

Title: "The Power of Noticing" Text: Luke 19:1-10 Series: "NSAC Missions Month" January 10, 2016

Pastor Dave Sattler Sources: Ross Hastings' "Missional God, Missional Church" (c.2012); Scot McKnight's "Kingdom Conspiracy" (c. 2014); Robert Lewis' "The Church of Irresistible Influence" (c.2001); Jason Byassee's "Vancouver: Stony Soil" 01/06/2016 Article; Mark Sayer's "Facing Leviathan" (c.2014); Commentaries: Bock, Morris, & Wright; NIV Life App Bible; Dr John A Beck; CEO Stat from The PEAK 102.7.

<Slide> Review & Introduction:

- Good morning, everyone! My name is Dave Sattler, one of the pastors here.
- Today continuing with "NSAC Missions Month." This concept of missional church ...
 - Q: "is not a fad but is theologically foundational for the church." -Ross Hastings, p35.
 - Our vision, Q: "... bringing the good news of Jesus across the street and around the world."
- BQ: Will this be part of your story in 2016?
- This January, it's our desire that God would grow our 'mission-hearts.' Together. It's a risk, but when you muster up the courage to 'talk across your back-fence' or hallway to a neighbour or classmate -- and keep sharing Jesus with them, it can be such a blessing. And, your faith grows.
- Like I challenged last Sunday, think of ONE person to share your faith with in 2016, ONE place God is calling you to be a light for Him, ONE thing God might want you to surrender -- give away to fuel His mission in 2016. God's mission. It's simply the best thing to give our lives to on the planet.
- **<Slide>** However, many in our region are deeming the Christian Church, 'irrelevant.'
- While the way we approach whale sightings, exercise, & indigenous art may suggest religion hasn't died here, fewer and fewer people are waking up on a Sunday thinking, 'I should go to church.'
- British Columbians would rather sleep in, go skiing, sailing, watch football, work. Less than 17% attend church even once a month. -Jason Byassee Article. My guess is North Shore stats are way lower.
- Seeing this trend more than a decade ago, author Robert Lewis asks a telling question:
 - Q: 'If your church were to shut its doors forever, would the community even notice?'
 - BQ: How has the church lost its 'presence' in society? -Robert Lewis, Church of Irresistible Influence.
- In his book Missional God, Missional Church, Ross Hastings suggests:
 - The marginalization of the church in Western society is, Q: "... due to the failure of church people to **engage redemptively** in all areas of human culture, sharing the mission God has given them ... by their **presence** (in people's lives) ..." -RH, p39-40.
- **<Slide>** In a city like ours, it's easy to have a certain aloofness about our relationships ... at work, at school, on our sports teams, in our neighbourhoods -- even in our families.
- We can 'know' a lot of people without ever truly 'knowing' anybody. Sure, we have a huge network of 'people-associations,' but our relationships can end up being a 'mile wide & only an inch deep.'
- And we live our lives rarely noticing what's really going on with people all around us.
- ILL - A report by the Vancouver Foundation in 2013 found ...
 - Q: That most people in our city can't name more than two neighbours. -JB Article
- But the God of the Christian Story calls us to something radically different.
- Setting our example, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save those who are lost" (Luke 19:10).
- Jesus steps in. Gets personally involved. 'Hunts down' lost people. 'Risks it all' on our rescue.
- **<Slide>** This is the Good News!!! Which leads us to Luke 19:1-10, p852 in the blue Bibles or on your electronic device. The story of Jesus & Zacchaeus.
- ILL - I want you to think for a moment about that person in your life:
 - The she or he who's the last one you think would ever get saved.
 - That crusty, spiritually-hard-hearted boss, enemy, or family member.
 - Well, I'm suggesting -- that's Zacchaeus. And, lest you think the Bible is just 'unicorns and fairytales', that same Jesus who reached him still lives in you today and says,
 - Q: "What is impossible with (humans) is possible with God." -Cf. Luke 18:27
- **<READ>** Prayer: 'Lord, please move me out of the way and come, speak to us by Your Spirit.'

Narrative Outline:

1. Passing Through (19:1) <Slide>

- A tough 30km hike from Jerusalem, strategically situated on both the N/S & E/W 'International Highway,' Jericho was one of the only places to re-fuel on the journey. And be heavily taxed for it.
- No bridges or swimming lessons in the ancient world, people were terrified of water. And Jericho's next to the 1.6km-wide-4-metre-deep Jordan River! Skilled professionals could help you and your family, you and your work companions, you and your animals to cross it. All for the right price.
- Like most, Jesus was "passing through" (1) town, focused, with his destination in mind: Jerusalem.
- But, is Jesus ever 'simply passing through,' switched off, on autopilot, head someplace else? Like Sattler locked into task-mode or with a 'sammich' in his hand or when the hockey game's on?
- No. Jesus always notices.

2. Tax Collector Wants to See Jesus (19:2-4) <Slide>

- Jewish by birth, this man chose to work for Rome to get rich by 'gouging' his fellow Jews.
- Top of the tax pyramid in a city rife with commercial opportunities, no surprise Zacchaeus is "wealthy" (2). And, extremely unpopular. Cheaters -- 'turncoats,' one can see why these 'double agents' were disowned by virtually everyone. Zacchaeus' greatest sin?
- Perhaps the most tempting one of the Western world: 'Whatever I can get, it's all mine!'
- But, if we step back from the dark stigma of a 1st Century tax collector, we see Zacchaeus was just a guy 'doing his job.' And his 'dirty' job made him 'untouchable' to many.
- ILL - This week I heard the average annual salary for a CEO in Canada ...
 - Dropped in 2015 to: \$8.8 million. Doubt there's much sympathy out there.
 - But, reality is, the 'high-rolling' corporate world can be a place of great marginalization too.
 - Many live in their offices. Have few confidantes. 'Off-the-charts' stress. Unmet desires.
 - Live in isolation. For some of you, this is your story.
- Zacchaeus is lost. Nobody's willing to give up their spot at the front of the crowd for a crook like him. And, he's short! Hmmm, not sure which one's worse! Vertically-challenged or unpopular?
- (Incidentally, why do we short guys always find ourselves in the crowd eclipsed by the Gregg Lelands & Brad Kennedys & Andrew Metcalfes of the world?! Just wondering.)
- Perhaps he'd heard stories of how Jesus had met other hardened tax collectors and knew exactly how they felt. Interest piqued, Zacchaeus is drawn in. Has to catch a glimpse of Jesus.
- Resourceful, "he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree" (4).
- Or, hid in it. Peering out from behind its branches.

3. Jesus Looked Up (19:5-6) <Slide>

- Jesus looked up, "Zacchaeus." (5b); He even knew his name!
- BQ: Why in all the crowd was Jesus intentional to single out this 'outsider?'
- Because that's precisely what the God of the Universe does. And calls us to do too.
- APP - Who are the 'outsiders' in your world? People of different faith, ethnicity, sexual orientation?
 - People of another class: the poor, the rich, the addict, the mentally ill, the old, the young?
 - Often these gigantic labels put barriers between 'us' and 'them.'
 - Maybe you, for one reason or another, feel like that 'outsider.' Truth is: we are never off Jesus' radar. No one's beyond His touch. He knows your name. Always has room for you.
- There was gravity in those words of Jesus. The tax collector's heart must have lept.
- Human acceptance. When it had been so hard to come by. And, an offer of friendship: Jesus **walks right into his life**. Insists on coming over to his house. And Zacchaeus eagerly responds.

4. The Crowd Mutters (19:7) <Slide>

- You can just hear the kerfuffle, Q: 'Jesus "has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner!'" Well technically, the crowd's muttering is bang on. As would be the case had Jesus been the guest of any one of them. Or, for that matter, company at your house too. Reality is, we're all notorious sinners.
- Jesus here ushers in a whole new strategy for mission: **integration**. The 'holy' intentionally seeks out the 'unholy' in order to influence and cause the 'unholy' to be made 'clean' again.
- As it was for Judaism in His day and is today for many Christian churches, we have far too often adopted the **segregation** strategy for mission. One commentator says,

- Q: "I fear many evangelical Christians spend too much time exposing the subtle ploys of the evil one and far too little time **being present to** that world and its broken people." - RH, p57.
- We mustn't adopt a 'hunker-down-in-our-safe-little-Christian-bunker' mentality. Extreme segregation leaves us with no audience. But I too caution us against extreme integration. We can become so like our non-Christian friends that we blend in; and this 'waters down' our witness.
- Vital, but increasingly difficult to balance in our day is deeply loving people while not condoning sin.

5. Restitution (19:8) <Slide>

- Restitution. Faith demonstrated in obedience: Zacchaeus' pocket-book must now match his heart.
- APP - And we see Jesus doesn't merely ask us to place our faith in Him for salvation.
 - Jesus also calls us to surrender, to re-orient our lives around His ways and purposes.
- And this encounter with Jesus would alter an entire community.
- Imagine you got your tax-money back with interest that day! That'd change your life, wouldn't it?!
- With newfound generosity, the whole ambition of Zacchaeus' life had been transformed.

6. The Mission of Jesus (19:9-10) <Slide>

- "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham" (9).
- Words that would have further incensed the crowd. In one of two ways:
 - Either, 1) that one of God's 'chosen' could actually be "lost" and in need of "salvation," OR:
 - 2) This no-good, swindler is one of us?! No way, Jesus!
- This story crystallizes the truth: we are saved not through heritage or lineage.
 - It's **only through faith in Jesus** ... that the lost are forgiven and made new again.
 - Q: "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith ... it is the gift of God." -Cf. Ephesians 2:8. God's free **grace** received by faith.
- Bible scholar, Darrell Bock says, Q: "Jesus' stay with the tax collector ... pictures what His ministry is all about -- to lead to God those whom others have given up on." -Darrell Bock, p479
- Unconcerned about reputation or crowd impression, Jesus' is always focused on the mission:
 - That lost people may come to know and embrace God's amazing grace.

Applications:

1. Ask the Spirit to help us to notice people. <Slide>

- ILL - A few years ago, I spent a day masquerading as a pan-handler in downtown Vancouver.
 - I dressed the part, sat myself near the busy intersection of Georgia & Burrard, and spent several hours begging for money. Now I didn't earn much, but that didn't matter.
 - The worst part was: hardly anyone spoke to me, few made eye-contact, or even acknowledged they noticed me. People just kept walking by. And I felt invisible.
- APP - And the Lord began to convict me. To follow Jesus means to **notice** all sorts of people.
 - To be less exclusive; to not just talk to the people who do stuff for me or have stuff I want.
 - Or those who make me 'feel good' or 'look good' when I'm talking to them.
 - But also, to go beyond my reach to the marginalized, the 'little guy.'
 - And the 'big guy' that I might think's 'too good for me' and not easy to talk to.
- Q: 'Spirit, help me notice people today' is a great prayer to start the day with.
- Then, look up. Look around. And when the Spirit prompts you, obey, go with it! I've nearly always experienced joy when I've gone with the Spirit's lead to notice specific people. And you will too.

2. Know that people are truly lost without Jesus. <Slide>

- ILL - 18th Century French philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau sparked a revolution with his idea,
 - Q: "Man is born free and everywhere he is in chains."
 - Challenging the long-held doctrine of Original Sin, he contended, 'humans are basically good.'
 - Rousseau would say, Q: 'It's the structures of society that make us do bad things. If we can rid ourselves of oppressive government & organized religion, and pursue the primal pleasures of nature, we'll discover our true selves and become good again.' -Mark Sayers, p162-3
 - Not lost. We can 'fix' ourselves. No need for a Saviour. Jesus didn't need to die on a cross.
- I daresay a ton of us have bought into this philosophy.

- Many well-meaning Christ-followers subtly believe in a sort-of 'light' version of Jesus: that He's come 'to help people' or 'to make the world a better place' -- both, noble missions.
- But ultimately, Jesus has come to rescue us from our sin and redeem people out of this dark world.
- Our culture, this world -- apart from Jesus -- is fundamentally-flawed. Why we all eventually die.
- Without Jesus, we're lost. All of us. Do you really believe this?
- Or, do you believe there are other paths to salvation too -- apart from Jesus?
- There are many ways to find Jesus, but there is **only one way to God: through faith in Jesus.**
- APP - I know this is not the message people want to hear today.
 - Jesus' mission to seek lost people now belongs to us, His Church. But, the majority of people I interact with don't seem to have even a hint of their own 'lostness.'
 - And I'm challenged with a series of BQs: 'How much do I believe this?' 'How much does my heart beat for the people in this city?' 'Am I willing to risk personal discomfort, loss of my reputation, & fear of sounding 'crazy' or 'stupid' to help my friends see they are lost without Jesus?' 'And, that Jesus is the only solution to their lostness?' Tough, I know.

3. Our city is full of wealthy people whose hearts break day after day. <Slide>

- ILL - Awhile ago, my Persian soccer-buddy, a successful local businessman and practicing Muslim,
 - Approached me on the field and asked a question that surprised me:
 - Q: 'I can see you're devout, why do you follow the Christian God?' He asked.
 - After I fumbled through my answer, I was caught off-guard by his response:
 - Q: 'Wow, my god isn't like that!' I could see he was intrigued, drawn in.
- A somewhat-surprising, unspoken question emerges in our story's wealthy tax collector.
- Underneath it all, there's a dissatisfaction -- a 'sickness' of heart.
 - His 'net-worth' was obviously high (it appeared he had it all), but what about his 'self-worth'?
 - And, everyone in Jericho knew his face, but did anyone really know him?
 - Sure he had many direct reports under him, but did he have friends?
 - I'm sure he presented all powerful & expert-like (short guys tend to compensate well!)
 - But what was he really like? How did he really feel beneath the surface of his riches?
- Jesus did say it would be hard for the rich, but here we see: it's not just the poor and powerless who need to hear the Good News. Zacchaeus reveals the inherent beauty of the Christian Story and its ultimate ability to deal with all sorts of human sin, brokenness, & failure.
- APP - I believe there are countless highly-successful, important people ...
 - Wandering around our city (or their corner offices) dying for a reorientation of their lives.
 - Living the 'Canadian Dream' with a high-paying job, fancy car, & a huge house is nice.
 - But what they've acquired and what they've become is not enough to satisfy.
 - And they have no answer to what they really crave. Apart from our loving witness!
 - Remember: people aren't always as impenetrable as they appear. We mustn't allow 'appearances' to fool us into thinking people are okay in their present state without Jesus.
- God longs to reach people in our lives and use us as His vessel.
- There is tremendous hope in the Christian Story. But for too long there has been no voice for it in our city. Let's hit the streets and boardrooms with this message. Embody it by how we notice people all around us who are seeking and don't even know it.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to woo others to Jesus through us.

<Slide> Communion:

- Luke 19 points ahead once more to the sweltering, steep, & dusty road to Jerusalem. Jesus' fate awaits Him. The complaint, Q: "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner'" will soon turn into 'He's been hauled off outside of town to die a criminal's death.' All for the same mission: **to seek and save those who are lost.** Family, friends, & neighbours. You. And me. 'Thank You, Jesus.'
- And so we come to the bread and the cup to remind us that our Saviour Jesus came. To us.
- Because of our sin, we needed to be rescued. Jesus' death was and is our only hope for salvation.
- If you know you're a 'sinner' in need of a Saviour, please come forward, tear off a piece of bread and dip it in the cup. To remember. To celebrate. Together. All that Jesus has done to save us. Amen.