

TITLE: **Jesus... The Answer**  
DATE: **April 26-27, 2008**  
TEXT: **Luke 19:1-9, Zacchaeus–**  
PROPOSITION: **Do You Believe Jesus is the Answer?**  
THEME: **God's Power to Change Lives**

## **I. Opening: Fati's death:**

During my first year on the field, I studied French. I wanted to continue being spiritually challenged, so another missionary, Larry, and I met to pray and share together. One particular morning Larry called and said we weren't going to be able to meet that day; a friend's daughter had died and we needed to attend the funeral.

The friend was one of the elders in our church and had a pretty good job making the equivalent of \$50 a month. He had three beautiful children and lived on the outskirts of Ouaga. His kids had been sick for three days. His middle daughter, Fati, was pretty bad off. He had already used up his credit with his boss buying medicine for his extended family. He had no money to take his children to the hospital, much less to buy the medicine they needed.

Fati became more and more sick. Finally, one evening, the father realized if he didn't do something, his daughter would die. He borrowed someone's moped, his daughter climbed on the back and he headed off to the hospital. Since it was late in the afternoon, it took a while for someone to see them. Fati just grew weaker and weaker in the waiting room. Finally, she died in his arms before any doctor had seen her. Her father had to wrap her body, put her on the back of the motorbike and return to his house.

Larry picked me up and we went to their home. Though we were in the city, in this section of town there wasn't one concrete building. Everything was made out of mud bricks. We walked into the man's courtyard. It was well kept. They swept the mud that made up the floor every day. We walked into the two room house. The only decorations on the mud walls were prayer cards from missionaries like us.

I looked on the ground and saw a traditional African mat, rolled up. It looked too small to hold the body of a 4-year-old girl, but I knew she was inside. Her father stood beside her and was working hard to hold back the tears. We greeted her father and the family. About that time, other men from the church came to say the grave was ready. It was the middle of dry season, so the clay ground was hard. The body needed to be put into the ground in less than eight hours because they couldn't afford embalming fluids. The men had been digging since first light and had dug down to a level they thought was sufficient.

We put the body in one of our vehicles and drove to the gravesite. When we arrived to the poor-man's graveyard, basically a field on the edge of town, I got out and felt so sick I almost vomited. The Harmattan (strong wind) had come off the Sahara and the air was a dingy brown. As far as I could see, there were mounds of dirt and most of them were decorated with a moon and star on top of a stick, representing their Muslim faith.

What made me sick was wondering how many of those people had died needlessly like this little girl, but gone to hell. The number was most likely in the thousands.

I walked to the edge of the open grave and quickly saw that it was far too small. They took Fati's body out of the grass mat and tried to stuff it into the little hole they were forced to try to chip out

the clay. Eventually they had to turn her sideways to fit her in. I looked around after the service and asked the father why the mother wasn't at the funeral. He disgustingly said, "It's been eight hours since her daughter died and she's still crying." In this part of the world the infant mortality rate is so high that the mothers are supposed to expect to lose children, so the death of a child shouldn't be mourned for too long.

After the funeral, I learned that Fati had died of dysentery. An IV of sugar water would have saved her life. The cost of that in Burkina is about \$2. This little girl had died for a lack of two dollars. I would have gladly given the \$2 if I had only known. The reality is that thousands of children will die in the Sahel every week for lack of proper medical care, medicine or food. I can't accept this. We can no longer stand by. I still believe that all this is a result of sin. Money is available, but it often doesn't make it down to the poor who make up the majority of the people. Sure, this is an imperfect world and we'll never make it perfect before Jesus returns, but we can make a difference so children like Fati don't need to die. I still believe Jesus is the answer. I believe God has sent us to rise up a righteous generation of youth to penetrate all levels of Burkinabe society with the love, compassion and honesty that is a result of being a new creation.

When I say, "We can no longer stand by", I mean all of us here this morning. Missionaries like Alice and I cannot go to places like Burkina without people like you who pray with faith and give sacrificially. This morning, I want to ask you, do you believe Jesus is the answer? Do you believe Jesus can change a whole society? Let's pray.

## **II. Message**

Let's turn in our Bibles to Luke 19:1-9. I'd like to bring out three aspects of this story.

### **a. The Sinner**

The only thing the Bible tells us about Zacchaeus was that he was short, he was rich, and he was a tax collector. He was not only a tax collector, but a CHIEF tax collector. That means he wasn't only scum, but chief scum in the eyes of the Jewish people.

The Jews saw tax collectors as traitors. They were taking money from the poor to give it to the rich king who had made the Jewish people his slaves. One can assume a tax collector would have to have an incredible love of money in order to turn on his own people, or maybe it was because he was short and felt insecure about it that Zacchaeus collected taxes. We can also conclude from Zacchaeus' own profession that he had become rich by cheating and taking bribes.

But there was something else about him that was only seen through Jesus' eyes. Jesus knew that all the money, comfort and power Zacchaeus had was not bringing him happiness. He was empty and hungry just to see Jesus. He never thought he would have the chance to talk to Jesus. He never would have imagined Jesus would actually come to his home and eat with him. All he wanted to do was just see Jesus.

But he was hiding behind his money and his power. No one would ever assume that he had this hidden desire. Around us today, there are many Zacchaeus'; people not satisfied, hungering deep down for Christ. Some may not even understand it or know that they want to see Jesus. Are we seeing those people and taking the opportunities to reach them?

When I was in high school at the Ivory Coast Academy, I had a friend. His name was Yissouf. Yissouf was a staunch Muslim so I didn't want to offend him by 'shoving Jesus into his face.' So I thought, I'll just live a really good life, I'll pray for him and one day maybe he'll come and ask me.

I graduated from high school and went to say good-bye to Yissouf before I flew back to the US. Yissouf met me, looked at me and said, "Pete, I really love you." I said, "I love you to, Yissouf!" He said, "That's what I really don't understand. You say you love me, but you're a Christian and as a Christian you believe if I don't accept Jesus as my Savior, I'm going to hell. And yet, not once did you convince me to try to follow Jesus. So either you must not really believe what you say you believe or you must not love me."

Do you have any Zacchaeus' or Yissouf's in your life? Do you have unsaved friends in your job or in your family you are afraid to share Jesus with? You see, that's not the last time I'm going to see Yissouf. I will see him one more time before the judgment seat. Jesus is going to look at him and say, "I knew you not," and as they drag him off to eternal damnation, he's going to be screaming my name, because his blood will be on my hands.

#### **b. The Situation/The swarm**

What was the situation we see in this passage? Jesus is speaking to a crowd (swarm of people) surrounding Him.

The crowd was made up of three kinds of people. Some were those who were hurting, physically, spiritually or mentally. Others were spiritual leaders who were there to entrap Jesus to use Him for their own advancement. Then, there were those who liked being around Jesus and liked being His friend. These friends were a part of a holy huddle. In crowding around Jesus, they crowded the hurting people away from Him, people like Zacchaeus. They forced Zacchaeus to climb a tree just so he could see Jesus. Are you helping to make your church a holy huddle, crowding people away from Jesus or are you bringing people like Zacchaeus to Jesus, helping to make your church a rescue mission?

Sometimes, unfortunately, the crowd is a picture of our church. We build holy huddles and it is really nice inside. We crowd people away from Jesus. Are you helping make your church a holy huddle or are you helping to make it a rescue mission? Are you willing to leave your comfort zone to be more effective for the Lord? Are you helping make your church a holy huddle or are you helping to make it a rescue mission?

#### **c. The Savior**

Jesus was in a popular time of His ministry. Jesus also knew He had a limited amount of time in His ministry, so He could have spent this time being caught up in the glory of having those around him absorbed in Him, instead of paying attention to Zacchaeus.

In our human eyes, His time could have been better spent speaking to as many people as He possibly could, while He had a chance. Or perhaps He should have at least taken that time with the disciples doing leadership development.

In our eyes, Zacchaeus would have appeared as a repulsive, greedy little thief, a man not worth the effort to reach, someone who, in all probability, would not want to change anyway.

But Jesus wasn't interested in glory, or in numbers, or in a lecture to His disciples about leadership. He didn't see a repulsive, greedy little thief. He saw a hurting man who was longing to see Him, longing to get his heart right, and that was His priority. That may have even been why He came to Jericho that day.

Jesus knew it would cost Him to talk with this man, that people would criticize Him and He would lose their respect. But, to Jesus, this man was worth far more than men's admiration. So He not only talked with Zacchaeus, but also went to his house and ate with him! He associated with him!

Zacchaeus' life was completely changed, forever. A meeting with Jesus and he became a new creation. "Behold all things have become new." He gave half of what he owned to the poor. He did not care about "things" anymore.

How do we see the people in our lives? Do we see them through our earthly eyes or through the eyes of Jesus?

(Immanuel was the son one of the Wycliff missionaries in Burkina Faso. He was known throughout the international community as a trouble maker.)

### III. **Conclusion**

This is how Jesus is the answer. We see the new creation Zacchaeus became. He was in a position of power and influence, so now he could make a difference in the economic situation of the area. He was also wealthy, so he ended up being able to help the poor. Maybe with his ability to manage money he would have been able to teach some of the poor to manage money themselves.

When we see many of our righteous youth grow into positions in society and begin to help other people see Jesus, we will see many become new creations and we'll see money make it to the lowest levels of society. We will see God bless the whole nation of Burkina.

A couple of weeks ago, we were visiting National Headquarters and I got to see one of my heroes of the faith, Uncle Dave Kennedy. We were reminded that Dave worked with the youth center in Bobo Dioulasso in the early 70's. He taught men like Alphonse Kaita who today is high up in the department of education, helping to write and correct the final exam for students being allowed into University. Up to now, passing or failing has often been based more on who you knew rather than what you knew. Alphonse is beginning to make an impact.

There are men like Ki Michel, who is the assistant to the minister of finance. He is a shining light and highly respected in an area known world-wide for corruption. Dr. Drabo is now the president's personal physician and has contact with the president's family and a chance to witness to them.

Do you believe Jesus is the answer? Do you believe God can raise up righteous youth who will penetrate every aspect of society and change this hopeless nation?

I ask you to pray for Burkina, believing that Jesus is the answer for this country.

### IV. **Passage: Matthew 16:17-20**

Mainly a testimony – what is bound on earth is bound in heaven. We have the authority of believers to bind things or loose them. I ask you to pray for different aspects of my life; a spirit of boldness, purity, the vision of seeing 1,000,000 youth in Africa on fire for Jesus, health and safety.

