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## WHEN SALVATION COMES INTO A HOUSE

Sermon by Rev. Wm. Dobson, Pastor of First Methodist Church, Charlottetown.

The Humility of Zaccheus, who was Honored by His House Being Entered by Jesus—He was Seeking Jesus and was Rewarded.

(Reported by The Guardian Stenographer.)

Text: Luke, 19. 9. And Jesus said unto him, "This day is salvation come unto this house."

There is just one thought in the text I wanted to emphasize tonight, and perhaps we shall be able to see it and put the emphasis upon it better by getting clearly in our minds the setting of the text. Our Lord had spoken the parable of the Good Shepherd in the hearing of the Jews. It awakened envy in their hearts and they began to press him to say what their law held to be blasphemy, and at last he said it: He said that God was his father: that at once took up stones to stone him and to get out of their way, he went across to the other side of the Jordan and lodged in a city called Ephraim, and while there became very popular. He was there when Lazarus, of Bethany in Judaea, took sick. It was to Ephraim that his sister sent the messenger. After he received the message you remember he tarried two or three days, then commenced his last journey to Jerusalem, a throne following him. He crossed the Jordan just below Jericho, moved up toward the city and then, with a tremendous concourse of people, entered, and was passing through Jericho. It was then that the attention of Zaccheus, the chief publican or tax gatherer, of Jericho, was arrested by a crowd. He was desirous, so the context says, of seeing Jesus, he sought to see them but there were difficulties in the way which might have discouraged a greater man. Whatever may be the excellencies or the defects of being short or tall there are times when the short man is at a disadvantage, and one of these times is in a crowd, especially if the crowd be made up of tall persons. Such was the case with Zaccheus, he was little of stature, he could not see the Man in the centre of the crowd. He was seeking to see Him and he determined to supply the natural defects by artifice. He ran before the crowd, climbed up into a fig tree, or, as the Bible says, a sycamore tree, thus to his defects supplying earnestness and ingenuity. Not a very dignified position you say for an officer of the law, not a very dignified position for a man of wealth, still he was there, and as Jesus was passing by he looked up and saw him and said to him, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must abide at thy house," and he made haste and came down and received him joyfully and took the Christ into his own house and his conduct was such, that the Son of God said "This day is salvation come to this house," forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham.

Now the first thing I want to emphasize is this. The man was seeking Jesus. The very same word is used that is used in the next verse, where it is said that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost. Zaccheus was seeking to see Jesus. Now the motive lying at the base of his action could easily be interrupted as curiosity, if it were not for the whole setting of the text. Curiosity has prompted men to do this very thing but the outcome was very different. A Pharisee on one occasion, who had been listening to Christ, invited him to dinner; he went but the Pharisee paid him no particular attention. He felt that the Nazarene, homeless, penniless, was greatly honored by coming into his house and it was not necessary for him to give Jesus water to wash his hands, it was not necessary to salute him with the Oriental kiss, it was honor enough for the Nazarene to be invited to the house of an aristocrat. Christ went and talked with Simon but left him an unsaved man. Curiosity prompted the Pharisee, nothing more. The case was different with Zaccheus, the outcome was also different. Zaccheus felt it an honor, that a man who had stilled a tempest, turned water into wine, a man whose fame was throughout all Judaea from Galilee to Jerusalem, famed for holiness, for straightforwardness, for sinlessness, should stop on his way through the city and call him, a publican, a man who was farming the Roman taxes in Jericho, and by that very one act had put himself outside the Jewish church, to be a farmer of Roman taxes, to be an official of the Roman government, was to renounce his patriotism to Judaea. Zaccheus felt this the moment he came in contact with so holy a Jew. They began to murmur saying, "He is going to be a guest with a man who is a sinner." Feeling that this man

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of purity, this man of fame, this man of sinlessness, would stoop so low as to come into his house, a man despised by his friends and co-religionists, and by the church in which he was brought up, the man's humble position put him in such relations with Jesus that Jesus uttered the words of the text: This day is salvation come unto this house.

But again, while it points us to the fact that the publican's conduct differed very much from that of the Pharisee, it points to something deeper than curiosity. We must go down below that in order to interpret the whole scene correctly, and when we get down we feel that this man was like many others in his time, he was restless for want of something that he could not find, he was seeking Jesus to see if this problem of life could be solved. It was this longing, yearning spirit that prompted him to seek the Christ. It was the knowledge of this that prompted Christ to stand on the way in Jericho and say to him, "Zaccheus come down, for today I must abide at thy house." So if this be true, we want to put the emphasis here, that it is the seeking sinner and the seeking Christ that meet, and the resultant of that meeting is salvation for the sinner and glory to God. I have very serious doubts about a man finding much more than he is seeking especially in matters that are religious. I think it is saying, "A man always finds that for which he is looking". If you and I be conscious of the realities of life, and I think every profound nature must be, we are conscious of this one thing, that there is nothing in ordinary life that will meet the longings of our nature, and satisfy the longings of our soul. Seeking to see Jesus because there is unsatisfied nature within us. I do not think a man ever wants Christ until he feels that need in some way or other; and yet when a man faces the matter fairly he feels there is that in him which is demanding something that the world cannot give. Look out our own hearts and see if it is not true. It seems to me that the history of our world is one long cry of this statement. What young man is ever satisfied with education, can the soul be satisfied with scholarship? Newton stands as a proof that it cannot be. You cannot satisfy the longings of the human soul with wealth. Few men ever reach the point where they are satisfied with what they have made. Did you ever hear or read of a man who was satisfied with power? The very increase of power begets the appetite for more. It is said of Alexander of Macedonia that after he had conquered the world, he wept because he was not able to conquer more. It is the teaching of history that there is something in the human soul that cannot be satisfied with that which is of the world.

It is the longing that keeps every religion alive whether true or false. Upon it christianity rests. Rule it out today if you will, but it will be back in a year. The human heart is craving for something to satisfy its longing. This is what has erected the altars on every hilltop and in every grove through the past. It is the longing of the human soul for something that the world has failed to give. You and I feel that this longing in our heart is consciousness that somehow we are out of harmony with God. The more I look down into the depths of my nature, the more I bring it in touch with my conceptions of God, the more I am afraid to meet Him. I did something yesterday that was wrong and I feel guilty. I go through the whole record of my life, and I would not like to meet the judgment with many things said and did uncancelled. I am seeking how to get rid of them, how to apologize for them, now, this is just what the Christ has come into the world for, to settle these discords, meet these longings, satisfy this yearning of the soul. These longings satisfied is what is meant by the word, "salvation" as we have it in the text. This day is salvation come to this house, this day a man is pardoned, this day a man has peace with God, this day there is harmony between a man and the Eternal Son of God, this day a man has become heir of God and joint heir with Jesus Christ. So then the seeking Christ is very little avail unless there is the seeking sinner ready to meet Him. And it is to produce this seeking, to stir up this consciousness in our minds, to stir up this longing, this yearning, this consciousness of sin that the Holy Spirit is striving with men. Every man has felt this striving as he has endeavored to show us our wants, our difficulties, our lack of harmony with God. And with these influences acting upon us, prompting us, unless we set out to find the remedy, to seek the Saviour, they seem for us of little avail unless we are seeking too. Well, you say, how am I to be sure that this will satisfy the longings, the desires, the fair, the troubles, with which I have to contend with every day. I do not think I could answer that. There are certain things you and I can never learn only by doing them. I can tell you how to do a certain proposition in geometry, but you cannot learn it without working it. You can never be master of arithmetic without working it; I could tell you how to write in cursive, but the only way you can learn to write in cursive, there is no other way. The only way you can

meet the Christ is to meet him. The only way you can learn the effect of that meeting is to meet him. The preacher and the teacher may lead you a long way but there is a point where you must take the responsibility and act yourself, there is no other way for salvation. But I know you will suggest difficulties again, if I were only sure you say. Well, I am not sure that my boy can study mathematics, but I am not sure he has brains enough, but if he try I shall know. I am not sure I can do much till I try it.

Well, you say; but there are graver doubts than these, I am not sure that the record of Jesus as it has been given in a correct record, I am not sure that that Man of Nazareth ever spoke the word of pardon or raised Lazarus from the dead, well what difference does all these things make? I am not sure that Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews; I am not quite clear upon the incarnation and the resurrection; well, what difference do all these make? I suppose there is not a christian man in the world today who does not find many and great difficulties in the Bible, and if you and I keep emphasizing our difficulties we will never be saved. The only way for you and me to settle these difficulties is to put this Man of Nazareth to the test, and if he fail I think you have a right to doubt, but even then you will have behind you the whole testimony from Calvary to 1906, of men who have felt its power, men who have been saved by coming in contact with the Christ.

There is a seeking Saviour, for I think, he was passing that way intentionally. He passed by to meet Zaccheus and to meet blind Bartimeus as well, for these two events occurred at the same time, and we find both men watching, seeking. One man cried, "Jesus, thou son of David have mercy upon me." At this the Son of God stood still. And when he came to the tree he used these words, "It is necessary" that it is part of my plan, that I stay at your house today. A seeking soul compels the Christ of God, a seeking soul will stop a seeking Saviour, a seeking soul compels the Eternal. He has sworn that he will not say unto one of the seeking sect of Jacob, "seek ye my face in vain". So then the seeking soul has the guarantee that the Christ is seeking him, and the soul open to receive Him will compel the Christ and bring salvation into his heart! Let us then try this experiment and see for ourselves this power the Man of Galilee has to save, meet the deepest wants of our nature.

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