

## Luke 19:1-10

### The Character of Christ (Jesus the Savior)

**Introduction:** If it is your first time joining us - Welcome! We have dedicated this year to Biblical Literacy; meaning we as a church are reading the Bible for ourselves to know first hand what it teaches and in order to be shaped by the story of God. And along with that we are teaching through the Bible on Sunday mornings - the main themes, message and characters. We are in the middle of a 5 week series on the Character of Christ.

We've considered Jesus the Teacher - Our Rabbi - who calls us to be his disciples - To be with him, to become like him, to do what he did.

Last week we considered Jesus the Healer. Looking at how Jesus didn't just heal people from their sicknesses and disease, he came to do a deeper work of healing and restoration - from the destruction that sin has brought into our lives and into the world.

This morning we want to look at Jesus the Savior.

As has been mentioned in the past weeks there are many titles that are given to Jesus of Nazareth - Messiah, Lord, Son of God, Son of Man. Etc. These titles have the habit of just rattling off our tongues as Christians and many times we don't stop to think what it means or says about Jesus, what it means to our lives personally, and what it means to the world at large.

Jesus' name in fact - means - YHWH is Salvation - and in a way that we don't fully understand - that's who Jesus is - He is YHWH in the flesh - bringing salvation; He is the Savior.

The title Savior, though very common for us to use for Jesus, is only used twice in the Gospels: First on the lips of the Angel in his announcements of Jesus' birth to the Shepherds - **"For unto you is born this day in the city of a David, a Savior, How is Messiah, the Lord."** The second comes from the lips of the Samaritans in John 4 after they have listened to the testimony of the woman who met Jesus at the well and have now heard him themselves. They declare - **"It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."**

Jesus does use the word "save" to describe his mission. **"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." - Luke 19:10**

**"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. - John 3:16-17**

But it was especially in light of the death and resurrection, and eternal salvation (Rescued to be part of God's kingdom) that Jesus accomplished that his followers began to refer to him as the Savior - and as salvation being found in no other name - than the name of Jesus.

In fact, this became such a well known title for Jesus of Nazareth that the early church came up with the acrostic ICHTHYS - Meaning Fish in Greek; they used this symbol as an identifier for fellow followers of Jesus.

The letters represent the belief's or statement of faith of the early Church - ICHTHYS stands for: Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.

Jesus is our Teacher

Jesus is our Healer

Jesus is our Savior

### **1. Lost sheep, Lost coins, and Lost sons**

1. I wonder what we think of when we use the common Christian phrase, "I'm Saved"? Or what we mean when we say - "the unsaved," or "they're not saved," in reference to non-followers of Jesus? What does it mean to be saved?
2. This might not be true of all of these statements but it seems to me that we use them in reference to being saved from sin, destruction or hell. Paul definitely makes that connection in his writings. But it's interesting to note that when Jesus uses the terms "save" it is always in the context of something dear that is lost.

### **3. Read Luke 15:1-32**

4. When Jesus is telling these stories, He is talking about how certain lost things are of great value, so much so that we diligently seek, search, and anticipate their return. When things are lost, God is searching diligently, going after them, or God is waiting with desperate anticipation in reuniting with the lost thing. Think about that. When something is lost, God is waiting with desperate anticipation for reuniting and reconciliation or He's going after the lost thing. And what Jesus is saying in parabolic language is that

when people are lost, it means that God is coming after them - He's coming to save.

1. These stories are not so much about how things get lost or how people get lost. We can and we often do pick these apart and talk about what went wrong, how things got lost. But that's not Jesus' point.
5. Last week we talked about our culpability in sin. We are all sinned against sinners. Jesus uses the term sinner in the application of the parable of the lost sheep - but this term here does not refer to a rebel, or our inner twistedness. This word means failure, or to miss the mark, to get it wrong. To be lost. It's not a term of blame but more of an observation. Isaiah put it like this, **"We are all like sheep wandering off, losing are way."**
6. Jesus is not saying, 'The sheep got lost because the sheep was wandering or because of some fault of the owner or the coin it was lost.' He isn't focusing on the sin of selfishness of the son. Jesus is not telling us how things get lost, or why things get lost. He's not even telling you how not to get lost. He's not heaping judgment on lost people. He's saying, these stories are about this: When things are lost, the character of God is to go after lost things.
  1. *"So often, we consider these parables from the point of view of the lostness of the sinner. We think of the misery of the sheep, the hopeless condition of the coin, or the degradation of the son. But Jesus begins, not with the object's loss, but with the loss sustained by God. In these parables, we see the feelings of God toward the sinner. He is anxious about each one and will go to great efforts to regain them."* - James Montgomery Boice
7. Last week we talked about faith being - moving through any and every obstacle to get to Jesus... but what about the flip side.. do we ever think of Jesus moving through every obstacle to get to us? of God moving through every obstacle to find people.. (Remember the story of Legion?)
  1. I was up in Seattle the other week sharing at a pastors conference and my good friend Jordan was teaching and talking about the story in the gospel of John with the man born blind. He was showing how Jesus is maneuvering and pushing through all of these obstacles that his disciples, the religious leaders, their culture had set up (Cultural barriers, tabboos, religious barriers) in order to heal one man. Jesus does all of this for one man who desperately needs his salvation - that is the heart of our God -

the heart of the shepherd that leaves the ninety-nine to go after the one

## 2. Older Brothers and the True Older Brother

1. Luke emphasizes the context of these stories - why is Jesus telling us these stories?

2. **“Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” Then Jesus told them this parable:”**

1. Even among good, moral, righteous people there is always a group of outsiders under suspicion. We often conclude they are past and beyond God's grace - people who even God can't save? Won't save? Doesn't care about saving? Are too far gone to be saved? The deserving vs. undeserving sinner?
2. The Pharisees had this view of this group that is flocking to Jesus - A group of Tax collectors (Who were considered traitors to Israel because they worked for their Romans oppressors) And Prostitutes (who lived in gross violation of the Laws sexual ethics.) In today's world - these would be like the crooked investment bankers that caused the 2008 crash causing so many to lose their homes, along with pedophiles and rapist hanging out at Church...( I only use this in terms of categories of societal outcasts people our society esteems the lowest of the low)
3. These religious leaders grumble - this crowd does not reflect well on this popular Rabbi Jesus - Jesus is muddying the waters of holiness and godliness in their minds.. And Jesus knowing what's going on.. tells them a story, three stories in fact.
4. Jesus first tells the parable of the lost sheep, and how the shepherd leaves the ninety nine to look for the one, and when he returns with the lost sheep he invites his friends to celebrate with him.. Then Jesus tells the parable of the lost coin and how the woman looks for it, sweeping and cleaning her house and when she finds it she calls all her friends together to celebrate with her because what was lost is now found... then Jesus tells a third story about a lost, and wasteful son.. who eventually returns home and is embraced, and reinstated in the family by his father.
5. As we read or listen to these stories you might have noticed that in the first two stories - someone goes searching diligently for that which is lost. By the time we come to the third story, and we hear the plight of the lost son - we expect that someone will go

looking for him, but no one does.. This is supposed to jar us...  
(Especially as we compare the the value of the objects in these stories Sheep compared to sons?)

1. In Jewish and Eastern cultural the responsibility of the care of the family would have fallen to the older brother - the first born - but in this story he is totally silent that is, until the younger brother comes home...
2. Edmund Clowney tells the true story of a young man who was a U.S. soldier missing in action during the Vietnam war. When the family could get no word of him through any official channel, the older son flew to Vietnam and, risking his life, searched the jungles and the battlefields for his lost brother. It's said that despite the danger, he was never hurt, because those on both sides had heard of his dedication and respected his quest. Some of them called him, simply, the Brother.
3. This story speaks to what the older brother in the story should have done - he should have been the one to go out looking for his lost brother - taking upon himself the cost of his own life and inheritance to bring him home...
6. We call this parable the Prodigal Son and there is definitely a lesson to be learned by focusing on him - The unfailing, gracious, generous love of the Father - but we often fail to see what else is going on in this parable - The Father, and the Older Brother and in fact this is why Jesus tells this story.
  1. In this story it is not only the younger son who is lost. Both sons seem to be shocked by the actions and character of the Father - one lived a life of rebellion to his father - being suspicious of his father's intentions and the family way of life - he thought he knew better and could figure it all out. He ended up lost; and was shocked when the father graciously and generously restored him to his place, running to receive him, embracing him and kissing him, putting the family ring and garments on him and of course slaughtering the fatted calf to celebrate his return.
  2. The second son, the older brother, is equally shocked by his father - he receives his younger brother so readily - bent the rules it seems, freely forgave him, marred the family name and reputation, and incurred more loss by bringing him back in. The older son can't believe it - he has always kept the rules

and done what is right and yet he says, "Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!"

3. The Father responds - 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.' It's almost as though the Father is saying - 'why did you not ask? Everything I have is yours.' Could it be that though the older son keeps the rules he also is living outside the love of his father? - He though, very good is in fact far from Home - he is lost, and disconnected from the heart of the father. Because the older brother has had wrong ideas about the father, he has disdain for his younger brother, he also has been kept from enjoying the blessing and riches of this relationship.
4. Remember - Jesus told these parables in response to the Pharisees and the Teachers of the law muttering, "**This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.**" - the point is this - These religious leaders, these self righteous people don't get the generosity of God the Father, and it shows in their disdain of others.
5. You might be thinking - it seems a little more complex than that - I think you're right. It is complex - These people are real sinners (Rebels and not just victims), people who have done wrong and evil, people who like we mentioned last week have rebelled against God and lived selfishly, but they are also lost, blind, broken, hurt, wandering, ignorant.. It's complex. It's no wonder Jesus used the story of a Father and a child - because outside of that dynamic it's hard to understand God's compassionate heart - How can you have grace and compassion for an evil, totally selfish, thief or a sexually deviant person? - Well, what if it's your child we are talking about?
6. Is it any wonder then 'Father' was Jesus favorite title for God?
  1. For many of us the reason we judge others harshly and wrongly - The reason we think people are beyond God's salvation, his care, his grace is because - we really don't understand the depth of the graciousness and generosity of (our) God - the Father - we have judged him wrongly, our assessment of him is wrong, which as Jesus says in the

sermon on the mount, keeps us from asking, seeking, and knocking for the good things we need - it stifles us, we too are kept out of the love of the Father because we are suspicious of him - we're lost. We don't really think the Father loves us, there must be some catch, we know ourselves, we know our selfish hearts - can God really love us that much?

2. In a world and culture that is full of "younger brothers"; a world full of lost sinners what will keep us from being religious pharisees, self righteous older brothers, and harsh judgy people is the gracious love and salvation of God found only through the Gospel - Jesus is the true and greater older brother who went out looking for us and gladly spent his inheritance, not just asking his life, but giving his life in order to to bring us into the incredible, generous and gracious love of of the Father. Jesus is the only true Savior who came to seek and save what is lost.
3. The character of Christ is to save. It is to seek and save what is lost. I think this goes back to our previous studies about redemptive participation. When God looks at the world he looks at it through the lens of redemption, and a desire to be reconciled with his creation; to rescue and save lost people.
  1. If we are disciples of Jesus: Being with Jesus, Becoming like Jesus and Doing what he did - that means that we also, like Jesus, will be out looking for lost people. That means when we see the world, when we see people, we see them as lost sheep, lost sons and daughters that God wants to bring home.

**Closing:** Think about the story of Zacchaeus

Jesus in this story is once again moving past all the cultural opinions, and red tape on either side about this undeserving person, this sinner, in order to save him. It's amazing what Jesus will do to reach one person, isn't it? Apparently he'll turn the whole house upside down, and inside out; he'll leave the ninety nine - to find the one; he'll spend his inheritance and risk his life for the younger brothers; he'll cross heaven and earth; he'll even go through death and come out the other side in order to rescue us. What a savior!

As it turns out Zacchaeus knew he needed saving. And it turns out that's really what we need to receive Jesus' salvation, to have him as our savior. Do you know you're lost? Jesus wants to bring you home, back to your father, to bring you into the love of the father, to give you the presence of the spirit, a solid identity As a beloved son, in whom the Father is well pleased. - He wants to put the family ring on your finger, cloth you in a robe of his righteousness, and celebrate over your rescue - for all we like sheep were going astray, we were lost, but because of God's gracious salvation through Jesus, we have been found, and brought home to the Father....