



You Need an Outcast

July 25, 2021

Luke 19:1-10

Connect:

- Who do you consider an outcast? Why?
- Len Sweet says that outcasts are any one “*up a tree*” – like Zacchaeus. In context, being “*up a tree*” might be speaking socially, mentally, physically, or economically – by way of isolation and sometimes shame. Who gets to decide who is an outcast and who is not?

Engage

- Read **Luke 19:1-10**. If you’ve been around the church at all, you’ve likely heard the story of Zacchaeus. If you grew up in the church, you probably sang a song about him in Sunday School. Why was his story so compelling to the biblical audience? Why is it compelling now?
- Jesus was accused of being a “*friend of tax collectors and sinners.*” In this phrase, used multiple times, the profession of tax collecting is the only one specifically called out as corrupt. There were others to be certain but this was the reputation of those who manipulated the power of tax collecting – skimming off the top as it were. What professions today get such a reputation? Is that fair? Who would people be disgusted to see Jesus in relationship with today? Is every profession redeemable?
- Evagrius of Pontus (*known for the creation of the Seven Deadly Sins*) described the root of sin as “*forgetfulness of God’s goodness.*” Soren Kierkegaard defined sin as “*the steadfast refusal to be your one true self.*” How do you define sin?
- Fourth century philosopher, Caius Marius Victorinus, said, “*Do walls make Christians?*” The point? The Christian church is too “*in here*” and not enough “*out there.*” “*Out there*” in love. “*Out there*” in service. “*Out there*” in relationships. “*Out there*” in compassion. Do you agree? Why/why not?
- Mark Twain said, “*Whenever you find yourself in the majority, it’s time to pause and reflect.*” What do you think he meant by that? What “*majorities*” are you a part? What reflection does that stir in you?

Next Steps:

- Make space to listen to someone on the margins this week. Just listen. What might you learn from their experience? How might you grow your compassion for others? Be intentional about fostering space for these relationships. Take account of your own personal growth in the process.

Pray:

- “*Thank you, God, for putting unexpected witnesses in our lives. When we’re open to learning from anyone and everyone, we just may position ourselves to grow our own faith. Give us eyes to see and spirits that welcome the one deemed “Outcast” knowing that none are cast out of your love, O God. Show us your truth in and through them today. Amen.*”