



Committed - 1

Zacchaeus: *Committed To Transformation*

**Payson United Methodist Church
August 16, 2020**

Sing along with Gail: *Your Love Awakens Me.mov*

Sing along with Gail Hymn #419: *I Am Thine, O Lord.mov*

Today we begin a new series entitled "Committed." In this series we will examine various aspects of what it means to be committed to following Jesus. I see countless people who appear to be frustrated with their relationship with Jesus. I have had people share their various levels of frustration through the years. Listening to the frustration breaks my heart because Jesus did not want or envision His followers having a frustrating experience following Him.

But here is the bottom line concerning one's walk with Jesus: following Jesus requires a deep level of commitment. Without commitment, there is no true walk with Jesus.

Today we will observe an interaction between Jesus and a man who was despised by his fellow countrymen. He was a man who was looking for something different, Zacchaeus needed a transformation!

Scripture: Luke 19:1-10

Zacchaeus the Tax Collector

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. **2** A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. **3** He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short, he could not see over the crowd. **4** So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."

6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

⁹ Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

As we observe the interaction between Jesus and Zacchaeus, we will gain insights concerning the amazing transformation that occurs once one is committed to Christ.

Sing along with Gail: Jesus Calls Us.mov

SERMON: *Committed to Transformation*

Today's lesson starts with the understanding that Transformation begins with seeking Jesus. Transformation is a process and a metamorphosis. The difference between transformation and conformation is distinct. To conform is to be like someone or something. To transform is to change the condition or purpose of someone or something. Our hearts and our behaviors experience internal and external transformation.

Remember this Sunday School song? "Zacchaeus was a wee little man; a wee little man was he..." While his physical stature was small, Zacchaeus was, in reality, no "wee little man." He was actually a powerful man in Jericho. He was the chief tax collector for the area. Zacchaeus, despite his wealth and position, was not a popular man. He was hated by his own countrymen.

Zacchaeus was a reminder to the Jews they were not an autonomous nation. Zacchaeus took. He collected their money and sent most of it to Rome. This system, under which Zacchaeus flourished, a tax collector gained his income by extorting more money from the people than he had contracted to pay the Roman government. This system had evidently worked well for Zacchaeus.

Here is a man who had power and wealth, he reached the pinnacle of success in his field, yet he knew something was missing. All of his success came at a steep price. Do YOU know someone in that position? Do we sometimes find *ourselves* in that position? Have you achieved a level of success only to find yourself lonely and empty or worse ashamed of yourself for your greed and lack of compassion?

Zacchaeus was wealthy but terribly unhappy.

Mark 8:36 (NIV) What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?

What price are we willing to pay? Zacchaeus paid a steep price for his wealth. Zacchaeus knew something was missing and it was time to fill the hole in his heart. Our passage tells us he was trying to see Jesus.

Why would he seek Jesus? We have to assume he had heard Jesus teach at some point, or he heard about some of the great lessons Jesus taught and something inside of him compelled him to seek out Jesus! Here is a grown man, a powerful man, who is literally running through the streets and alleys of Jericho trying to see Jesus.

Zacchaeus was determined to catch a glimpse of Jesus. It was a courageous thing for Zacchaeus to even be in a crowd, lest some zealot give him the gift of the end of a knife in the crowd. In the crowd he would have been vulnerable to physical harm.



Jesus would have been a little difficult to find in the middle of a crowd since He would not have been dressed in fancy clothing that would have made it easy for Him to be noticed. Nevertheless, Zacchaeus was seeking Jesus. Something had given him hope that Jesus could transform his miserable life. Transformation only comes through Jesus. These two key passages help us understand that.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV) And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!