

This past Monday, our two-year-old granddaughter Lilly was in town, which is always a welcome adventure! It was supper time, so Amy and I took Lilly out to eat at one of her favorite restaurants, Unhinged. **[Slide]** Lilly especially loves corn served from the buffet and put in a little 2-ounce cup, and as soon as it's empty, she hands it to me, and it is my duty as Grandpa to promptly refill it for her. Among other things, Lilly also always gets a small cup of milk with a cover and a straw, which is nice in preventing spills. But being the cautious Grandpa that I am, I moved Lilly's cup just a little further away from her plate -just to be safe- so she wouldn't accidentally tip it over. That's when I learned my lesson. Next time, I will be sure to ask Miss Lilly's permission first before I touch *her* milk. You see, when out of an abundance of caution, I moved her cup some three inches further away from her, she looked at me as though I was going to drink her milk that I had given her, and said, 'Hey, mine!' Yes, for a brief moment Lilly actually thought that her loving, doting Grandpa, was going to either sneak a sip of her milk or steal the whole cup away from her! 'Mine!' Even though I provided Lilly with that milk, the corn, the chicken sticks, and other delicacies, Lilly wanted to make sure that I knew that I had no business messing with *her* milk. Thankfully, she got over it and isn't holding a grudge against me, but like I said I learned my lesson and I even got a sermon illustration out of it too! 'Mine!'

[Slide] This morning we wrap up our three-week series called *Money Talks* and this week Zacchaeus is our man. Zacchaeus shows us money's generous side. How so? Zacchaeus turns from thinking about only himself and saying, "Mine!" to looking at Jesus and saying, "Yours!" Zacchaeus, who isn't two years old and ought to know better (!), changes from, "This money is all *mine*," to, "Jesus, this money is all *yours*." Let's see how Zacchaeus changes from ugly greed to such joyful generosity, from "mine" to "yours".

[Slide] (Take an honest look at myself.) "Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a *chief* tax collector and was *wealthy*." (Luke 19:1-2) This is the only time when a New Testament writer connects the word "chief" to the expression "tax collector." Zacchaeus is a top dog when it comes to collecting taxes!

First century Jewish tax collectors worked for Rome. First century Jewish tax collectors could keep as much money as they collected - as long as Rome got its cut. This made Zacchaeus wealthy. How wealthy?

To put it into context, Zacchaeus drives a 2024 Mercedes and lives in a 25,000-square-foot mansion on the shore of Lake Minnetonka. Zacchaeus has

season tickets to the Minnesota Vikings, Twins, Timberwolves, **and** the Wild. And get this. Zacchaeus smokes top-of-the-line Cuban cigars! When it comes to money, Zacchaeus lives by one word - "Mine! It's all mine!"

[Slide] Then Zacchaeus takes an honest look at himself. What prompted that? These words of Jesus. Luke 16:13, "No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money [*Mamona*]." Jesus doesn't say, "You **shouldn't** serve two masters." Jesus doesn't say, "**Don't** serve two masters." Jesus says, "You **can't** serve two masters." It's impossible to serve both God and *Mamona*. *Mamona*? *Mamona* is a Syriac word for the god of money.

[Slide] Zacchaeus takes an honest look at himself. What does he see? He sees himself worshiping *Mamona*. Zacchaeus comes to the realization that if he doesn't change from "Mine" to "Yours" *Mamona* will kill him. *Mamona* is out to kill people? I didn't know *that*!

[Slide] A few years ago, authorities in Boston discovered the bodies of two women in a small apartment. Their cause of death? Malnutrition—malnutrition brought on by *Mamona*. How so? Authorities found \$200,000 in cash hidden in the women's mattresses! If I don't get money right, everything else will go wrong. *If I don't get my attitude about money right, everything else in life will go completely wrong.* How do I get my attitude about money right? Take an honest look at myself. Then ...

[Slide] **Take a long look at Jesus.** "He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man, he could not, because of the crowd. So, he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way." (Luke 19:3-4) Jesus looks up and he sees the local IRS chief looking at him. It's Zacchaeus!

[Slide] Look at this picture taken in modern-day Jericho. Zacchaeus could have taken a short look at Jesus by just standing in the crowd. But that's not the way to be free of financial miserliness and stinginess and pettiness. If I want to experience the freeing and liberating change from "Mine" to "Yours"—from greed to generosity—I need to take a long look at Jesus. I've got to climb a tree and get out on a limb!

[Slide] The wise men traveled hundreds of miles—just to see Jesus. The shepherds left their flocks at night—just to see Jesus. Nicodemus came under the cover of night—he had to see Jesus. The Samaritan woman at the well rounded up her entire village—she had to show them Jesus. Peter and John

went running to the empty tomb on Easter—they had to see Jesus. Peter once jumped from a boat into the water—he would do anything to see Jesus!

Take a long look at Jesus. *Jesus*. The one who is older than time and greater than death. Jesus. The Alpha and the Omega. The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Jesus! The Root and Offspring of David and the Lion of the tribe of Judah. All the splendor of God revealed in a human body. *Jesus!* Why take a long, concentrated, serious look at Jesus?

Because Jesus went to the cross. Because Jesus rose again. Because now we have forgiveness for every sin, direction at every turn, light for every dark day, and an anchor for every threatening storm! *Jesus!* Luke 19:10, Jesus came to seek and save lost people!

[Slide] “When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down at once. I must stay at your house today.’ So, he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.” (Luke 19:5–6) Zacchaeus immediately jumps out of the tree.

The crowd is shocked. “All the people saw this and began to mutter, ‘He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.’” “How can Jesus be such a great prophet if he hangs out with a scoundrel like Zacchaeus?” The angel answers that in Luke 2:10, “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.” “All the people.” That includes Zacchaeus. “All the people.” That includes even and especially *you!*

[Slide] Take a direct look at people’s needs. “Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord! Here and now, I give half of my possessions to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.’” (Luke 19:8) Zacchaeus takes an honest look at himself and he knows he worships *Mamona*. Zacchaeus takes a long look at Jesus and he knows unconditional love for the first time. Then Zacchaeus takes a direct look at people’s needs and he knows he must do something!

Do you see them? All the people and all their needs! This is why our church and school exist! *Connecting people to Jesus!* First Lutheran Church, First Lutheran School, Sunday School, Catechism, Bible Class, LWML, Mat-Makers, Quilters, Youth Groups, Choir. I could go on!

[Slide] “Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is **a son of Abraham.**’” Abraham was a man of faith—so is Zacchaeus. Abraham was saved by faith—so is Zacchaeus. *Not so fast!* Zacchaeus doesn’t say, “I trust you, Lord” or “I believe you, Lord” or “I have faith in you, Lord.” Zacchaeus doesn’t ask Jesus to come into his heart. Zacchaeus

doesn't even join a church. How does Jesus know that Zacchaeus is a son of Abraham?

[Slide] Jesus knows Zacchaeus is a son of Abraham because Zacchaeus' attitude toward money changed. That's the sure sign of faith! Zacchaeus promises to give half of everything he owns to the poor. And, since Zacchaeus was a chief Jewish tax-collector working for Rome, the list of people he had defrauded was very long. Zacchaeus promises to pay them four times the amount he cheated them out of. *Four times the amount!*

If I'm motivated by the church budget, I'll give until we meet the budget. If I'm motivated by duty, I'll give until I fulfill my duty. If I'm motivated by guilt, I'll give until my guilt goes away. There is a better way to give!

Take an honest look at myself. Take a long look at Jesus. Take a direct look at people's needs. That will transform **how** I give, **what** I give and **why** I give. *How I give. What I give. Why I give.* **[Slide]** That will transform me from "Mine ..." to "Lord, it's all yours." Amen.