spoke.

It will affect the Christian in that day. It'll affect the Christian in our day. It will affect the one that chose not to receive Christ. That's who he describes at the end. And the nobleman that travels away is Christ himself who ascended into heaven about 2000 years ago, almost. Make no mistake, he told us again and again that he will return. And as we anticipate his return, we need to recognize the truth that he want us to know in this story. Because we live in the meantime. So what do you do in the wait? In the meantime, acknowledge some truths. One is we have been left a trust.

We've been left a trust. He left us with a trust, an investment of opportunity with responsibility.

And that opportunity to better our lives and to better other people's lives. And he left us the message to change the world and left us also the power to change the world. He left us a trust.

Now the minute here, man, I bet I've read 40 different commentators in preparing for this sermon. And what that amounts to and the amount of money it is ranges from \$200 to \$50,000. You know, it's all over the place. The most reliable says that it's about three months worth of wages. And if that's \$50,000, you're doing pretty good. But even those thousands of dollars, it really don't matter what the amount is. Quite honestly, the point was that they gave them a great investment. Those thousands of dollars are a lot less than the trust that Christ has referred to. What does that mena represent?

[10 : 36] Well, it represents the message that he left us because he left us the gospel. We have the opportunity to claim the gospel and to be changed by it. But we also have the responsibility to do something with it as well. Scripture tells us whosoever will may come. And Romans 10, 9 tells us how to come when it says, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. It's a two-step process.

It's an outward, bold confession of our faith, not a hidden matter that makes it private. No, you don't see private faith lived out in the New Testament. It's bold, it's real, it's life-changing.

And then as well, a belief. That's not just a historic belief that Jesus was a real man and really died and really coming back. No, it's a life commitment belief. I compare it to when I was a kid and we went to on vacation in Savannah and the pool had a diving board. Well, first the hotel had a pool.

Which is common, but not in that day. And it had a diving board. Man, the luxuries of the day. And I remember my daddy asked me, will you jump off that diving board and let me catch you?

And in that car, I was bold and said, yeah, I had no doubt. If you were to ask me, you think your daddy would catch you? I wouldn't have no doubt at all. But when I got to that pool and walked out on that diving board and looked over that deep end and saw my daddy treading water, I questioned it. Historic belief that he is who he says he is is what I had in the car.

[12 : 30] Commitment belief is what I had on that diving board. And to give your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ, you need to be openly confessing what it means to you to surrender your life to Christ, agreeing with him on the state of your circumstances and the need that you have for him.

And then you need to commit your life to him. Not just a historic belief, not just a Bible belief, but a life belief. That's the message that we're to live by.

It's the message that we're to share. And that message is an investment left with us that will only grow as you share it. You're not going to lose it. It'll only grow.

But that man is not only a message, but it also represents a power. And that is the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Because we've been given a trust as well that when we surrender our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit of God.

Not only is there a message to share and to live in response to, but Christians have been given the power of the Holy Spirit of God indwelt within us.

[13 : 37] Listen, the Spirit is described as the helper, the Holy Spirit. And Jesus spent his time in the upper room. The longest discourse that we have of him speaking is in John 13 through 17.

And he spends it talking about the power of the Holy Spirit of God in the lives of individual believers and the difference that it makes within the church of Jesus Christ when the lives of individuals live out the power of the Holy Spirit of God within them.

Listen to how Christ describes him. In John 16, 7, he says, Nevertheless, I tell you the truth, it's to your advantage that I go away. For if I don't go away, the helper will not come to you.

But if I go, I will send him to you. He goes on in that passage to describe what the Spirit will do. And he says that the Spirit will convict of sin. He says the Spirit will convict of righteousness.

He says the Spirit will convict of judgment. In other words, he will guide us into all truth and he will glorify Christ as he does that.

[14 : 43] He glorifies Christ through the gifts that he has given to us. What are those gifts? Those gifts are the gifts of evangelism. Those gifts are the gifts of proclamation, of teaching, of exhorting, or spiritually urging is what that means, of discernment between the Holy Spirit and the work of the evil one deceiving.

God has gifted us with the Holy Spirit of God who gives us gifts to help us not only live out our faith, but to act on it and watch other people's lives change because of it.

All of those gifts, folks, are a trust that has been given to us. Don't be like the guy with one that said the little bit that I got, I think I'll hide it so I don't lose it.

The gospel, the guidance, the gifting of the Holy Spirit, it is a trust. And if you're a child of God today, you've surrendered your life to the Lord Jesus Christ, that has been given to you.

Don't tell me about your inabilities. Tell me about his abilities in you because that's what makes the difference. And by the way, if you're not a child of God today and you've never given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ, I wouldn't be standing here if every opportunity I get to tell you that Jesus, I wouldn't be standing here if this wasn't true, Jesus saves and changes lives.

[16 : 23] And when you surrender your life to the Lord Jesus Christ today, he'll save you from where you are and make you to be what he'd have you to be. It is an open invitation.

And I can say it without any misgiving, any concern with whether it's relevant to anyone's life. And I can tell you that if that's never happened to you, you desperately need it.

I don't care how talented you are. I don't care how educated you are. I don't care how much money you have. You desperately need the Lord Jesus Christ. And when you accept him, he'll change you.

It's trust. We've been given a trust. Second thing is this. We must work the trust. We're not to sit on it.

We must work it. Anyone who has been saved, has received the gospel, they've received the spirit of God, they've received his gifting, and all have not been gifted the same, but we all have a responsibility for what we've been given.

[17 : 31] The proper way to respond to what's been given to you is to invest wisely and allow it to grow. And when you do, not only will other people's lives be blessed by it, but you'll be rewarded for it.

So I ask you this morning, what have you done with the trust of the gospel that God has left for you? Have you given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus? Have you surrendered your life to the Lord?

Do you live surrendered to the Lord? Because the opportunity of salvation is a trust that's been left to us, and we must respond correctly to that. And then the power of the Holy Spirit within us, man, I'm telling you, 1 Corinthians 10, 13, you can hang your hat on it and rest in it and rely on it.

No temptation has overtaken you. That's not common to man. I ain't got time this morning to explain this, but I'm going to anyway. One of Satan's key strategies is to try to tell you that somehow you're different than anybody else, that nobody really understands what your circumstances are, and that the temptations that you face are somehow different and somehow justified, or either nobody else will know the difference.

And you think that's unique with you, is common to man. And God is faithful. Do you hear me?

[18 : 56] God's faithful. He's right there in the trenches, right there in the tough stuff, right there in the midst of your weakness. God's still there.

When you want Him to be there, He's there. When you don't want Him there, He's there. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. But with the temptation, He will also provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it.

And I'm telling you, when it comes, regardless of what kind of temptation it is, you run like Joseph, run, leave your coat in her hand, and get out of there! Because the Holy Spirit of God has empowered you to do it.

Your way of escape is the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Jesus told us He would guide us in the truth. Temptation comes through deception. The devil will lie to you. He'll tell you your sin's okay.

He'll tell you that it's not hurting anything. He'll tell you that there's not going to be a reckoning. That nobody will know. That there's no penalty. That you'll be somehow left out if you don't participate in whatever He's trying to get you to do.

[19 : 59] So we indulge. But I want you to be clear about some things this morning. You're not different. We're all tempted. Be clear that God will not let you be tempted beyond your ability.

If you have the Holy Spirit of God in you, you don't have the can't help it's when it comes to sin. You've got the power of a living Lord in you. God, through the Holy Spirit, has provided a way out, and you need to walk in it.

And you can endure by the gospel of Jesus Christ and by the Holy Spirit who has indwelt within you. Don't bury the gift. Don't hide the treasure in a handkerchief.

The opportunity that God has given you is there. Put it to work. Put the gospel to work in your own life and then share it with others and watch and see what God will do.

Put it to work. A man asked a farmer one day, he said, how's the cotton coming along? He said, I ain't got none. He said, I was worried about the bull weevil, so I didn't plant any.

[21 : 02] Well, how's corn coming? I didn't plant any. I don't think we're going to get a lot of rain this year. Well, how's the taters? I'm afraid about a tater blight.

May not get any. So what'd you plant? I didn't plant anything this year. I'm making it safe. What's that farmer going to harvest? Nothing.

Nothing. And that's what we do with our lives. How sad it is when people's lives are the same way. Trust Christ to change your life and then tell others how he can change them too.

Let the Holy Spirit of God work in you as only he can because he can and he will. Don't be like the one that said, I like work. It fascinates me.

I can just sit and watch it all day long. You know? Let the Spirit of God work in you. Walk away from sin and work with the Spirit of God.

[22 : 04] Walk through opportunity. Allow him to change your life and change your world. Don't bury or lay dormant or neglect what God has given to you. As the old song says, work, work till Jesus comes.

We've been left to trust that we're to work. And it's important that we do because we will be held accountable. I want to be clear.

In our jobs, we work each week for a payday reward. Well, the Lord wants us to know there'll be a payday someday. There'll be an accounting.

God has blessed us with the opportunity of salvation. We have the responsibility to respond to that. And God has blessed us with the Holy Spirit, gifted us, empowered us, enabled us.

The question is, what are we doing with it? And it's most obvious seen in three areas of the Christian's life. And that's in our time, that's in our treasure, and that's in our talent.

[23 : 12] And so let's just break it down for just a minute and we'll go home. How do you invest your time with the Lord? Do you give Him time personally?

I mean, is it as regular in your life as cleaning up? Brushing your teeth ought to be more than a daily event, by the way.

Is it as regular as washing your body? Brushing your teeth? Is it a pattern in your life that's a priority?

Do you invest in the Lord personally? Do you take time to serve Him? And I've said this a lot in recent days, I'll say it again.

I don't consider this service. What we have today is an opportunity to worship. To come before a living, reigning Lord and say, it ain't about me, it's about you.

[24 : 29] And so I dedicate myself to you. And for our time together, we're going to worship you for roughly this hour together as a congregation.

and then when we leave here, we go serve the Lord. This is not a service. This is worship. So outside of this room in this hour, what are you doing for the Lord?

How are you serving the Lord? Are you a steward of the treasure that God has given you? Are you faithful to the Lord with your spending? And that's about tithing, but I'm telling you, it's also about spending.

Because if you're a tither, the question is, does the other 90% honor the Lord in your life? Do you feel like that's free game, do whatever you want to with?

Because if you do, the concept has been misunderstood. The reality is, everything you've got comes from the Lord. And He wants you to acknowledge that with 10%.

[25 : 39] But don't forget, the other 90% still is. He's just entrusting you to be a steward of it. Remember, all that you have is His.

What about your talent? What are you doing for the Lord? How has your life been marked, changed, led, empowered by the Holy Spirit of God?

What have you done with what the Lord has given to you? Because everything we have is His. And so are you managing it? We're in the meantime, folks.

We're in the meantime. Are you managing it, what He's given to you? And you spend your time and your money on matters that'll last. What if you could invest your time, your money, your talent in something that could last forever?

That'd look a lot better than the retirement accounts these days, wouldn't it? Well, you can, friend. Thank you. You can. You can. And there are too many people who claim to be Christians that spend their life minimizing the dangers and the risks and not trusting the Lord of the estate.

[27 : 04] I've heard of people who are so heavenly-minded they're not any earthly good. I'm going to tell you, we don't have that problem. The problem that concerns me is that we may become so earthly-minded that we're no heavenly good.

And that's small-minded. That's limited. We need to be faithful with what we've got. Don't be threatened by living by faith.

Don't be threatened enough to take God out of it by bearing the treasure entrusted to them. You can't find eternal life or live a life for Christ by trying to hang on to everything in your life just like it is.

You can't do that. You've got to give it up. He may not take it from you, but you've got to let go of it and give it to Him. I really believe it comes down to perspective.

Four workers were on a church site and a reporter came by and said, what are you doing? And the first one said, I'm busting rocks. Went to the next one and said, what are you doing?

[28 : 18] He said, I'm laying precious treasure. Excuse me, I'm laying precious stone. Went to the third one and said, what are you doing? He said, I'm earning a buck for my family.

He went to the fourth one and said, what are you doing? He said, I'm building a great cathedral. Perspective makes a lot of difference, folks. And if we get a handle on what God wants us to be a part of, it'd make a lot of difference.

So have no doubt today, you are making an eternal difference. You are. Either for the good or for the bad, you make an eternal difference.

And if we're not careful, we'll miss it. Little boy confronted another little boy. Let me ask you a question. If you had a million dollars, would you give me half of it?

He said, man, you're my best friend. You know I'd give you half of it. He said, well, what if you had \$4,000? Would you give me half of it?

[29 : 27] Little boy said, yeah, you know I'd give you half of it. Be plenty for both of us. What if you had \$200? Would you give me half of it? Yeah.

\$100, yeah, I can do that. What about if you had \$20? Would you give me half of it? Little boy said, man, that ain't right. You know I got 20 bucks.

God wants it all. I'll just go ahead and tell you he ain't gonna take it all. But he wants you to lay it out. He wants you to know that it's his.

And the irony is that when you spend your life avoiding risk, risk, now risk for different folks, risks are different for different folks.

So I don't know what you consider risky. Speaking to your neighbor about the Lord or inviting them to church may seem risky to you. Obeying God with what he's given to you and tithing and being faithful to the Lord, that may seem risky to you.

[30 : 50] Walking in the gifts of your spirit and that the Holy Spirit has given you and using those that may seem risky to you. You may say I can't do that.

Thank God. That's when it gets good when you can't do it and you let him do it. I don't know what's considered risky for you. I know what it is for me.

But I will tell you the irony is that if you live your life trying to avoid risk, you'll be like this man and so many others, you'll take the biggest gamble of all, you'll lose your own soul.

You'll lose the opportunity to serve the Lord with what he's given to you. May our lives be marked by what we do for the Lord and not by what we fail to do for the Lord.

But I want you to be clear this morning. this is our one chance. This is it.

[32 : 01] Let's not waste a day. With every head bowed and every eye closed, if you don't know the Lord Jesus today as your personal Lord and Savior, I want to encourage you.

Soon as we stand to sing, you come and say, Pastor, I want to give my heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ. We'll guide you in that. It's not a manipulative or a cheap gospel.

We don't sell it that way. It's free. It's free. And when you come, we'll be happy to guide you in that. If you know you're a Christian today, what are you doing with what God's given you?

He's left you a trust. He's left you a trust. Today, put it in His hands. Use it for His honor and glory.

Maybe God's leading you to be a part of this church. You've worshiped with us. You felt the power of His presence move in your life and you feel the Holy Spirit of God guiding you.

[33 : 03] We'd love to lead you in that. Maybe you're a Christian who's never publicly acknowledged that through baptism. That first step of obedience becomes a hindrance for so many.

Keeps them from ever progressing. Just be obedient. Trust Him. Take a risk. Do what He tells you to do and watch Him change your life.

Lord Jesus, I love you and I thank you for the privilege you give us to be together today. Lead us right now, I pray, to simply be obedient. Nothing more, nothing less.

Oh God, I pray in Jesus' precious name. Amen.