The Son of Man in This Lost World

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"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."
Luke 19:10

Psalter 312: 1, 4 – 6
Psalter 143: 1, 3
Luke 18: 35 – 19: 10
Psalter 227: 1- 3
Psalter 403: 1 ,3
Psalter 422: 5

Introduction
We ask your prayerful attention for the Word of God. Our text is found in Luke chapter 19, verse 10, where the Lord Jesus says: "*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*." These few words bring us very close to the heart of the Gospel. They tell us *who* Jesus is, *why* He came into this world, *whom* He seeks, and *what* He does for those whom He finds. At the same time, they tell us something very serious about ourselves. Jesus did not come into a world filled with people who were almost saved and only needed a little help. He came into a lost world. He came to seek those who are lost, and He came to save them. That is our theme this morning:

The Son of Man in This Lost World

1. The Son of Man *Has Come*
2. The Son of Man *Seeks*
3. The Son of Man *Saves*

Our text comes from the well-known history of Zaccheus. The Lord Jesus is on His final journey toward Jerusalem. He knows what is awaiting Him. He knows that the religious leaders will reject Him; He knows that He will suffer, that He will be condemned and crucified, and that He will lay down His life as a ransom for sinners. Yet He continues. No one forces Him to go to Jerusalem. He goes willingly: willingly He came to do the will of His Father and to finish the work given to Him.

Before He reaches Jerusalem, however, He passes through Jericho. And in Jericho there is one man whom He will meet. That man is Zaccheus. To the people of the city, Zaccheus may be only a hated tax collector, but in the purpose of God he is one of the lost whom the Son of Man has come to seek.

Jericho was a city with a long and remarkable history. In the days of Joshua, the people of Israel came to Jericho when they entered the promised land. Humanly speaking, the city was very strong, but the Lord fought for His people. The walls fell, and Israel took the city. Joshua then spoke a curse upon the man who would rebuild it. Many centuries later, during the reign of King Ahab, Hiel the Bethelite rebuilt Jericho. And the Word of God was fulfilled exactly. He laid its foundation at the cost of his oldest son, Abiram, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son, Segub. Jericho therefore carried memories of

judgment, but also of the faithfulness of God. What God spoke, He fulfilled. And now, many centuries later, the Lord Jesus enters this same city, bringing not only a message of judgment but also the wonderful message of saving grace.

Among the people of Jericho is Zaccheus. He is not simply a tax collector; he is the chief tax collector, a man of position and wealth. Yet his wealth has not brought him the love of the people. The Jews hated the publicans because they collaborated with the Roman occupiers, and many tax collectors became rich by demanding more money than was required. Zaccheus therefore had money and influence, but he did not have the respect of the people around him. To many people he was simply a traitor and public sinner. But this very man heard about Jesus, and something moved him to seek the Lord. Because he was short and could not see over the crowd, he ran ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree. He wanted to see Jesus as He passed by. We do not know exactly what was already taking place in his heart, but he was seeking Jesus, and we know that his heart and life were about to radically change.

Perhaps Zaccheus only climbed the tree because he was curious. Some commentators think that the Lord was already working in his heart. Scripture does not tell us everything, and therefore we must be careful not to say more than the Bible says. Yet the name of Jesus was known everywhere. People had heard about His miracles, His teaching, and the authority with which He spoke. They also knew that He received publicans and sinners. Levi, who later became Matthew, had been such a tax collector. The religious leaders kept their distance from men like him, but Jesus sought them. No, He did not excuse sin or make sin unimportant, but He sought sinners, called them to repentance, and graciously changed their lives. Zaccheus may have wondered whether there could also be hope for a man like him.

And then something remarkable happens. Jesus comes to the very place where Zaccheus is sitting in the tree. Verse 5 tells us that He looked up and saw him. This was not an accidental glance. Jesus knew exactly where Zaccheus was. He knew his name, his past, his sins, his heart, and his deepest need. Then He said: “Zaccheus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house.” Notice especially that small, but important word *must*. Jesus did not say that He might visit Zaccheus. He said that He *must* abide at his house. There was a divine purpose in this meeting. Zaccheus thought that he had climbed the tree to see Jesus, but in a far deeper sense Jesus had come to Jericho to find Zaccheus. Zaccheus was looking with his eyes, but Christ was seeking him with saving grace.

The people of Jericho did not understand this. They began to murmur because Jesus had entered the house of a man whom they regarded as a notorious sinner. They could see the sins of Zaccheus very clearly, but they did not see their own. That is still possible today. It is very easy to speak about the sins of another and to see everything that is wrong in his or her life. Yet the Gospel brings the question much closer: what about me? Am I right with God? Have I been changed by grace? Do I know something personally of Christ as the Savior of the lost? Jesus did not come to please the people of Jericho. He came to do the will of His Father. And at the end of this history He explains the purpose of His actions in one sentence: “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Which brings us to consider our first point: *The Son of Man Has Come*

1. The Son of Man Has Come

Jesus says: “For the Son of man is come.” We must begin by asking what this title means. The Bible gives many wonderful names to the Lord Jesus. He is Jesus, Christ, the Savior, the Lamb of God, and the Son of God. Yet He often calls Himself the Son of man. This title takes us especially to Daniel chapter 7, where Daniel saw in a vision One like the Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days. He received dominion, glory, and a kingdom that would never pass away. The title “Son of man” is therefore not a weak title. It is a royal title, and a Messianic title. When Jesus uses it, He is declaring that He is the promised Messiah, the King whose kingdom will never end.

For the Jewish people, this was a very great claim. For centuries they had waited for the Messiah. Generation after generation had lived and died while looking forward to His coming. God had spoken through Moses and the prophets, and now Jesus stood among them and declared that He was the promised Messiah. He showed His identity through His words and works. He healed the sick, opened blind eyes, cleansed lepers, and even raised the dead. He spoke with an authority the people did not hear from the scribes. But many refused to believe. Many only saw Him as a teacher from Nazareth; others thought that He might be a prophet. But Jesus emphatically declares: “The Son of man is come.” The long-promised Messiah is here.

Who, then, is this Son of Man? We must be very clear about this. Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. He is truly God and truly man in one Person. His existence did not begin in Bethlehem. Before Bethlehem, I am. Before Abraham, I am. Before the world was created, He was with the Father. He shares the same divine nature with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He did not become God, and He did not receive His Godhead from another. He is God from eternity. This is not merely an interesting point of doctrine for theologians. It is necessary for our salvation, because our need is so great that no ordinary human being could ever rescue us.

Our sin is too deep for a mere man to remove, and our guilt is too great for any creature to pay. A minister cannot save us. An angel cannot save us. A saint cannot save us. Parents cannot save their children, and the church cannot save its members. We cannot save ourselves. No good work can remove our sin. No tear can pay one part of our debt. No amount of religious effort can break the power of sin or satisfy the justice of God. If salvation is to come, God Himself must save. Therefore the Savior must be truly God. When we hear the name Jesus, we must not only think of Him as a great teacher, a wonderful example, or an important prophet. He is the eternal Son of God, and therefore He has power to save even the greatest sinner.

At the same time, the eternal Son of God became truly man. That is the other side of this great wonder. He remained what He eternally was, namely God, and He became what He had not been before, namely man. The Apostle Paul speaks of “the man Christ Jesus.” He took a true human nature. He had a real body and a real human soul. He knew hunger, weariness, sorrow, pain, and tears. Yet He was completely without sin. Why did He become man? He became man so that He could suffer, shed His blood, and die. In His divine nature God cannot die, but the Son of God took our human nature so that He could stand in the place of sinners and bear the punishment that they deserved.

When Jesus walked through Jericho, He was already on His way to Golgotha. Every step brought Him closer to the cross. He knew what was before Him, yet He continued. He had come to offer the perfect sacrifice and to give His life as a ransom for many. There is therefore an infinite Gospel in the simple words: “the Son of man is come.” The eternal Son

entered this world for the salvation of sinners. He did not remain at a distance. He came into our human condition. He took flesh and blood. He came down into the depths of our misery, yet without sin, so that He might bring His people back to God.

But what moved Him to come?

First, He was sent by His Father. Salvation did not begin in the heart of fallen man. It did not begin because sinners asked God to send a Savior. It did not begin because people were searching for God. Salvation begins in God Himself. It comes from His eternal good pleasure and love. The Father sent the Son, the Son willingly came, and the Holy Spirit applies His saving work. Think again of Zaccheus. Why was he saved? Was he better than the other people in Jericho? No. Was he more worthy? No. Had he earned grace? No. His salvation came from God, from free grace and sovereign love. If anyone is saved, all the glory belongs to God.

This truth is deeply humbling. No child of God can ever say, "I was wiser than others. I made the first move. I saved myself." If the Lord had left us to ourselves, we would never have come. If He had not sought us, we would still be lost. Grace takes the first step. God is first. He awakens the sinner. He opens the heart. He gives repentance and faith. That does not make man a machine. The sinner truly repents, the sinner truly believes, truly comes, and truly seeks. But when he later looks back, he confesses that behind all of his seeking was the seeking grace of God.

Secondly, God had promised the coming of Christ long before He was born. Already after the fall into sin, when everything seemed hopeless, the Lord gave the first promise of the Gospel. Genesis 3:15 says: "*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*." Here, in the darkness after the fall, a light begins to shine. God promises the coming Savior. The seed of the woman will come, and He will bruise the serpent's head. Even before Adam and Eve were banished from Paradise, God spoke about Christ.

As the centuries pass, the promise becomes clearer. Moses speaks about a great Prophet who will come. The Psalms speak about the coming King. Isaiah speaks about the Servant of the Lord and the Man of Sorrows. Micah points to Bethlehem. Malachi speaks of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings. Again and again God adds another part to the promise. Then John the Baptist sees Jesus and says: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" For centuries God prepared the way. He promised the Savior, and God always keeps His promises. At last, in Bethlehem, the promise became history. The Word became flesh. The Savior came.

We must also notice the way in which the Son of God came. All power belongs to Him. The angels worship Him. Heaven is His throne. The earth is His footstool. We might have expected Him to come in a palace, surrounded by royal honor, servants, and earthly glory. But He did not come that way. He came in deep humiliation. He was born in poverty, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. He grew up in a humble home. He knew hunger and tiredness. He knew rejection and sorrow. Isaiah calls Him a Man of Sorrows. Yet through all of this He remained completely without sin.

John 1:14 says: "*And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth*." And John

3:16 says: "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*." Why did He come? The Father sent Him. Scripture promised Him. He came in deep humility. And He came because lost sinners can never save themselves. Without His coming there is no forgiveness, no hope, and no way back to God. But the Gospel says: "The Son of man is come." The Savior has come.

2. The Son of Man Seeks

Our second point is: The Son of Man Seeks. The text continues: "The Son of man is come to seek..." Think about that word, congregation. The Son of God seeks lost sinners. He does not wait until they first return to Him, because by nature we do not return. We have turned away from God. We seek comfort, money, pleasure, success, approval, and our own will. We naturally seek many things, but we do not truly seek the honor of God. Scripture tells us that there is none that seeketh after God. That is our natural condition.

Yet the Son of Man seeks. He seeks people who have turned their backs upon Him. He seeks people who break His commandments and live for themselves. He seeks those who do not deserve His grace. That is the wonder of the Gospel. How does He seek? He seeks through His Word, through the preaching of the Gospel, and through His dealings in our lives. When He truly saves a sinner, He also seeks inwardly through the powerful work of the Holy Spirit. He opens the heart so that the Word which has been heard many times suddenly becomes personal, serious, and living.

He is seeking through His Word this morning. The Gospel comes to children, young people, fathers, mothers, and older people. No one is too young to hear His voice, and no one is too old. Children, young people, whoever who are, hear the word of the LORD! Think of the many ways in which the Lord has already brought His Word near to you. Perhaps you were born in a Christian home. From your earliest years you heard the Bible. Your parents prayed with you. You learned Psalms. You were brought to church. You hear about creation, fall, redemption, and restoration; you hear about sin, grace, and the name of Jesus. These are not small things. They are great privileges, and one day God will ask you what you have done with them.

Many of us were also baptized as children. But baptism does not save us, the water itself does not renew our heart. Yet baptism is a holy sign. It tells us that we need cleansing. It points us to the blood of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. It reminds us that we have been brought under the preaching of God's covenant Word. We have heard much and received much, and therefore we are also responsible for much. One day we must stand before God. We cannot say that no one ever spoke to us about sin, grace, Christ, or eternity. The Lord has brought His Word very near.

As we grow older, the Lord continues to seek through the means He gives. He gives parents who warn us, teachers who instruct us, ministers who preach, the Bible in our homes, and the Lord's Day on which His Word is heard again. Again and again the message comes: you are lost in yourself, but there is salvation in Christ. Again the call comes to turn to Him, to seek Him, and not to harden the heart. Perhaps someone says, "I have heard all this for many years. I know the Bible and the sermons, yet my heart is still hard. Can Christ still seek such a person? Does Jesus still seek me?" The answer of Zaccheus is very clear.

Was Zaccheus naturally better than the other people in Jericho? No. Was he more worthy of grace? No. Had he prepared himself for salvation? No. He was a guilty, sinful, lost man. Yet

Jesus sought him. That is the great point of the history. Grace begins with God. God is first. He begins the work, calls, awakens, opens the heart, gives life, and brings the sinner to Himself. Before we truly seek Him, He seeks us. That does not mean that we may sit still and say, "Then I do not need to seek." The Gospel itself calls us to seek the Lord. But when a sinner truly begins to seek, he will later discover that grace was already seeking him.

The same truth appears again and again in Scripture. Saul of Tarsus was not looking for Christ on the road to Damascus. He was going there to persecute Christians. His heart was full of hatred against the church. Yet Christ stopped him and called him by name. Manasseh had lived in terrible sin and had gone far from God, but the Lord brought him low and sought him in his misery. The Samaritan woman did not go to Jacob's well to meet the Messiah; she went simply to draw water. Yet Jesus was already there. And Zaccheus climbed a tree to see Jesus, but before Zaccheus truly knew Jesus, Jesus knew Zaccheus and called him by name.

This remains the wonder of grace today. The Lord still seeks lost sinners. He seeks them through the Gospel. He stops them in their way. He shows them their sin. He makes His Word powerful in their hearts. He changes enemies into friends. He gives a new heart. He brings them to repentance and faith. And Christ does not seek sinners simply to show them that they are lost and then leave them there. He seeks them in order to save them. "*The Lord our God builds up His church; He seeks her wandering sons; He binds their wounds, and gently heals, the brokenhearted ones*."

Let us sing it from Psalter 403: 1 and 3

3. The Son of Man Saves

Our text says: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." He came to save. What does it mean to be saved? We use this word so often that we can easily forget how deep its meaning is. Sometimes Scripture speaks about being blessed. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says: "*Blessed are they that mourn*," and also: "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness*." To be blessed means to possess true happiness, not merely the short, trivial happiness that comes from money, health, success, or comfort. Biblical blessedness means to be happy in God, to be right with Him, to know Him, and to live in fellowship with Him.

By nature our hearts are restless. We search for happiness in many places. People look for happiness in money, work, relationships, travel, entertainment, possessions, and comfort. These things have their legitimate place, but none of them can fill the deepest need of the human heart, none of them fulfill our ulimate purpose of life. We were created for God. Christ brings lost sinners back to God. In Him there is true peace. In Him there is true joy. In Him there is a blessedness that the world cannot give and cannot take away.

In our text the word *save* especially means to rescue, and deliver from danger. The Son of Man came on a rescue mission. We sometimes use the word "save" in ordinary life. A person becomes very ill and the doctors save his life. Someone is caught in a rip and the lifeguards save his life. Yet the Bible here speaks about something infinitely deeper. It speaks about salvation from sin and guilt, from the power of Satan, from death, and from the judgment of God. It is not merely salvation for a few more years of earthly life. It is salvation for eternity.

To understand this salvation, we must understand our real problem. What is the greatest problem of every man, woman, and child? We hear about political problems, economic problems; we hear about war, poverty, sickness, family problems, loneliness, and fear. Our world is full of problems and all these matters are serious. But beneath all of them is a deeper problem: we are sinners before a holy God. God created us. He is good, holy, and righteous. We owe Him perfect love and obedience. Yet we rebelled against Him, broke His law, and add new sins every day. We carry guilt before God, and that guilt must be dealt with.

Salvation therefore means far more than having a good feeling. It is more than being moved during a sermon, more than singing a Psalm that touches your heart, and more than having a strong religious experience. A person may have many feelings and experiences and remain unchanged. True salvation means that a guilty sinner is delivered from condemnation. His sins are forgiven. His broken relationship with God is restored. He is delivered from the greatest evil, which is sin, and brought to the greatest good, which is fellowship with God.

Go back to the beginning of the Bible. God made everything very good. He created Adam and Eve in His own image, and there was perfect fellowship between God and man. There was no guilt, fear, death, or separation. Then Genesis 3 tells us about the fall. Man listened to the serpent and disobeyed God. Sin entered the world, and with sin came guilt, death, fear, and separation. God did not create that separation. We caused it by sin. Adam fell, and in Adam we all fell. By nature we stand guilty before God.

This is true of every one of us. It is true of me and it is true of you. We are not born neutral. David says in Psalm 51:5: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” The youngest child needs God's saving grace. We all need to be rescued from the pit of sin and guilt. That is why salvation is not something that only openly wicked people need. The respectable church member needs it. The child needs it. The minister needs it. Every human being needs the saving grace of Christ. You need it.

There are many wrong ideas about salvation. Some people think: “I am baptized, I go to church, and I read the Bible, so everything must be all right.” But baptism and church attendance do not save us. They are great privileges, but privileges are not the same as conversion. We need a personal work of grace in the heart. Others think: “God is love, so surely almost everyone will be saved.” But then they forget that God is also holy and just, and they forget the serious warnings of Scripture.

The Bible shows us two ways and two eternal ends. We see this already in Cain and Abel. Both came from the same family. Both knew about God. Both brought an offering. Yet they were not the same before God. Abel lived by faith; Cain did not. Therefore the question is very serious: am I saved? Has my relationship with God been restored? Has the guilt between God and my soul been removed? Do I live by faith? These questions cannot be answered merely by saying that we belong to a certain church or know the Christian doctrine.

But how can *guilt* be removed? Think of John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Christian walks with a heavy burden on his back. It is the burden of his sin. He cannot remove it himself. He cannot work it away, forget it, or free himself from it by trying harder. Then he comes to the Cross, and there the burden falls from his back and rolls away. The lesson is clear: the

burden of guilt can only be removed at the Cross of Christ. Bunyan also speaks of the Wicket Gate. The Gate points to Christ. Jesus says: "I am the door." The Cross points to His finished work. Salvation is only to be found in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

First, Jesus is the *only* Savior. Peter says in Acts 4:12: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is no other Savior. You may search everywhere, but you will never find another. You cannot save yourself. Your good works cannot save you. Your tears cannot save you. Your prayers cannot save you. A minister cannot save you. An angel cannot save you. God has given one Name, and that Name is Jesus. Only His blood can cleanse from sin. Only His righteousness can cover a guilty sinner. Only He can bring us back to the Father.

Second, Jesus is a *complete* Savior. He does not do part of the work. He does not nearly save a sinner and then instructs him or her to add the final touch. He saves completely. Everything necessary for salvation is found in Him. He obeyed the law perfectly. Every day of His life He did the will of His Father. Never did a sinful thought, word, or deed stain His holy life. He loved God perfectly, and he loved His neighbor perfectly. His obedience was complete, and His righteousness is without stain.

He also suffered the punishment due to sin. His whole life was a life of humiliation. He was born in poverty; he was rejected, mocked, hated, and finally nailed to the cross. There He bore the judgment of God against sin. There He cried: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But there He also cried: "It is finished!" Those words mean that the work was complete and the debt was paid. Nothing had to be added. On the third day He rose again from the dead. The empty grave shows that His sacrifice was accepted. Therefore He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him.

When a sinner is united to Christ by faith, his hope is no longer in himself. Christ becomes his righteousness, his hope, and his peace with God. This is why the Gospel does not direct us back to ourselves. It directs us away from ourselves and toward Christ. If we keep looking at ourselves, we will either become proud because we imagine there is something good to be found in us, or we will despair because we see only sin. Faith looks outside itself. It looks to the Savior who has finished the work.

Third, Jesus is a willing Savior. We see this again and again in the Gospel. Think of Nicodemus. He came to Jesus at night. Did Jesus send him away? No. He taught him and spoke to him about the new birth and the Son of Man who must be lifted up. Think also of the Samaritan woman. Jesus knew her sinful life completely. He did not excuse her sin, but He did not turn her away. He offered her living water, revealed Himself to her, and changed her heart and life.

Think also of the thief on the cross. His life was almost over. He had nothing to offer. He could not repair the past, nor could he come down from the cross and spend years doing good works. He could only ask for mercy. And Jesus answered him with mercy. Jesus is still willing. Through the Gospel He calls sinners, young and old, those who have wasted many years, those who have lived outwardly respectable lives but still have an unconverted heart, and those who have begun to feel the burden of their guilt. He is the *only* Savior, the *complete* Savior, and the *willing* Savior.

How does this salvation become real in the life of a sinner? The Holy Spirit gives life. By nature we are spiritually dead, and a dead person cannot make himself alive. God must awaken the heart. The Spirit opens our eyes. He shows us who God is, what sin is, and what we are. He takes away our false peace. Things that once seemed small become serious. Sin

becomes sin. Eternity becomes real. The sinner begins to understand that outward religion cannot save and that he needs a real change of heart.

Then the Holy Spirit makes room for Christ. He breaks our pride and teaches us that we cannot save ourselves. He shows us that our best works cannot pay our debt and that our religion cannot become our Savior. We need Christ. When the Spirit teaches this, Christ becomes precious. The sinner begins to understand why the Bible speaks so much about Jesus, His blood, His righteousness, His cross, and His resurrection. What once seemed only doctrine now becomes a matter of life and death.

This is also what true faith is. True faith is more than emotion, knowledge, or the ability to speak well about religion. True faith receives Christ. The sinner sees that he is lost in himself and that Christ alone is sufficient. Therefore he flees to Christ, rests in Christ, and receives Him as his only Savior. He begins to say: my hope is not in myself, not in my tears, not in my prayers, and not in my church attendance. My hope is in Christ. Robert Murray M'Cheyne expressed this when he wrote: *"Jehovah Tsidkenu! The Lord is my righteousness!... No refuge, no safety in self could I see,— Jehovah Tsidkenu my Savior must be."*

That is the language of saving faith. Christ becomes necessary, sufficient, and precious. Congregation, if we try to add our own merit to Christ, we have too much. We cannot stand before God with Christ plus our own goodness. But if we have less than Christ, we have too little. Without Him there is no hope in death and no answer at the judgment seat of God. Salvation is in Christ alone. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost."

Application

Beloved congregation, we have considered the words of Luke 19:10: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Jesus spoke these words almost two thousand years ago in Jericho. He was on His way to the house of Zaccheus, but He was also on His way to Jerusalem and to the cross. The Holy Spirit caused these words to be written in Scripture so that they would still speak to us today. The question is therefore not only what these words meant for Zaccheus, but what they mean for us.

Children, remember that the Lord speaks through His Word. You have heard His Word today. Do not forget it tomorrow. Think about the words of Jesus. Pray about them. Ask your father or mother what it means to be lost, what it means that Jesus seeks, and what it means that Jesus saves. Ask the Lord Himself to teach you that you need this Savior. You are never too young to need Christ, and you are never too young to pray that the Lord will give you a new heart.

Young people, the world will tell you that many other things are more important. It will tell you to seek success, money, friends, pleasure, study, work, travel, and comfort. Some of these things may have a proper place, but none of them can save your soul. Do not spend the best years of your life drifting away from the voice of God. Now you hear the Gospel. The Lord has placed His Word before you. Do not imagine that there will always be another opportunity. Seek the Lord while He may be found.

Fathers and mothers, do not let the Word go in one ear and out of the other. That happens so easily. A few days after the sermon we may no longer remember the text, the theme, the warning, or the invitation. Take the Word home. Speak about it. Pray about it. Ask the Lord to make it living in your own heart and in the hearts of your children. Our children need more than outward religion. They need Christ. We cannot give them a new heart, but we can bring them under the Word and pray that the Holy Spirit will bless it.

Unconverted friends, do not rest in outward religion. Do not rest in baptism, church attendance, knowledge, or a respectable life. Ask the Lord to show you your true need. Ask Him for a new heart. Ask Him to make His Word powerful. You cannot make yourself spiritually alive, but the Christ who called Zaccheus is still mighty to save. The same voice that said, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down," is still heard through the Gospel. Do not harden your heart against it.

Children of the LORD, you also need this text. You not only need Christ at the beginning of your spiritual life, you need Him every day. You need Him for forgiveness and holiness, in temptation and sorrow, in prayer and at the Lord's Table, in life and in death. The Lord keeps teaching His people that they have nothing in themselves. More and more they learn of the depth of sin and the weakness of their own hearts. More and more they learn to look outside themselves, to look to Christ, and to find everything in Him.

Older ones, perhaps you have heard many sermons and lived through many joys and sorrows. Perhaps your strength is diminishing, and you think more often about eternity. Hear again that the Son of Man came to save the lost. A long life of church attendance cannot replace Christ, but no long history of sin is too great for His saving power.

Lonely people, remember that the Lord knows where you are. Zaccheus was in a tree, the Samaritan woman was at a well, and Nathanael was under a fig tree. Jesus knew them, and He knows every heart.

And therefore the final question is deeply personal: am I still lost in myself, or have I learned to find salvation in Christ? Our text does not say that Jesus came to help people who were almost saved. It says that He came to save the lost. That word takes away all our pride, but it also gives hope. If you have learned that you are lost in yourself, then hear again what Christ says: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." He came to seek. He came to save. He came for the lost.

We close with the words of John chapter 5, verse 25: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."

AMEN.