

Come to the Table Sermon Series – Week 7

Going Out On A Limb

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Sermon Preached: Sunday 27th July 2025

Preacher: Kelvin Burgemeister

Location: St Peter's Lutheran Church, Loxton

Sermon Text: [Luke 19:1-10](#)

Thanks, Pastor Jason. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, open our ears to hear your word, open our heart to receive your word.

Heavenly Father, may the words I speak today be what you would want your people to hear today, in Jesus' name, amen. To go out on a limb. I'm guessing you've all heard the saying to go out on a limb, or to put yourself out on a limb.

What does it mean to go out on a limb, and why would you go out on a limb? Is it standing up for what you believe in, or standing up for someone else? Doing something you wouldn't normally do, like going out of your comfort zone. Or is it taking a chance when all the facts and figures say you shouldn't do it, but your gut feel says just do it. When you put yourself out on a limb, there is a level of risk associated with it, a hopeful outcome.

The risk could be to your reputation, where you stand up for something that is contrary to most people's thinking and is unpopular. The outcome, being vindicated for your stance. Sometimes the risk is physical.

When you put your body in danger to protect something, you hold dear to yourself. The outcome, protecting something so it has a long life into the future. The risk could be financial, where you could be making a significant financial loss.

Or the outcome, make a significant profit. The risk could be to you emotionally. That awkward moment when a person professes their love for someone else, not knowing if the feeling will or won't be reciprocated.

If the person does feel the same way, then the outcome could be amazing. With all these scenarios, the hopeful outcome surpasses the associated risk. It's worth the risk.

Have you ever gone out on a limb? I want to share a story about myself. For my work, I go and recruit workers to help us with our citrus harvest, and we bring workers in from overseas. I decided to say to the boss that I think we should go in country and recruit them then.

Get to know them, interview them, and assess them if they're physically capable of doing the job. This meant taking a couple other people over with me. I put a proposal together.

I had to go to the CEO, because it was international travel, to get the authority to do that. That all came back fine. Yep, let's go and do this.

The two gentlemen I took with me, they were in their mid-60s. Also, I had to organise all the hut monitoring equipment that we took with us, all the paperwork, all the equipment to measure their physical assessments. I had that all packed in my bag.

I had a pretty big bag. We left, and I took these two gentlemen with me. We get to Tonga.

It's 12 o'clock at night in this very small airport. I wasn't sure. There wasn't very good communication about where we were staying, because we were a travel agent, and whether we even had a vehicle.

I get out of the plane, get through customs, grab my bag, weave my way out the tin shed, which it was. I did find that we had a vehicle there, so that was white the brown. Off we got, two gentlemen came through, and off we went to our accommodation.

By this time it was up us two in the morning, and we were all a little bit weary. The plan was to get ready by lunchtime, and the men would be coming in for their interviews and assessment by about two o'clock in the afternoon. As we all venture up to our room, we get ready for bed, so I open up my suitcase, and out of it falls a big set of red bras.

I picked up some other lady's suitcase. All my equipment, all my paperwork wasn't there. I didn't know whether this was going to be a disaster or not.

In today's Gospel reading, Zacchaeus, metaphorically and literally, puts himself out on a limb. Why does Zacchaeus do this? Jesus is passing through Zacchaeus' hometown of Jericho, on his way to Jerusalem. The word had obviously got around that Jesus was coming, and everybody wants to get a glimpse of Jesus, maybe even touch him.

This is because all of the stories they'd heard about Jesus. So the people are lining the streets in hope to see him. We're told that Zacchaeus is a short man, so for him to be able to see Jesus, he would need to get to the front of the crowd lining the way.

We're also told that Zacchaeus is a tax collector. Tax collectors were well known for taking more tax from the people than they were supposed to, and pocketing it for themselves. Therefore, they were not liked, and people didn't associate with them.

We're also told that Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector. So he would have been well known, and his reputation would have preceded him. So it's unlikely that the people of Jericho would have moved aside to let Zacchaeus get a front row viewing of Jesus.

So what is a short bloke who's despised by everybody in town do? He climbs a tree to get a look at Jesus. He puts himself out on a limb. What is the risk Zacchaeus has exposed himself to? What is the outcome he is hoping that drives him to do this? I suppose the obvious risk is that he could fall and injure himself.

There's the potential reputational risk where everyone would make fun of him because he's up in that tree. But he's probably used to ridicule being the chief tax collector. By this time, in Jesus' ministry, he had performed numerous miracles.

And there would have been many stories shared about these and the things that Jesus preached about. People were wondering, who was Jesus? Was he a prophet? Was he a Messiah? Zacchaeus is the same as everyone else. He's asking those same questions.

If it is true, the potential outcome is amazing. Zacchaeus' heart is drawing into Jesus, and Jesus knows it. That's why Jesus deliberately stops at that tree, looks up and says, Zacchaeus, come down immediately.

I must stay at your house today. Could you imagine what the comments would have been from the people who saw this would have been? Well, we don't have to. Luke tells us that the people who saw this began to mutter.

He's going to be a guest of a sinner. In the last few weeks, we've had numerous accounts of Jesus doing the unexpected, the unacceptable. He was turning people's understanding of the world upside down.

This time, not only does Jesus challenge people's perception, but here Jesus also comes to Zacchaeus and spends personal time with him. The gift of time is always amazing. Considering what Jesus was off to do and how busy it was, and at that moment, it's extraordinary, and Zacchaeus must have known it from his response, which we read in verse 8. Zacchaeus stood up and said, 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 them back four times that amount.

To give away half of everything you own. Well, to pay back anyone you've cheated four times the amount, and being a tax collector, we know you cheated a lot of people. The outcome for Zacchaeus from putting himself out on that limb is transformation.

He's a new person. His life has been transformed. He has a new beginning.

Jesus responds by saying, today's salvation has come to this house because this man too is the son of Abraham. For the son of man came to seek and save what was lost. Have you ever gone out on a limb for God? Maybe you haven't.

Maybe you didn't know you did. So what does it look like to go out on a limb? It doesn't have to be starting a school in a third world country. It could be something like committing to reading your Bible regularly, spending some quiet time with God.

Checking in with someone, giving them your time, offering to pray for them. Introducing yourself to someone here at church that you haven't met before. Supporting someone who's new to the faith and walking alongside them.

Joining a Bible study group or running a Bible study group. Helping out with one of the ministry activities that we have here at St Peter's. But why would you put yourself out on a limb? I believe it's the response to what Jesus has done for us.

Jesus put himself out on a limb for you and me. He willingly allowed himself to be hung out on a limb. We read in Philippians 2 verse 8. He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

We may not be secures who put himself right out on the tip of that limb, but because Jesus has died and risen for us, we can confidently shuffle a little way out onto that limb. We can do this because the Holy Spirit is right there alongside us. We can be confident of that because Jesus promises us.

He promises us this in John 14 verse 16. And I will ask the Father and He will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever. And further in verse 26.

But the advocate, the Holy Spirit, that when the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you. Through those experiences out on a limb, the Holy Spirit teaches us, strengthens us and grows us. This may not be the outcome we were first thinking of when we first got out on that limb.

Instead, these are the blessings God promises us if we trust in Him. Now back to my story. So it was up past two in the morning.

No one was answering the phone at the airport. And I was concerned about, did I have the equipment? Could I do my job? So by 12 o'clock the next day, we had located each other's bags. And about three trips out to the airport, I'd got my bag full of my equipment.

And the lady got her bag. I was able to do my job. But the thing that stood out to me was what we each valued in that particular situation.

I was rushing around worrying about getting a job done. And this lady, all she was worried about, was getting her Bible back that was in the front of her suitcase with all her mates in it. When we do get a go out on a limb, no matter how far, not only will we be supporting others, but we will also grow by going out on a limb.

We may not be sakias, but we can make a difference in one person's life by welcoming them into our life and to the Kingdom of God. Anything is possible if we shuffle out onto a limb. And I'd also encourage you to share any stories with one another about times you've shuffled out on a limb.

And the blessings, that was for others, but also the blessings that you've received from going out on a limb. Amen.

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are always with us.
We thank you that you have sent your Holy Spirit to teach us, guide us, and protect us.
Fill us with the confidence so that we can go out on a limb for your glory.
In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.