

UP A TREE AND OUT ON A LIMB

(Luke 19:1-10)

- Intro: Woman made a needlepoint piece, which said:
- “Prayer Changes Things.”
 - #She framed it.
 - #She put in on her mantle.
 - Few days later she noticed it was missing from its place.
 - #She asked her husband about it.
 - He fessed up:
 - #“I didn’t like it.”
 - #“So I took it down and threw it away.”
 - She was miffed:
 - #“How could you do that?”
 - #“Don’t you believe that prayer changes things?”
 - Her husband replied:
 - #“Oh, I believe that prayer changes things alright.”
 - #“But it just so happens that I don’t like change.”

Reformation Day is about change.

- Change for Martin Luther.
- Change for the church.
- Change for people like Zacchaeus.
- Change for you and me.

I. Reformation Brought Change.

A. Change For Martin Luther.

1. Roman Catholic monk.
 - a. Augustinian friar.
 - b. In Germany.
2. Tormented soul.
 - a. Unrighteous person.
 - Under the judgement of a righteous God.
 - b. Imperfect person.
 - Under the judgement of a perfect God.
3. Luther felt lost.
 - a. No matter what he did.
 - b. No matter how hard he tried.
 - He felt unworthy.
 - He felt condemned.

4. One day things changed.
 - a. Luther was reading Paul's letter to the Romans.
 - "God justifies the one who has faith in Jesus."
 - # Romans 3:26.
 - "We hold that a person is justified by faith,"
 - # "Apart from works prescribed by law."
 - * Romans 3:28.
 - b. Luther was a changed man.
 - Luther's salvation.
 - # Depended not:
 - * On how good he was.
 - * On how hard he tried.
 - # But depended:
 - * On his faith in what God had done for him.
 - + Through Jesus Christ.
 - What a revelation!
 - What a reformation!
 - What a relief!

B. Change For The Church.

1. Agents from Rome were selling indulgences.
 - a. Pieces of paper that promised:
 - Forgiveness.
 - Salvation.
 - # For the purchaser.
 - # For the poor souls thought to be trapped in purgatory.
 - b. For a price.
 - Proceeds going to build St. Peter's in Rome.
2. Johann Tetzel.
 - a. One of the salesmen.
 - b. Had a nifty little jingle to go with his sales pitch.
 - As soon as the coin in the church box rings.
 - Right then the soul to heaven springs.
3. Luther protested.
 - a. Nailing his 95 Theses.
 - Debating points.
 - b. To the Castle Church door.
 - In Wittenberg, Germany.
 - On the eve of All Saints' Day.
 - # October 31, 1517.

- c. God's grace could not be bought.
 - Coin in the church box.
 - #Not so that God might:
 - *Love us.
 - *Forgive us.
 - *Redeem us.
 - #But our response to the fact that God has already:
 - *Loved us.
 - *Forgiven us.
 - *Redeemed us.
 - What a revelation!
 - What a reformation!
 - What a relief!

II. Zacchaeus Became A Changed Man.

A. Zacchaeus Was Up A Tree And Out On A Limb.

- 1. Short of stature.
 - a. Seeker.
 - Wanting to see Jesus.
 - b. Unable to see because of the crowds.
 - So he climbed:
 - #Up a tree.
 - #Out on a limb.
- 2. Short on moral scruples.
 - a. Chief tax collector.
 - I told you last week about tax farming.
 - #Those who paid the Roman government.
 - *For the right:
 - +To collect.
 - +To extort.
 - =Taxes from the people.
 - #More they collected.
 - *Greater their profit.
 - b. Tax collectors were doubly hated.
 - Because they collaborated with the Romans.
 - #Who imposed their rule against the will of the people.
 - *Reinforced by the presence of their military.
 - Because they were often seen as:
 - #Cheats.
 - #Thieves.
- c. Zacchaeus was up a tree and out on a limb.
 - As far as his fellow citizens were concerned.

- B. Jesus Went Up A Tree And Out On A Limb For Zacchaeus.
1. If Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus.
 - a. Perhaps merely out of curiosity.
 2. Jesus wanted to see Zacchaeus.
 - a. Just as much.
 - b. Or more.
 3. Jesus saw Zacchaeus.
 - a. Up a tree.
 - b. Out on a limb.
 - Who he was.
 - How he was.
 - What he might become.
 4. Jesus said to Zacchaeus.
 - a. "Come on down, down, down from that tree, Mr. Z."
 - Song on a record my kids used to have.
 - I wish I could remember the rest of the words.
 - b. "I must come to your house today."
 - Greek word.
 - #δει.
 - Divine necessity.
 - #As in Jesus' passion predictions:
 - *"The Son of Man must undergo great suffering,
 - And be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes,
 - And be killed,
 - And on the third day be raised."
 - +Luke 9:22.
 - #God requires this.
 - *"I must come to your house today."
 - Crowds grumbled.
 5. When Jesus comes.
 - a. Into his home.
 - b. Into his life.
 - c. Into his heart.
 - Zacchaeus can't help but:
 - #Be changed.
 - #Repent.
 - "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor."
 - "If I have defrauded anyone of anything,"
 - #"I will pay back four times as much."
 - *Luke 19:8.
 - #Old Testament required:
 - *Restitution + 20%.
 - +Leviticus 5:16.
 - +Leviticus 6:5.
 - +Numbers 5:7

#But Zacchaeus was a changed man.
*He repaid 4x what he had cheated people out of.
#Little did he know when he climbed that tree.
*He would not only see Jesus.
*He would be willing to part with half of his fortune.

6. When Jesus comes to Zacchaeus.

- a. Into his home.
- b. Into his life.
- c. Into his heart.

-Salvation comes.

#It comes today.

*"Today salvation has come to this house."

+Luke 19:9.

-Today.

#Important word.

*For Luke.

*For salvation.

#Luke 2:11.

*Angels to the shepherds:

+ "To you is born today in the city of David a Savior,"

= "Who is the Christ, the Lord."

#Luke 23:43.

*Jesus to the repentant criminal on the cross:

+Who has pleaded:

= "Jesus, remember me when you come into you kingdom."

+ "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

#Luke 19:9.

*Jesus to Zacchaeus:

+ "Today salvation has come to this house."

7. Jesus goes:

- a. Up a tree.
- b. Out on a limb.

-To bring salvation today.

#To Zacchaeus.

#To all who believe.

#To you.

#To me.

III. We Can't Help But Be Changed.

A. Aren't We Up A Tree And Out On A Limb?

1. Like Luther.
 - a. Unrighteous.
 - b. Imperfect.
 - c. Unworthy.
2. Looking down.
 - a. On the world.
 - b. On other people.
3. Unable to see Jesus.
 - a. Until Jesus comes:
 - Into our homes.
 - Into our lives.
 - Into our hearts.
4. When Jesus comes.
 - a. We can't be the same.
 - b. We are not the same.
 - We are changed.

B. Jesus Went Up A Tree And Out On A Limb For Us.

1. We are not the same.
 - a. Our iniquity forgiven.
 - b. Our sin remembered no more.
 - Jeremiah 31:34.
2. No longer are we spectators.
 - a. Sitting on our tree limb.
 - Above the fray.
 - Watching the world go by.
 - b. Jesus calls us:
 - Come on down, down, down from that tree, Mr. and Ms. Z.
 - #Come to the table.
 - *Where you can be fed.
 - #Come to the dessert auction.
 - #Come to the church box.
 - *With your wallets.
 - *With your checkbooks.
 - +Where you can help feed others.
 - #Come to rekindle the fire.
3. Rekindle the Fire.
 - a. Theme of our congregation renewal process.
 - Here at Ascension.

- b. Next Sunday afternoon/evening.
 - We will convene our first small group of Ascenders.
 - #To invite your input into our renewal process.
 - *If you haven't gotten an invitation for next week.
 - +Fear not.
 - +We'll get to you.
 - +Everyone will have a turn.
 - We have four focus questions.
 - #They will be in the Ascent.
 - *Which should be going out this week.
 - #How did the Holy Spirit draw you into this community of faith?
 - #What have been some of the highlights of your involvement at Ascension?
 - #What vision or dream for the future has God given you:
 - *For your individual spiritual walk?
 - *For our life together in this congregation?
 - *For our involvement in our community and in the world?
 - #How is God calling you to make this dream a reality?

- Concl: When I mentioned to my pastoral colleagues.
- We had adopted as our theme for our congregational renewal process.
 - #Rekindle the Fire.
 - Pastor Alan Fox.
 - #Of Fellowship Lutheran Church.
 - #Gave me this sign.
 - *He claims he didn't steal it.
 - *It says:
 - +NO PARKING.
 - +FIRE LANE.

- As we Rekindle the Fire.
- No parking.
 - No spectating.
 - No sitting on the tree limbs.
 - #Everyone is to be involved.

- As we Rekindle the Fire.
- There will be reformation.
 - There will be change.
 - #Thank God for that.