

Luke 19:1-10  
October 30, 2016

**Luke 19:1-10**

1 He entered Jericho and was passing through it. 2 A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. 3 He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. 5 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." 6 So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. 7 All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." 8 Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." 9 Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!  
Amen.

Today we remember the reformation, which took place 499 years ago. Yes, next year will mark the 500<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of this storied event in which, all these years later, reveals a God who is continually at work ushering in the kingdom of God and opening the eyes of all people to the vastness of God's love. While there is no way in one sermon the magnitude of theological and doctrinal issues of the reformation could be presented with any justice I do believe we can get to the very heart of the reformation with one word - Grace. It is what grabbed hold of Martin Luther all those years ago when he struggled mightily to find a loving God when the only God he had known was an angry and vindictive God whom he would never be able to please and be right with. Romans 3 states, "Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God;

they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Grace is a sheer gift from God. Grace is something that often comes unexpectedly when we feel as if we don’t deserve it. Grace is unconditional. Grace is freeing as our text from John 8 gives witness to. Grace unlocks doors once thought permanently locked. Grace is God making possible what humans deem impossible. Grace changes and transforms. Grace opens eyes to see a God as Luther came to see God through the life of Jesus Christ – a God who is merciful and slow to anger, a God full of grace and compassion, a God of love and forgiveness.

Luke 19:1-10 may never be the appointed text assigned as we gather year-after-year to celebrate and remember the reformation but there is no doubt it is a most applicable text because it is all about grace. It is about Jesus once again seeking out and saving the lost. It is about Jesus continually revealing God’s grace extends to those whom the world so often deems stand outside of it. It is about Jesus opening eyes, hearts, and minds to who God is and to a kingdom that knows no boundaries and limits which is something we simply can’t grasp because no matter how hard we try we still want to put limits on God’s grace. Haven’t we all at some point in our lives muttered the words, “There is no way so and so could ever get into heaven because they are a (fill in the word) or they have done (fill in the word)?” The biblical witness gives us proof that when we draw a line, when we cast judgement upon another, when we perceive someone is a worse sinner than we are, when we write off another because they appear

different than we are, that Jesus is often found on the other side of that line. That's what happens in our text today. The crowd grumbles when Jesus tells Zacchaeus to come down out of the tree, when he acknowledges this sinner, and they certainly can't grasp why Jesus would invite himself over to Zacchaeus' house for a meal and a meal in that day wasn't just simply inviting a new neighbor over for a quick get to know you. No, it was a symbol of friendship. It was a sign of loyalty. It was an extension of love. This meal was sheer grace. Zacchaeus, a scandalous and despised tax collector, was a sinner. He was unworthy. He was unclean. He was outside of God's grace but now he found himself at the table with the Son of God. Just a chapter earlier Jesus had another encounter with a rich man – a ruler. Jesus had advised that rich man to sell all he had; however, the man could not. He could not part with all his wealth. If we recall, he had done everything else commanded by the law – he had not committed adultery, he had not stolen or murdered, he hadn't gossiped about his neighbors and he had never dishonored his mother or father. Yet, when Jesus told him to sell all his money he simply couldn't come to terms with that request. It seemed he was doomed and would never enter the kingdom of God and that left the crowd gathered dismayed and left asking, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus responded to their question with these words, "What is impossible for mortals is possible with God." Just a few short verses later, Luke gives testimony to the truth of this prophecy in that this rich tax collector has been saved. The impossible has happened. There is nothing we can do on our own to be

saved. It is Jesus who saves by means of the grace of God. The very essence of the reformation, “we are saved by grace through faith.”

Now, back to that statement that when we draw lines, cast judgement, write someone off that appears different than us and then realize Jesus stands on the other side of that line does that imply he is not standing with us? Absolutely not because the grace and promise of Romans 3 continues to hold firm, “Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Grace abounds. We fall short of the glory of God. We sin. But we are made right. We are made whole. We are forgiven. Not by anything we do but solely by God’s gift of grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. He sees us. He calls out to us and invites us to share a meal with him. A meal that gives life through his death and resurrection. A meal that rescues us from our sin and restores us to a right relationship with him. A meal in which we catch a glimpse of the kingdom where there is enough for all who attend. A meal where the once lost are found. A meal of grace. Amen.