

Seek and Save the Lost

Franklin Church of Christ
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PM Assembly

Introduction:

When Jesus went to Zacchaeus' house, His opponents berated Him for being the guest of a sinner. When Zacchaeus repented, Jesus responded, "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" (**Luke 19:9-10**, ESV). Why did Jesus come to earth? To seek and save the lost. Jesus has passed that mission on to His disciples (**Luke 24:46-47; Mark 16:15-16**). But what does that mission really mean. If we want to be like Jesus, and not like His opponents, we need to give some thought to what that statement means for our lives.

Discussion:

- I. The object of our efforts is the *lost*.
 - A. We are not seeking the saved. We are seeking the lost. Have you ever thought about what that means? Who are the lost? No doubt they are religious people who practice error and have never obeyed the gospel but still look pretty much like us morally. But that is a minority of them. Consider the lost of **I Corinthians 6:9-11** who were saved by Christ's grace. They were fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, idolaters, thieves, covetous, drunks, etc. These are the people we are supposed to be looking for.
 - B. But let's face it. In general, these are the people that we typically try to stay away from. We shudder to think that our children might ever be around anyone like that. We often ask the question about a Christian walking into a bar. I've heard people say we shouldn't jump to conclusions. Maybe the Christian had a flat and that was the nearest phone. Or maybe he is going to get a family member who is drunk and carry him home. But I have never once heard anyone say, "Maybe he is going there to seek and save the lost." Why? Because we don't think like that.
 - C. We each need to ask ourselves who we are more like in this story. Are we like the Pharisees who are so concerned with being defiled by sinners that we forget we too are sinners and forget we are supposed to be saving sinners? Or are we like Jesus, so concerned about seeking and saving the lost that we do not worry so much about our reputation among those who aren't out there saving people?
 - D. We need to understand, our efforts are toward the lost. They won't look like us. They won't act like us. They won't talk like us. Many times, they won't even like us. They might be our enemies and their sins might even have been against us. But we need to remember, no matter how their sins compare to our sins, we were just like them before we met Christ. Perhaps we should post **Ephesians 2:1-3** somewhere we can see it every day. Jesus died for us while we were still sinners (**Romans 5:6-8**). If Jesus would die for us while we were still sinners, the least we can do is carry the gospel message to others while they are still sinners.
- II. We are to *seek* the lost.
 - A. Have we ever thought about all the implications of this concept? We are actually supposed to go looking for lost people. Too often, we waste our time waiting for the lost people to find us. Sure, we will put out a sign, put ads in the paper, commercials on the tv and radio. I think all of these are good things and we should do them. But we must not think when we have done these things we have fulfilled Jesus' mission. He didn't hang out a shingle and wait for the lost to come to Him. He went to them. He went to Zacchaeus' house.
 - B. First, this means keeping our eyes open to the lost who are around us. In **John 4**, the apostles were sent into Sychar to get food for Jesus. They came back with food but no followers. The woman at the well went back into the town and very shortly many of the townsfolk were coming to meet Jesus (**John 4:30**). What was the difference? The apostles eyes were not open to the people they met who needed Jesus. This woman's were. How many lost people do we talk to every day? Have we ever remotely done anything to talk to them about Jesus?
 - C. Second, this means actively seeking the lost. We are supposed to go looking for them. Think about this, Jesus called the disciples to be fishers of men (**Matthew 4:19**). If you want to catch some fish, where do you have to go? You have to go where the fish are. I can't cast a net off my back porch and expect to retrieve any fish. I have to go to the lake, river, ocean, etc. Even then, I know I can't just go anywhere. I search for a good spot where the fish feed or rest. We want to

go where the fish are biting. If we are going to fulfill Jesus' mission, we have to go to where the lost people are. That means going into their homes. That means finding them on the street corners, maybe even in the bars. It may mean going to that block party filled with sinners, because that is who is there.

- D. We all have to ask ourselves, are we really seeking the lost or are we hoping the lost will start seeking us?

III. We are to save the lost.

- A. It is not good enough just to find the lost. We must actively work to save them. However, let's keep in mind that this is the part of Jesus' mission that we can't really fulfill. In the strictest sense, only God can save people. We cannot. Remember **I Corinthians 3:5-7**. God is the one who gives the growth. However, He gave that growth through the work of Paul and Apollos who planted and watered. Thus, people can't be saved apart from the workers planting and watering (cf. **Romans 10:13-15**).
- B. We must work to save the lost. There is only one way to do that. We have to teach them the gospel. Obviously, there are all kinds of ways we can do that. We can invite them to our assemblies and classes and they can be taught here. We can have home studies and invite them. We can have personal one on one studies. We can have conversations. We can all have our different ways to approach people. We might just ask them what they know about Jesus. We may try to turn physical conversations into spiritual ones. We may try to drop in comments that demonstrate we are Christians and try to open the door. We may ask if they read their Bibles. I don't really care what approach you take (so long as it is scriptural), but we must make some approach.
- C. We have to ask ourselves, what are we doing to try to save the lost? What are we doing to open doors with others? What are we doing to have conversation with sinners? If we want to fulfill the mission of Jesus, we have to plant and water so God can give the increase. I guarantee, if we plant and water, God will give increase.

Conclusion:

Jesus went into Zacchaeus' house. He went to eat with a sinner, but He left the house of a saved man. We may have thought a man like Zacchaeus was beyond hope. But Jesus knew His job to seek and save the lost and He simply did it. He did not prejudge; He just sought, taught and saved. We need to carry on His mission. Who are we seeking? Who are we saving?