

“A New Kind Of Love”
Luke 19:1-10
David P. Nolte

Some people base their love of others on their future, potential and continued performance: “I will love you if” and then the conditions are added: “If you let me have my way.” “If you bring me presents,” “If you do what I tell you when I tell you to do it.” This demanding love is a burden, not a blessing.

Others base their love on desirable present conditions: “I love you because ...” and the conditions are stated: “Because you are rich.” “Because you are handsome / beautiful.” “Because you are happy and funny.” This conditional love is colder than 9 day old peas-porridge.

The bottom-line is “You will be loved on condition of being loveable!” A major drawback is that if any of those required factors changes or ends, so does the so-called “love.” Who wants to be loved like that? It is about as comforting and desirable as a spoke in the eye.

Jesus brings a different kind of love. Luke recorded an event that demonstrates His new kind of love. “He entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way. When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, ‘Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.’ And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.’ Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, ‘Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.’” Luke 19:1-10 (NASB).

What kind of Love is evident? And what does His love do?

I. HIS LOVE SEEKS THE LOST:

- A. The smug and self-righteous were indignant that Jesus would speak so kindly to this skunk of a traitorous tax collector. But Jesus defended His action and declared His intention saying, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Luke 19:9-10 (NASB).
- B. Jesus took the initiative and, looking up into the tree, said, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” He said that, not harshly, or angrily, or impatiently, but kindly and with good humor, full of grace. It was an invitation, not a demand.

1. In the same grace and kindness He invites us to come to Him. He doesn't brow-beat or berate or bellow at us to "Get down from that tree right now!"
 2. He came to seek and save people like Zaccheus, and you and me, not to harshly drive them further into lostness.
- C. He still seeks the lost which includes:
1. Those who trust their own works and goodness to save them.
 2. Those who think they are beyond saving.
 3. Those who imagine they are too insignificant for Jesus to care about them.
 4. Those who are indifferent to their spiritual condition. They don't know and they don't care.
 5. Those who are hard-hearted, stubborn and resistant.
 6. Those others have written off, ostracized, and shunned like Zaccheus, the woman at the well and lepers..
 7. Those who are His enemies and who are angry with Him for something He allowed to happen or something He prevented from happening.
- D. The folk in the crowd were as lost as Zaccheus, but were not aware of it. But, more to the point, where are you in this picture? Are you lost and unaware of it?
1. Are you one of the curious, self-satisfied crowd smugly standing on the sideline watching Jesus pass by, rejecting those, like Zaccheus, whom Jesus came to save?
 2. Or are you up in the tree about to have a personal one-on-one with Him Who is calling you to come down?
- E. Either way, Jesus came to seek you and me. We all need to seek Him, too. This week I heard the story of a father and son whose favorite game was "hide and seek." The game always went the same: Dad always counted to 100 by 5's and then would shout out, "Here comes Daddy to find you Timmy." And Timmy would always hide in the same room and the same spot - but of course Dad always went through the motions of looking in just about every other room. He'd go into one of the bedrooms and loudly proclaim "I wonder if Timmy is under the bed?" Down the hall he could hear the barely suppressed giggles of his child as he lifted up the sheets. "I wonder if he's in the closet?" Again giggles from the other room. Making his way into the bathroom, Dad would say "I wonder if he's in the shower?" Giggles. "I wonder if he's in the toilet?" as he lifted the seat. The giggles were getting louder. Out in the hallway now, the father proclaimed "I wonder where Timmy could be?" And at that moment Timmy would burst out of his parents' bedroom hollering "Here I am Daddy, here I am!" and he'd throw himself into his Dad's waiting arms.

The Father recalled telling his son, "But, Timmy, that's not how the game is played." But Timmy didn't care - that's how he played the game. For the object of the game to Timmy was in being found and then to rush into his father's arms.

Our Father sent Jesus with the kind of love that seeks the lost. May we rejoice in being found. His is love that seeks and:

II. HIS LOVE SAVES THE WORST:

- A. “He looked up and said to him, ‘Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.’ And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly. When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.’”
1. Tax collectors were classed with prostitutes, spiders and cockroaches, maybe even lower.
 2. For the most part, the tax collectors earned their despicable reputations. They gouged the people for more than the required Roman tax. They were traitors to Israel because they served Rome in such a way.
- B. Paul wrote to Timothy regarding his acceptance by Jesus. “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, Who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are found in Christ Jesus. It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all. Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.” 1 Timothy 1:12-17 (NASB).
- C. Not one of us deserves His salvation. All of us fall short every day in many ways.
1. Our thoughts are not always pure.
 2. Our speech is often off-color, untrue, and unkind.
 3. Our actions are less than Christlike.
 4. Our attitudes are unwholesome.
 5. Our motives are self-serving.
- D. But though He certainly does not accept all we do and say and think, and believe, God still loves us, longs for us and accepts us.
1. He doesn’t love us for any good thing He sees in us, or because there is something attractive about us.
 2. He loves us because He is love and it is His nature to love. You can get a mini-glimpse at His love for you when you realize how much you love your children.
 - a. Nothing under the sun would make me reject my children or my grandchildren.
 - b. They could break my heart, leave me cold, wreck their lives and still find acceptance in my heart and at my house.
 - c. They could cut me into pieces and every piece would cry out, “I love you!”
- E. When we go to a doctor, he accepts us as we are with broken bones, wounds, sickness, stinky feet and B.O. Then he goes to work on us to make us well again. Max Lucado wrote. “Grace is God as heart surgeon, cracking open your chest, removing your heart – poisoned as it is with pride and pain – and replacing it with His own. Rather than telling you to change, He creates the change. Do you clean up so He can accept you? No, He accepts you and begins cleaning you up. His dream isn’t just to get you into heaven, but to get heaven into you. What a difference this makes!”

His is a love that accepts us as we are but even more importantly:

III. HIS LOVE SHAPES OUR LIVES:

- A. Look at Zaccheus: “Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, ‘Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.’”
- B. Neither good intentions nor good promises can suffice. Zaccheus had repented. So far, so good. But until he actually did something about it, it would have been meaningless flim-flam.
- C. The Bible says,
 1. We must repent or keep our guilt and perish.
 2. So, “Go and sin no more.”
 3. And then continue to “Live lives that show true repentance.”
- D. He shapes our lives like the potter we meet in Jeremiah.
 1. The prophet wrote, “The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD saying, ‘Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will announce My words to you.’ Then I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make.” Jeremiah 18:1-4 (NASB).
 2. So, may we say, “But now, O LORD, You are our Father, We are the clay, and You our potter; And all of us are the work of Your hand.” Isaiah 64:8 (NASB).
 3. And may we be like one old guy, newly converted, who said, “I ain’t what I oughter be, and I ain’t what I’m gonner be, but Praise the Lord, I ain’t what I uster be, neither!”
- E. In the September, 2019 Reader’s Digest is the story of a 7th grade girl, Tamora Pierce, who loved to scribble out stories for English Class. Her teacher, Mary Jacobson, helped shape her as a writer and encouraged her to read a certain set of fantasy and science fiction books. When she wrote a too-long short story, about Blackbeard, for class, Mrs. Jacobson kindly suggested that, for class assignments, she pick shorter subjects, but to press on in her spare time.

Forty years later, hearing a Tamora Pierce being interviewed on the radio, Mary wondered if it could be the same person she had taught. Turns out it was. Getting her books, Mary was pleased to read in one novel, “Dedicated to the teachers who helped shape my life ...” and in the list of four was Mary Jacobson’s name.

The two reconnected by e-mail in which Tamora expressed her gratitude for making her feel special, and helping her believe in herself at a vulnerable time in her life. “She changed my life.” she later wrote.

Jesus came with life changing, life shaping love. And He dispenses it, in part, through you and me. How are we impacting on the people in our little world and in this congregation?

Can you offer a word of encouragement and gratitude when you see someone doing something good? Can you help them envision what they could be by positive comments on their performance? Can you sincerely tell a self-doubting person, "I believe in you!"? You may change a life.

Jesus brings love that seeks us; love that accepts us; love that changes us. Steve Malone said in a sermon, "To accept people is to be for them. It is to recognize that it is a very good thing that these people are alive, and to long for the best for them. It does not, of course mean to approve of everything they do. It means to continue to want what is best for their souls no matter what they do."

If you compare how Jesus and the self-righteous legalists treat sinners, you will see that His love does what self-righteous condemnation and judgmentalism and finger pointing accusations could not do: and that is to produce a changed life.

Perhaps Zaccheus would say, and hopefully each of us would say,

"I'm just a "hunk of nothin"
Not worth a single cent.
But in His eyes, I'm worth a lot,
So to the cross He went.

Not for any good in me
Did He bring me His love,
It was the nature of His heart
That sent Him from above.

Not for any human merit
Did Jesus bear the pain.
It was by Grace He gave His life,
That Heaven I might gain.

So I can claim His Pardon
So grateful that He came
To bring to all eternal life.
Now I'll never be the same."

David P. Nolte, 01/18/2020

Jesus still seeks, saves and shapes – because He still loves with the everlasting love of God – and I am so glad that Jesus loves even me. Aren't you?