



Lent

CONNECTING FAITH AND LIFE

stories where heaven and earth meet

Adult Small Group/Study Guide
The Blind Beggar/Zacchaeus Week of March 21

KEY POINT

Jesus brings salvation to outsiders who receive him with faith and joy. Jesus shows us that people that society considers to be “outsiders” (a man who was blind and a despised tax collector) receive salvation when they encounter him. Jesus is willing to become an outsider himself by being arrested, beaten, and killed in order to make this salvation complete.

SCRIPTURE

Luke 18:31—19:10
(Psalm 84:1-4, 10-12)

OPENING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on us. Give us understanding so that we might grasp your message for us as we study God’s Holy Scripture. Amen.

READ

Luke 18:31—19:10

ABOUT THE STORY

Jesus and his disciples are on their way to Jerusalem, and it has been a long journey with many interludes and incidents along the way. Jericho, only 20 kilometers from Jerusalem, is the last stop in his journey before his arrival in the holy city. The three different episodes that take place right before and during his time in Jericho sum up Jesus’ ministry by describing his teaching, healing, and other dealings with people.

Jesus has already told his followers on two previous occasions that he will die in Jerusalem, and he tells them again in our lesson today. They are unable to understand his words and “what he said was hidden from them” (Luke 18:34). It is not clear who hid the meaning of these words from them or why. It is possible that God is behind this, although Luke does not say. Ultimately all will be made clear to the disciples after Jesus is resurrected.

Jesus goes on to Jericho and meets two different individuals, each in need of his help. One is a man who was blind, the other a rich tax collector, and both were “outsiders” in society. In Jesus’ day, those who were blind were often seen as having incurred God’s displeasure. It is no wonder that some people sternly order him to be quiet. Tax collectors were seen as dishonest traitors, collaborating with the occupying Romans. Jesus heals the man who was blind, which sparks praises to God from all present. He also invites himself to the home of the tax collector, Zacchaeus, which brings about Zacchaeus’ transformation.

At first, both of these incidents might appear to be distractions or digressions as Jesus nears Jerusalem, but instead they are perfect examples of his greater mission. Jesus’ statement that “the Son of Man came to seek out and save the lost” (Luke 19:10) epitomizes not only the happenings in Jericho, but also his entire mission. Coming to “seek out and save the lost” includes healing blindness by the side of the road and restoring chief tax collectors to the community.



Jesus began his public ministry by saying that the words of the prophet Isaiah were fulfilled, including good news to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind, freedom from oppression and the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18-21). The incidents in and around Jericho bear this out.

SHARE

- Every society in human history divides people into “insiders” and “outsiders.” Consider the social context of your group: who are the “insiders” and “outsiders” in our own society? What factors peg someone as either an “insider” or an “outsider?” How are people in each group treated by those around them? Is it possible to move from one group to the other?
- This is the third time that Jesus has told his disciples about his upcoming death and resurrection (see Luke 9:21-22, 43-45 for the first two). Why do you think Jesus repeats this information to the disciples three different times?
- Jesus says that, “Today salvation has come to this house...” (Luke 19:9) How does the word “today” add to the power of Jesus’ words?

PRAY

Lord Jesus, you are our salvation. Help us to stop and take time for those in need and to follow you in what we say and do. Amen.

BLESS

Mark one another with the sign of the cross on your hand and say, “Jesus is your help and salvation. Amen.”

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION AT HOME:

- Think about those you consider to be an “outsider” in your own life. Reach out to at least one of them in the coming week. Pray for all of those on your list of outsiders.
- Using an online search engine or Scripture concordance, find all of the instances where Jesus speaks of his death. How are they alike? Different?
- Research and support ministries for those who are blind.