

Nobody Left Out 1 – A No-good Thief

Welcome to Redemption Church in Plano Tx. My name is Chris Fluitt and I welcome everyone joining us in person and online.

Today we are starting a brand-new sermon series called “Nobody Left Out.” We are basing this series off a great 40-day devotional by Michael Murray and we encourage you to go through the devotional with us. We have some copies on hand that we can give you or you can find a copy on Amazon.

<https://www.amazon.com/Nobody-Left-Out-Messes-Devotional-ebook/dp/B08MY583G8>

Have you ever felt left out?

Left Out?

Do you know what it means to be looked past?

Does anyone remember being the last chosen for a game? There have been times that I was only included because I made an even number for teams.

And even if you are great at sports there is probably an area of your life you are not an all-star. In those areas, you may feel unworthy of inclusion.

We probably all know in some way what it means to be rejected, un-invited, the punchline of the joke, and called names.

You would think that because we know what it means to be left out, we would be more aware and empathetic to those around us, but strangely it is just the opposite. Injured people often injure others.

Christians are not excluded from this issue. We in the church often leave people feeling rejected or judged.

We really need to look at our perfect example – Jesus Christ.

Jesus comes to all of us and he leaves nobody out.

Nobody Left Out

We should be like Jesus!

Over the next weeks, we are going to look at 8 stories of people who were left out, until a man named Jesus came to them. These 8 stories are also a part of a 40 day devotional called Nobody Left Out. I encourage you to read along with us as we receive Jesus' invitation to be in a relationship with Him.

Luke 19:1-6 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. 5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

When we read the story our first inclination is "good job Jesus" & "good job Zacchaeus."

Good job Jesus

Good job Jesus! It is so good that you are healing people, spreading the good news of the kingdom, and going from town to town. And Jesus it is so good of you to notice the little people.

Good job Zacchaeus

Good job Zacky boy! You didn't let circumstances or your physical abilities like height keep you down. You climbed above the obstacles of life.

Wrong idea: Get Jesus' attention

It is very easy to get the wrong idea from this story. You could **WRONGLY** think the point of the story is that if you try hard

enough (good enough, pray enough, worship enough, holy enough) Jesus will notice you.

Christianity is NOT an attempt to get the attention of God. There are no worship songs entitled "Jesus please notice me." Christianity is all about the fact that God so loves the world... we already have his attention and his heart. God so loves the world, He is willing to go to the greatest lengths of patience, wisdom, and sacrifice, in His love.

You have His attention today.

...and Zacchaeus had the attention of Jesus... and the crowd.

The crowd's response is surprising. The crowd is not chanting "good job Jesus" and "good job Zacchaeus."

7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

Surely there must be some mistake?

Did Jesus make a mistake?

Is Zacchaeus a sinner?

Surely Jesus would not have approached a sinner? Surely Jesus would no better.

Turns out that Zacchaeus is a no-good thief.

A No-Good Thief

Zacchaeus was Jewish but was a chief tax collector for the Roman Government. It was correct to consider him...

- Thief (Taxed over and above to take his own cut. If Emperor Caesar expected 30% of your earnings, the tax collector would charge you 40% and keep the extra 10% for himself)
- Rich and dishonest
- Traitor
- Outcast
- Privileged

And Zacchaeus is called not a tax collector, but a chief tax collector. He is not a bottom rung tax collector. He is not "assistant to the regional" tax

collector ("the office" joke), Zacchaeus is upper management.

The crowd had trouble understanding why Jesus would come for a no-good thief. Yet that is exactly what happens.

The spot

Jesus walks into Jericho and reaches "the spot." Scripture calls it "the spot." I have often wondered what that meant. It seems to mean that Jesus had a predetermined cause and a predetermined longitude and latitude to arrive at in Jericho. It seems like Jesus didn't randomly see a guy in a tree and say "the tree guy."

Jesus came to the spot. I believe Jesus knows the exact spot where you and I are, right now.

Camp testimony

You can't hide from God. He knows the spot where you are hiding.

Jesus walks up to the spot and looks up into a tree and Jesus speaks. What is the first word out of His mouth?

Jesus calls out "Zacchaeus."

Jesus does not call him "no-good thief", but BY NAME.

Jesus did not come to the spot to judge or rebuke, but to have a relationship.

Jesus came to hang out and NO ONE in Jericho wanted to hang out with Zacchaeus.

The word “sinner” was in the mouth of the crowd. They murmured that Jesus was to be the guest of a sinner. They were mad, confused, disappointed, and hurt.

Rejected people often reject others...
Hurt people often hurt others...
Left out people often leave out others...

The word "sinner" was in the mouth of the crowd, but the name “Zacchaeus” was in the mouth of Jesus.

Have you been listening to the crowd?
Have you been listening to Jesus?

The crowd thought Zacchaeus was unworthy.

Jesus thought Zacchaeus was worth stopping for... and then later that week dying for.

A No-Good Thief

The crowd thought Zacchaeus was a no-good thief. This reminds me of another crowd in Jerusalem.

Jesus died among thieves.

Jesus died the death of a thief.

The crowd at the crucifixion treated our Jesus like a no-good thief.

Jesus knows rejection, yet he doesn't reject us. And upon that cross, even thieves had access to Jesus.

Hope for a no-good thief

Seeing Jesus and having Jesus approach and speak to him by name must have changed Zacchaeus.

8 But 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 cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

This is a really big change and a really big promise. Did Zacchaeus follow through?

Do we think he "made it right" with everyone he hurt?

We don't know and it is not what really matters in the story.

Here is what matters.

9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Salvation has come... not because Zacchaeus is giving back the money. Salvation has come because Jesus, the son of man, has come.

Jesus = Salvation

The very name Jesus means salvation. It literally means Jehovah Savior.

When it comes to salvation, nobody is left out.

Thieves, liars, murderers, racists, hypocrites... Salvation has come for us all because Jesus has come for us all.

Salvation has come to the spot where you are today.

Salvation is calling you by name today. Salvation is not calling you by your sin, but by your name.

What will your answer be?

Zacchaeus did not stay in the tree and watch Jesus from a distance. Zacchaeus climbed down and went home with Jesus.

I am going to ask everyone who wants to go home with Jesus to come to this altar today.

When you walk towards Jesus you are walking away from the label.

Perhaps you are like the crowd with labels in their mouth. Rejected people reject others... Come today and be healed of rejection so that you can receive others.