

November 19th, 2017

ICA Sunday Pulpit Message

Zacchaeus' Thanksgiving (Luke 19:1-10)

<Intro> Puritan's Thanksgiving

I have a memory of Korean Thanksgiving. When I moved to America, we have thanksgiving here as well. One time, I was invited to dinner to taste the turkey. Even though it was very dry, I told them that it was very delicious. I thought, "How come Americans eat turkey during Thanksgiving?" Of course, later on I noticed: in the beginning this was performed by the Puritans, who suffered a lot when they first arrived in America. I read something that someone wrote. The title was, "Pay a Pilgrims Thank". It told of how the Puritans gave thanks; in order to give thanks, what did they go through that they had no other choice but to give thanks? They didn't give thanks because they were sound and successful. We tend to become happy when things work out the way we want. However, greater thanksgiving comes out when you face difficulties and they are solved.

This happened in December 1620. 110 people rode on the boat, yet about half of them died on their way. The survivors were thankful because they were healthy. They chopped up trees and made cabins. They were able to stay inside and be away from the cold, and they were thankful for that. If something turned out well, that's not what they were thankful for; they were thankful for being able to survive. Even though their houses were made out of trees, they were thankful for being away from the cold. The place they came to was Plymouth. All they had were the seeds they brought with them, but the soil was different, so nothing grew. However, they received help from the Native Americans and planted the maize, which was successful. They chased turkeys and roasted them to eat. Having corn and eating turkey, they were thankful for all of these things. Turkey isn't that great, but because of this ancestry, Americans eat it during Thanksgiving. I hope that during Thanksgiving, when you eat corn or turkey, you remember the ancestors who came here and suffered.

1. Zacchaeus' outer appearance (Luke 19:1-2)

- 1) Chief Tax Collector
- 2) Rich

What about Zacchaeus? Who was he and how did he come to know Jesus. At this time, the Romans colonized the Jews, making them unable to be away from the Romans. Of course, with colonization comes with tension between the Jews and

the Romans. Zacchaeus used this time well; he said that he was well off since he was rich. He was the chief tax collector, and since he had money, he had power as well. The soldiers of Rome were protected and intimidated by the tax collectors. When Rome was colonized, the collection of tax money gave a better economic circulation. The Jews didn't like him because they thought of Zacchaeus as a betrayer. A long time ago, a similar thing happened in Korea when Japan colonized the country. This happened in Germany and France as well. In history, when the Nazis were conquering the European countries, some countries were helping them out. After the war, they had to go to their own countries. They were killed. They said, "you are on of our people, but why did you help the enemy?" The females would shave their hair and walk in the streets naked; how shameful would that have been? The sin for them was helping the Germans. This same concept was applied to the Romans tax collectors. For Romans, it was a good thing to get the taxes because it helped out the country's economy. For example, the tax collectors would take taxes, keep half, and give the other half to the country. The Jews, however, were very angry about this, so they would curse the tax collectors.

In Israel, there were many beggars who would ask for money, but they would never take the money of a tax collector. They truly disliked the tax collectors.

2. Zacchaeus' inner status (Luke 19:3-4)

- 1) Social concern
- 2) Concerns on faith

Zacchaeus was a tax collector. Even though he had a lot of money and he had authority in Rome, he had a lot of suffering in his heart; he felt as if he's betrayed his own country. He collected money from people which was going against Jesus' law, so he was conflicted. To his nation, he felt distant and conflicted. So he was a troubled man. He had that burden of collecting money for Rome. Amidst this, the Israelites were thinking and had this conscience. They knew that the Messiah would come to solve their sufferings and disasters; it cannot be like this. Just like it is promised in the Bible, someone must come along and start a new thing for them. They were expressing it as a type of ideology. Zacchaeus followed this ideology, but he heard something: that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. He heard that this Jesus was performing all these miracles. So Zacchaeus thought, "is this the Person that can help me through my problems?"

3. His true thanksgiving

- 1) He enjoyed Jesus and accepted Him (Luke 19:6)

2) He confessed that he would follow God's word (Luke 19:8)

He also heard that this Jesus was close by, so he wanted to see Him and went up on a tree to gaze across the massive crowd. Zacchaeus' outer appearance was very distant, but his inner turmoil was leading him to want to see Jesus. He heard a rumor that Jesus was a Friend of the tax collectors and the sinners. Out of His disciples, He raised one to be a tax collector. All of the Israelites hated tax collectors, so who is this Jesus who didn't hate them? He was curious, so he wanted to see this Man. However, Zacchaeus was very short, so he wasn't able to see across the crowd, so he climbed the tree. If you're short, you cannot climb a tree, but he didn't lose that hope; he believed that it was his only opportunity to see Jesus among the crowd. With this expectation, he climbed the tree, and all of a sudden, their eyes met. One-on-one, their eyes met, and Zacchaeus saw Jesus. Now, Zacchaeus didn't say much, but Jesus saw the heart of Zacchaeus. He said, "Zacchaeus, come down from the tree." Jesus didn't greet him, but told him, "I must stay at your house." The Israelites didn't go near the houses of tax collectors, so people were shocked when they heard that Jesus would go. They talked behind his back, and Zacchaeus was surprised that Jesus would do that, despite the reaction. He was very thankful. Even though Jesus didn't hear a lot of words, He knew Zacchaeus and what he wanted. Even though the people hated Zacchaeus, Jesus accepted Him. We are thankful for a lot of things, but we are most thankful when other people recognize us. Zacchaeus knew that he is very sinful, but Jesus still came to his house, and Zacchaeus was very thankful for this. Jesus said that Zacchaeus was a descendant of Abraham, and that salvation was upon Zacchaeus' house.

Before the Republic of Korea, during the Joseon Dynasty, a king ran away with his guards to hide. The king went into the house of a farmer, and begged the farmer to let him stay for one night. The farmer realized that this person was not an average civilian, so he let him stay and gave them something to eat. Though the king asked for one night, he stayed the next day as well. They continued together, and after time passed, the king came back to the throne, and he came with a heart of thankfulness. To show his thankfulness, the king called for the farmer. The king asked if the farmer needed anything, and the farmer said that he only had one request: the farmer said that it'll be his birthday soon, and he asked if the king could come back and have a meal with him for his birthday. On the countryside, they had a birthday, and the king and his servants came. The rumors spread that, "Ah, that man's house is where the king came." So hearing those rumors, all the rich people came to visit the farmer's house. They said that if something happened to you, let the king know about me. Those people continued to give him gold and property, and the farmer became very rich. So if

someone like the king came to visit your house, it's a very important thing; similarly, Jesus came to Zacchaeus' house.

What does it mean that you're the descendant of Abraham? It means that you're a child of faith, and that you'll receive the same blessings as Abraham did. For this, Zacchaeus was very thankful. Zacchaeus didn't climb that tree for money; he climbed because he had a conflicted heart, and Jesus realized it. No one else knew about this heart except Jesus, so the blessing of God was upon him, and God was with him. With this realization, Zacchaeus was very thankful. I hope that you will have this blessing as well.

We all have our own worries that no one else will recognize, and no one else will resolve. Zacchaeus' outer appearance shows that he doesn't have any problems, but in reality, he had his own scars. This is the same for us too, and we must be willing to let Jesus into our hearts. So as we give this Thanksgiving worship, what must we remember? Who will recognize me? Who will embrace me? Who will satisfy me? It is ONLY Jesus Christ. Your children, your significant other, your spiritual leader will not be able to do this; they can help you, but it is ultimately Jesus who can help you and accept you. That's how Jesus and Zacchaeus connected.

Zacchaeus opened his heart. The evidence of this is his willingness to give the people around him all the help they need, be it financially or otherwise. He wasn't boasting that he had money. He was just saying that he wanted to help however he could.

So when you receive grace but have no choice but to give thanks, you will experience this as well. Spiritually, you will help them. All the wrongdoings, Zacchaeus would pay back four-times fold. Why did he say this? It meant that he wanted to follow the Word of God. He was confessing that he would help those in need and open his heart to follow God. Because of the political circumstances, people didn't like Zacchaeus, but Zacchaeus was able to overcome this conflict and pain. True thanksgiving comes from our thoughts and our minds. If God doesn't hold you, then you will surely die. If God takes everything from you, everything will disappear. You need to be thankful that you can live a healthy life. What you think, you should give thanks to. The things you lost, the scars you hold, you must give thanks for all of them. If you believe in this, you must give thanks in all circumstances. The grace that you have received from God, you should be thankful for when you think of this. That is how you express your thanks. When you receive grace, you will think and you will give thanks.

The person who wrote Hymn 405, "Amazing grace", is John Newton. His occupation was the trafficking of slaves. However, when he found Jesus, he stopped his ways. Even

though he sold slaves, even though he was a sinner, he realized God's grace. He repented and worked for God. I hope that you will restore your thanksgiving within Christ. Then, not the worldly success, but God's success will be upon you. When you are truly thankful and truly have the joy within you, only then will you have true happiness. Inside of that thanks, you will give praise.

<Conc> Our thanksgiving topics (Luke 19:9-10)

So what is our conclusion? Do you believe that Jesus has come to you and your household? Believe that you and your household will be saved. Jesus Christ is with you and with your family. You will be the descendants of Abraham and receive the blessings he's received as well. Even though Jesus is God, He came in the form of a Man. It means that He's just like us, but He's an example that we should follow Him. As children of God, you live on this physical world for the purpose of saving lost souls. I hope you can save these lost souls. That is the true meaning of Thanksgiving. Being able to save others, that's the greatest thanksgiving. That is the reason why He called us His children. Live a life that can save other lives. That is why you met Jesus. Because you think that you're not good-looking, that's why Jesus came to you. If you give and express true thanksgiving, God will bless you.

<Prayer>

Almighty Father God, we praise You who is precious. Thank You for saving us as our Father. We have given this Thanksgiving worship to You, and we are listening to Your voice through the pulpit message. I confess that no one takes care of me but You. Not only do You understand me, but You also proclaimed that I am the descendant of Abraham. Thank You for allowing us to thank and give thanks. Those who are poor in health, help us to save them. For those who have lost their vision to help, let us help them. May You receive our thanks. In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.