

The Tree Story (Do you Want to Listen?)

Luke 19: 1-9

#32 in “Jesus Stories” Series

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Prayer

Lord, I pray, and I ask that the people in this room would pray for me, that we would pray for us, that you would help us to speak what you want to speak and hear what you want us to hear. Because God, the thought of talking about you just seems insane to me because you are so big. Lord, you are so simple, but our lies are so complex. So, Lord God, sometimes people think, it needs to be shorter, it needs to be more to the point, it needs to be more creative, and God, I just get overwhelmed thinking about you. So Lord, I pray that you would talk about you, that you would inhabit this talk and that you would invade our hearts and use these little words to reveal The Word. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Message

Last week, we preached from Luke 18: 31-43

Jesus asks His disciples to see and they don’t see. Then he heals a blind man, near Jericho, who wants to see and he does see. This week Angie Dancer posted a video and a note on my Facebook page. She wrote, “I was thinking about how it must’ve been to suddenly see and thought you might like to see these people suddenly hear.”

Video clip: *Hearing*

People of all ages are receiving hearing aids for the very first time. This video captures the moment that each one of them hears with their new devices. Each individual is filled with immense joy. Most laugh, many cry in joy and relief, even a small baby, who was crying, upon getting his hearing aid smiles in delight!

On Facebook my friend, Ginny, commented, “I wish I had that job,” and I commented, “I think we do have that job.” We’re called to announce good news. *Evangelical* literally means good news announcer. When you hear good news, well, you react like the folks on the video. But when folks hear our “Evangelical” good news they don’t usually look like the folks in the video. So, are we proclaiming good news?

Now, good news to some can be bad news to others. Good news about the New England Patriots can be bad news for Denver Bronco fans. But the angel said, “*Behold, look I bring you good news of great joy that will be to all the people.*” In Revelation 4 & 5, Jesus shows John good news and allows him to hear all people singing. It’s the song that never ends, for it is the end. He sees four amazing creatures that never stop singing around the throne of God, and twenty four elders that never stop casting crowns, and the Slaughtered Lamb that opens the scroll and then he sees “*every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is within them*”

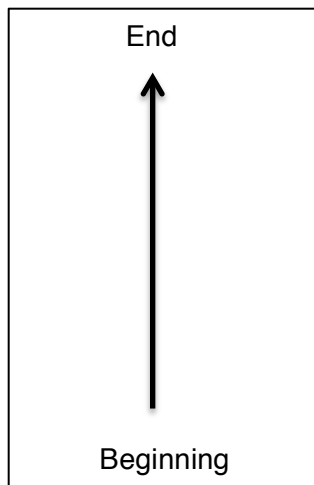
(which would include you) worshipping the Lamb on the throne, for He has done it: He has ransomed people for God. It's like all reality vibrates to the rhythm of that praise, the Hallelujah.

So why don't we hear?

Why don't we see?

In Luke 18:31, Jesus takes the twelve and says, "*See? We're going up to Jerusalem and everything – everything that's written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished.*" Just a week later on a tree in a garden, Jesus cries, "It is accomplished" and delivers up His Spirit. About four hundred years before that, the prophet Daniel saw a "*Son of Man*" coming on the clouds of heaven and to him was given a kingdom that "*all people, nations and languages should serve him.*" Daniel saw Jesus and Revelation 5, as if the story was finished, and Jesus said, "*It is finished.*"

Last week we asked, "How can that be?" and then kicked around the idea of Flatland.

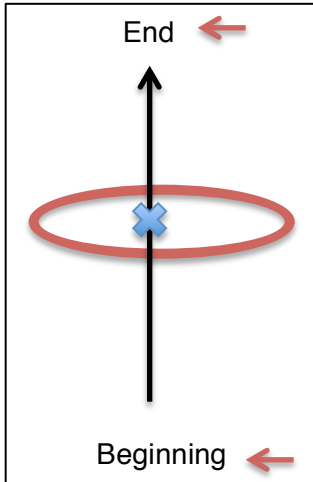


And we imagined time as a dimension in Flatland, a dimension in which we can only move in one direction, although we dream of moving in both directions. Well, if Someone has spoken, or is speaking, creation into existence, that Someone is telling a story with His word and we are part of the story He is telling.

All stories have a beginning and an end; they have a plot. Once you see the plot, every moment in the story has new meaning. The Plot makes sense of the story, and if you're part of the story the Plot makes sense of you. Well, Jesus is "*The Beginning and The End*"—the Plot. He is the meaning, the *Logos*; He is the Word God is speaking.

[Peter uses the timeline to help explain the following, pointing to all the places in red and blue to describe where we are on the timeline and how God interacts with the timeline.]

We exist on the timeline



Logos—Jesus
Us

But the *Logos*, Jesus, is The Beginning and The End of the timeline and, in fact, all around the timeline encompassing the timeline.

So the *Logos—Jesus*—that is The End is literally at hand!

[Peter stands directly in front of the time line so that he's interacting with every part of it.]



The *Logos—Jesus*—that is The End is literally at hand to every moment on the timeline. So The End is literally at hand. And when He says, “*Look, from now on you will see the Son of Man coming on the cloud of heaven and coming with great power henceforth...*” “*Henceforth...*” Well, gosh, He could really mean it!!

He could say, “I’m coming.”



And He would be coming at every moment on the timeline.



It's always true, for-ever (*aion*) true. I'm just saying, maybe Jesus was telling the truth. And maybe the story really is finished and maybe the choir is already singing, "He *has* done it, it *IS* accomplished."

STRUCTURE

Luke 18:31-34	"See...The Son of Man."
Luke 18:34	They don't see.
Luke 18:35-43	The blind man sees.
Luke 19:1-10	The sinful man sees... "The Son of Man."

So, in Luke 18: 31 Jesus is saying, "Look, guys, you're about to witness the Son of Man receiving his kingdom from the Ancient of Days." Then He describes His death on the tree. He says, "See," but they don't want to see. Next a blind beggar wants to see and does see, and now a sinner wants to see and does see. His name is Zacchaeus.

Luke 19: 1 – 3

(Jesus) entered Jericho and was passing through. And behold—LOOK, 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.

Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector in a critical trade city in the Roman Empire. That means that, although he was "a son of Abraham," he had made a covenant with the Roman oppressors to oversee all tax collectors in Jericho as they excised taxes from their countrymen.

They were notorious for defrauding their own people and Zacchaeus was rich . . . but not in stature: spiritual, social, psychological or physical stature. Zacchaeus was about Zacchaeus. He was the author of his own story and so he'd written himself out of Abraham's story. He'd written himself out of God's story. Because God is the Author of all things, to write yourself out of His story, history, is to write yourself into nowhere and nothing—a very dark place with no meaning in which you are utterly alone. It is to make yourself false, a false self, a *golem* in Hebrew, like Golum in the Lord of the Rings, an unfinished, unformed substance.

Zacchaeus had seized the ring of power (You know how it is). He thought he controlled it, but now it controlled him. It started small, "I'll take an extra denarii and sacrifice a little

love.” Then, to ease the guilt, “I’ll take another denarii and sacrifice a little more love.” I’m sure he tried to keep the commandments, but the more he tried to keep the commandments, the more he saw the commandments and knew he broke the commandments—the law. And then something in Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus.

He wanted to see, but was terrified to be seen.

He wanted to know, but was terrified to be known.

He wanted to seek, but was terrified to be sought.

I imagine that no one really knew Zacchaeus (including Zacchaeus). He was excluded, rejected, and cast out of the crowd. And so he found himself at the foot of a tree. From the tree he could see Jesus from a distance and he could see he didn’t belong. He must’ve thought, “This Jesus story is a story to which I don’t belong, but I am curious.” So, like a man taking a seat in the back row and the darkest corner of the theater, Zacchaeus climbed the tree.

Luke 19: 3-9

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 up 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 stay at your house today.” So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has 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.”

Wow! Zacchaeus is saved – it’s “the tree story.” Ever since I was a kid, I’ve heard this story about a guy who climbed a tree for Jesus and I thought, “I’d climb a tree for free.” I mean the point of the story seems obvious and boring. It’s a morality story, right? A story telling us about what we “should” do – that’s the point. So when we preach “the tree story” we try to apply it to our lives and so we say things like this:

IF you seek Jesus, even to the point of climbing tree and looking silly.

THEN you’ll be saved.

And, *IF* you don’t, *THEN* you will perish.

And you know, Jesus did command us to: “*Seek first the kingdom.*”

Well, anyway, we say “If” and “Then”.

IF you invite Jesus in...

THEN you’ll be saved and if you don’t then you’ll be lost.

And Jesus did say, “*I am the way.*”

We say, *IF* you give one half your possessions to the poor...

THEN you’ll be saved, and if you don’t, then you’ll be lost.

And Scripture says, “*The greedy cannot inherit the kingdom.*”

IF you believe Jesus died for your sins ,on the tree, and loves you unconditionally...
THEN you'll be saved.

But *IF* you don't believe He died for your sins and loves you unconditionally...
THEN He doesn't love you unconditionally,
 AND didn't die for your sins
 AND He will torture you forever without end.

So, *IF* you renounce your greed for gold...
THEN God will reward you with streets of gold. Just imagine all the gold!!

I mean, when we tell the story as if it depends on us, Jesus isn't much of a savior, grace turns into law, it's not *good* news, but a *threat*, and we reward sin with more sin because our hearts remain just as they were or get worse.

And one last thing: to tell the story that way, is just not accurate.
 There is no "if" in this story.
 There is no "invitation," there is no "offer of salvation."
 There is no "should."
 There is a commandment and there is a Word spoken,
 And then a new creation. Zacchaeus *WANTS* to love!

There is no "should," only a new heart and Zacchaeus sure didn't do much to get that new heart. I mean, Zacchaeus wasn't an impressive seeker. I mean if you would've been there that day and someone said, "Tell me, who is most diligently seeking Jesus?" You'd look around and probably say, "Well, the people that got up early and came to the parade, the people that bought their tickets in advance, the early workers in the vineyard that really work at loving their neighbors and not defrauding their neighbors. They seek God and His kingdom.

In Romans 3 (quoting Isaiah) St. Paul writes, "*No one seeks for God – no one.*" Maybe the people in the crowd aren't seeking Jesus, but seeking what Jesus can do for them. Maybe they don't desire Jesus; they desire to *use* Jesus. "Jesus get me some gold, heal my leg, get rid of the Romans, save me from the Romans!" Maybe they're seeking to use Jesus to write their own story.

Well, I doubt Zacchaeus expects to make Jesus part of his story, and he's convinced he's not part of Jesus' story. I suspect he's like the man taking his seat in the back of the movie theater. He's not trying to use Jesus. He's just heard stories about Jesus and now he's intrigued with Jesus. You know, when I go to a movie, I don't go planning to work on my self. I go hoping to forget myself – my miserable self. If someone says, "You really should go see this movie; I think it would help you." I won't go. But if someone says, "You ought to see this movie because it's a great movie!" Then I'll go. . . not to find myself, but lose myself. That's the point, that I'm not the point.

Well, Paul writes, "*No one seeks for God.*" But Luke writes, "*Zacchaeus sought to see Jesus.*" Well, I doubt it's because someone said, "You really should see Jesus. It'll help you." Instead, someone told a story about Jesus; the story created a desire in Zacchaeus to see Jesus. Whatever the case, the *point* is Jesus.

Let's finish the story.

Luke 19: 9-10

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."

Did you get that? "Saved" SINCE he's a son of Abraham: "*for the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.*" We assume this is a story about Zacchaeus seeking God, and it is, but only because it's first a story about God seeking Zacchaeus. This is a story about the Son of Man and how He receives His Kingdom from the Ancient of Days. Maybe it's not really about Zacchaeus and not really about you. Maybe you're not the point, and not the plot, and definitely not the author.

Jesus says, "*Today salvation has come,*" as if salvation is the protagonist and the plot. Salvation came to the house like Jesus came to the house, and He didn't ask to come. He said, "*Zacchaeus I am coming.*" And why is He coming? Because Zacchaeus also is "*a son of Abraham.*" Because two thousand years before Zacchaeus climbed the tree, God made a promise to Abraham.

Genesis 12:2 "*Abraham, of you I will make a great nation and in you ALL the families of the earth will be blessed.*" In chapter 15, God makes a covenant with Abraham and it's unconditional – it's grace. Six hundred years later, God makes a covenant with Abraham's descendants and it is conditional – it's law. (It contains at least six hundred thirteen "if-then" statements.) That's the old covenant – the law.) But the new covenant was given to Abraham six hundred years before the old covenant, and God told Abraham the end from the beginning: "*This WILL happen!*" I'm saying that the law is a story within a story—the Story of Grace. God *WILL* bring His People into the land, and He *WILL* give them new hearts no matter how hard the old hearts.

So, why did Jesus go to Zacchaeus' house? "*Salvation has come to this house since he also is a son of Abraham, for the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.*" The lost can't find the way; The Way must find the lost.

In the beginning, God said, "*Let us make man in our own image and blessed them.*" "*It is finished*" at the end of the sixth day, the beginning of the Sabbath day – the seventh day. And then we read how on the sixth day, Adam and Eve took fruit from the tree of law—the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Then God appeared and cast them out of the garden, but only after making a "*covenant promise: 'The seed of the woman WILL crush the head of the snake.'*" That is, "a son of man *WILL* destroy the work of the devil."

Well, I'm just saying the story of original sin is a story within the story of original blessing. Maybe you – oh man – are a story within the story of the Son of Man.

It's like God says,

"Okay, you sons of Adam. Just go ahead and try to create yourselves with the fruit from the tree of law and watch as I create you with fruit from the tree of life." Get lost and watch me find you."

“Okay, you sons of Abraham, just try to save yourselves with the law and watch as I save you with grace.”

“Okay, Zacchaeus, you just try to write your own story and you’ll write yourself out of the story. Then I’ll write you back into the story, redeeming your empty story and that’s the story.”

“I write the story” and that’s good news – it’s the gospel.

God is the Author and He writes the story with His Word. His Word is Jesus, and Jesus said, *“The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”* And all the Christians say, “Hallelujah and amen.” But then if you say, “And He will succeed” all the Christians say “Hallelujah and well, maybe.” And then if you say, “He came to seek and save the lost and so He will seek and save the lost, *ALL* of the lost,” they cry, “Heresy and have you defrocked.”

Why is that? Well, maybe because they don’t actually believe that they were lost.

- Maybe we don’t actually believe we were lost!
Which means we don’t actually believe we were found..
Which means we don’t actually believe “*God is Salvation...*”
Which means we’re lost.

Good thing Jesus came to seek and to save the lost!

Now you may say,

“Cut it out with that fancy shmancy Kung Fu talk.”

“Jesus came to save the lost, but the Bible makes it clear that some will perish.”

Actually the Bible makes it clear (Romans 2:12): “*ALL* have perished and will perish.” With or without the law, all perish. Actually, the word translated “lost” is the same word translated “perish” (*apollumi*). So, Scripture makes it clear all have been lost and the Son of man came to seek and save the perished–lost. That is the perished. He is the word of God and God is the Author of the story.

Jesus said, “*Seek and you will find.*” How dare we tell Him that He can seek, but cannot find? He said, “*Seek first the kingdom and all . . .*” And what is the Kingdom?

Daniel 7: 14

And to him (the Son of Man) was given (by the Ancient of Days) a kingdom that all people, nations, and languages should serve him . . . an everlasting kingdom which shall not pass away.”

That means it is the end, for He is the end: “*It is finished.*” So humor me and read the story again, but this time not assuming that it’s about you and what you should do, but that it’s about Jesus and what God *does* do.

Now we don’t have time or brainpower to explain all of this for all of this is His story. It’s

His story, which is actually every story that's any story. You can't comprehend this, but you can watch this and it will comprehend you.

Luke 19: 1 “[Jesus] *entered Jericho and was passing through.*”

Jesus is Joshua and Jericho is the edge of the Promised Land. It is the city that could not be taken, except that Joshua led Israel and the ark of the covenant, that contained law encased in mercy, around the walls for seven days and on the seventh day the seven priests blew the seven trumpets and the walls come tumbling down. Just like that walls around Zacchaeus' heart come tumbling down. Inside the city is a woman named Rahab. She used to be a harlot, but she became a bride, and a mother, the great great *(many greats)* grandmother of Jesus. Jesus is passing through Jericho on the way to Jerusalem, which is us. We were harlots and Jesus makes us His Bride and even His Mother.

Luke 19:1-3

[Jesus] *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.*

“No one seeks.” So, if Zacchaeus seeks, perhaps he's already been sought.

John 6:44 Jesus said,

“No one can come to me unless my father, who sent me, draws him.”

John 12 *“I will draw all men to myself . . . when I am lifted up.”*

And He meant lifted up on the tree.

“No one seeks,” but Zacchaeus sought and God rewards the one who seeks Him – God rewards him with Himself. If you seek God, you want to be rewarded with God. If you want to be rewarded with something else, you're not seeking God . . . you're using God, like a harlot, and you are a harlot with a wall around your heart.

John 19: 3-4

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 up into a sycamore tree...

This was not a sycamore like our sycamores, but a *sukamore*. It comes from the word *sukon*, which is Greek for “fig” and *moron*, which means mulberry.”

This is a picture of a *sukamore*.



Commonly called a “sycamore” tree. They are a type of fig tree; the kind the prophet Amos cultivated in ancient Israel. The fig tree is a symbol of Israel and the law. Remember that Adam and Eve hid themselves in fig leaves in the trees. The fig tree is the only tree that we know of that was in the Garden of Eden.

It very well may be a picture of the tree of knowledge, and the tree of life in the middle of the garden—the garden that has become the city of Jerusalem in the Revelation at the end of the story. Jesus was crucified on a tree in a garden in Jerusalem, that we call the cross. It’s the tree of law at which we realize we have written ourselves out of the story. And it’s the tree of life at which God writes us back into His story.

We climb the tree and realize that we’re out.

And God climbs the tree and grafts us back in.

It’s on that tree that we die to ourselves and live to God (made in the image of God).

It’s at that tree that we take His life and He fore gives His life.

It’s at that tree that we meet Jesus, The Plot, The Son of Man.

And He calls your name. He calls my name saying,

“Come down, (it is necessary) (I must abide) at your house this day.”

“Your house is my City, my Temple, my Bride and my Body.”

“You are my Jerusalem.”

“And this day is the Sabbath day, the seventh day, the day of rest.”

“Your warfare is over and your iniquity is pardoned.”

Jesus looked up into the tree, He saw, and He said, “Zacchaeus.”

The name Zacchaeus means “pure.”

No one thought Zacchaeus was pure, especially Zacchaeus. But Zacchaeus is no longer writing the story. God is writing the story, for God has already written the story. Jesus is looking at Zacchaeus. And Zacchaeus is looking at the Plot, the Beginning and the End of Zacchaeus, that which is most true about Zacchaeus. No one knows who Zacchaeus is, but Jesus knows who Zacchaeus is. He knows who he is and he tells him who he is: “Zacchaeus, my clean, bright, pure and shining one come down, it is finished!”

Jesus knew him all along. The way Luke tells the story, it appears that Jesus met Zacchaeus at the tree toward the end of Friday – (a good Friday) – and the beginning of Saturday, the Sabbath day. So Jesus will go to Zacchaeus' home for the Sabbath dinner that evening—the banquet! He will abide at Zacchaeus' house. He will commune at table with Zacchaeus, remain until the next evening, then early in the morning go up to Jerusalem and enter Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

Luke 19: 4

So he (Zacchaeus) ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree . . .

Do you think he simply decided to climb that tree?

Or did someone decide that he would decide to climb that tree?

Luke 19:4-7

So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree for he (Jesus) 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 stay at your house today." So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner."

What's happened? What's wrong with these people? They're angry at Grace. They don't like grace and God is grace. He is love for no reason. He is the reason. He is Grace. They're angry at grace. They don't want to be His story. They want to write their own story.

If you think you write your own story, you're lost. But to believe that God writes your story is to be found. So check it out: The one that was lost is found. And all those that thought they were found, are lost. Good thing the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost! Yet once they see that they're lost, then, they can know they've been found, since they also are sons of Abraham and the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.

Luke 19:8

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."

Zacchaeus receives Jesus joyfully and gives half of his possessions away joyfully.

He fulfills Jewish law and Roman law joyfully.

He fulfills all the commandments.

And no one tells him that he has to do it. He *wants* to do it.

It's like his right hand doesn't even know what his left hand is doing.

It's like he's lost himself and found himself.

It's like he sees something that others can't see.

It's like he hears music that others can't hear.

It's like a dance, like he's a dance – the dancing Body of the Son of Man.

Luke 19: 9 - 10

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."

Do you see? Do you hear? Zacchaeus was seeking Jesus because God in Christ Jesus was always seeking Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus didn't write the story, God wrote the story. The story is not dependent on Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus is dependent on the story. Zacchaeus doesn't change the story so much as the story changes Zacchaeus and that's the way all God's stories work.

I go to the movie theater not to apply the story to my self. I go to the movie theater to forget my self and then I find myself in the story. I don't apply the story to my life, but the story applies me to its life. The story is finished. I can't change "The Lord of the Rings," but every time I see it, hear it, or read it, it changes me – it makes me.

Star Trek is finished, but still making trekkies. And not because kids try to apply Leonard Nemoy to their lives. They watch Spock, imitate Spock, even worship Spock and become more "reasonable" like Spock. They don't apply James T. Kirk to their lives. They watch Kirk, imitate Kirk, even worship Kirk and become more "courageous," like Kirk. Star Trek makes trekkies, like the Gospel makes men and women in the image of God.

We don't apply Jesus to our lives so much as Jesus applies us to His life. We are His body. We watch the Son of Man – imitate the Son of Man, we participate in the Life of the Son of Man and become human – *"in the image of God."* The story is finished. "It is finished."

So, it's not about us and yet it's all about us. It creates us and that's not just some psychological trick. It's the reality of eternity unwrapping temporality. It's Jesus, The Plot, the Slaughtered Lamb standing on the throne unwrapping the scroll and giving eternal meaning to all temporal reality...including you!

You know, once you read a good story, *"It is finished,"* and you know the plot. *"It is finished,"* and yet it's not finished because you want to go back and find new meaning on every page. The plot changes the meaning of every moment: past, present and future.

A believer knows the plot for The Plot has found the believer at the tree. It's where we surrender the story we're writing and believe the story God has written. It's where all our sin is transformed by Grace into Grace. *"It is finished" – "it is accomplished."* When we see that, it changes the way we read the Bible and hear the Gospel. What we thought was just law becomes part of the story of Grace. It's no longer a threat, but the greatest of all news – good news.

We don't write the story, but we become the story. It's not about us and yet it's all about us. By grace through faith – *"It is finished."* When we see that it changes the way we hear the gospel and the way we tell the story. You don't have to threaten people, con people, or fix people. You don't have to write the story. You just have to tell the story because you want to, because it's "good news."

Say, “Look, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah has conquered – would you like to hear the story? “Look, the Lamb of God has taken away the sins of the world on the tree and “it is finished.” “Look, the Son of Man is receiving his Kingdom.” Look, he is coming to your house this day.” “Listen, the angels are already singing.”

At the end of January, I received an email from a man named Aiden in London. He had watched our *Hallelujah in Hell* video just the week before. In it we tell how on the tree God in Christ Jesus conquered hell and cried, “It is finished.” Aiden shared that he’d been a worship pastor in Ireland eleven years ago, but became disillusioned with the theology he heard, left his position and even playing music. He sank into depression and addiction, and thought about suicide. Finally, a week before he sent me the letter, he prayed a little prayer of what he called, “total and utter desperation.” Two hours later, at the advice of a friend, he watched the video that all of us made. He writes, “. . . this is when things start getting weird.” He explains that he’s a healthy sceptic, and then he writes:

Having listened to what you spoke about and the point where your daughter screamed signified Jesus singing in Hell I look up and bawled! I felt compelled to raise my hands and then, like out of nowhere, I felt my back arch inwardly and lift me upward. My shoulder blades felt like there were wings flapping, and while I won’t say I was lifted right out of my chair, it was pretty darn close. . . Needless to say, I was compelled to get on my hands and knees and just worship the true, living, and loving God.

The experience isn’t really what this email is about. That’s just the background. The following days were immense. The level of intimacy, the joy I felt, heck on Friday before my wife came home from work I ran across the street to the flower shop to get her flowers, such was my total love for God’s creation.

He explains how he had begun hearing melodies in the fan when he was falling to sleep, then he writes:

Last night having had a wonderful, alcohol free evening with my wife eating pizza and drinking 7up we retired. Do you think I could sleep? Nope. I began to hear what I can only describe as a choir of what must have been over 1,000,000 voices singing. It was so vivid I was actually able to run into my living room and work out that it was being sung on D Sharp. There were drums, and the most amazing saxophonist playing these crazy jazz free styles that would put Miles Davis to shame. There was so much noise I decided I’d join in. We have a dehumidifier in our living room, and I decided I would go out to my computer to tell my pal from my church back home about it. With the dehumidifier working away, suddenly the genre changed to a sort of Iron Maiden type set-up. The singer was belting it out Brice Dickenson style, but in a language I had never heard. . .

He explains how he did research on the computer trying to figure out if it was a medical condition. When that didn’t make sense he went to the kitchen at 1:30 to have a smoke.

Then the noise of the fridge started making music, he writes, and I just shook my head in disbelief. A new genre! Brilliant. Now it was a sort of Shane MacGowan

folk ballad, and the voice albeit sounding like Shane, spoke in a language I didn't understand.

He finally went to bed . . . where the fan is.

He writes:

No more gospel angel voices now. The genre had changed again! Same fan, different song (no pun). All praise, all language I do not understand . . . I feel light. I feel that finally I have realized God chose me. It was always the other way around for me: I found Jesus; I asked Him into my heart; I sought him.

Now this is the gospel: God sought Aiden and God sought us and saved us and: *"It is finished."* And so: *"Every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them"* praises the Lord God and the Lamb on the throne. It's good news, even though we're just beginning to hear it, and just beginning to sing with the angels.

When we tell the story like it depends on us we give glory to men and create pride, fear, doubt, anxiety, and shame. We create false men trapped in hell. When we tell the story like it depends on God and *"it is finished,"* we give glory to God and His gospel creates men and women who look like Jesus and begin to sing with the angels.

God created all things –sustained all things and arranged all things in order to meet Zacchaeus at the tree and proclaim good news: *"Zacchaeus I must abide in your house this day."* And God created, sustained and organized all things in order to meet you at the tree and proclaim good news. In seven days, Jesus would be on the tree instead of Zacchaeus. Eventually, all will meet Him there as He says, *"Father forgive..."* and *"It is finished"*—The End.

Now, if you're thinking, "fine, but what do I do?" Well, keep the commandments. Sincerely, I'm telling you keep the commandments. And, hey look [Peter turns to the cross] – there's a tree.

Communion

And Jesus took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to you; take and eat." And in the same manner, after supper, He took the cup and said, "This cup is the covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Take and eat. Take and drink. Eat and drink me!"

Do you see? Do you hear? Do you hear what God is saying? He calls your name and He says, "Hurry and come down from that tree. It is finished, and now I must abide at your house this day."

In Jesus' name believe the gospel, Amen.

Benediction

Please just close your eyes, if you would. I want to ask you some questions: Do you feel short in stature?

Do you feel inadequate?

Do you feel like you've failed?

Have you been excluded?

You're in a tree, and you see others,

And you kind of hope that they don't see you,

Yet you want someone to see you?

You want someone to find you?

Look! There's a Man at the base of the tree, and He's staring up at you. You look in His eyes. He knows who you are; He sees you! And He calls your name:

Peter! Susan! Jess! Kathleen! Hurry up and come down from there. Come down from that tree! Don't you know it's finished? And I must come to your house this day. And by the way, this day is the seventh day. This is a day that does not end, and you are my mobile home. We're going places!

Well see? That's good news! Believe the good news, and live like you believe the good news! In Jesus' name, Amen.

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.