

E-Series

Good News for Bernie Madoff (Continued)



1 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 being a short man he could not, because of 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. 7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'" 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." 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 what was lost." —Luke 19:1-10

Jesus came to save sinners. While that might sound as obvious the nose on your face, it is something that is easily forgotten. Or, maybe it's *conveniently* forgotten. We'd rather forget it. We'd rather Jesus save good people. Mother Teresa, Billy Graham, [Dorothy Day](#)...it doesn't bother us when Jesus saves people like that. It doesn't even bother us when Jesus seeks out and saves people like us—normal everyday kind of people. But, when Jesus starts seeking out and saving the Bernie Madoffs of the world, we get a little antsy.

Yet, Jesus had this disturbing habit of focusing his ministry on prostitutes, tax collectors, you know, big-time sinners...drug addicts, drug dealers, murderers. "The healthy have no need of a physician," Jesus was fond of saying, "I have come for those who are sick."

Zacchaeus was a Bernie Madoff-level sinner. He was not only a liar and a crook, he was also a traitor. The fact that he would work for the government—the occupying army's government—is an indication of how much of a traitor he really is. But, Zacchaeus is the only person Jesus really engages in Jericho. Luke tells us he's just passing through. We know that he has already "set his face toward Jerusalem" (Luke's way of telling us that he's on the way to the cross). So, Jesus is just quickly traveling through Jericho. It's not his destination. But, he takes the time to search out Zacchaeus up in that Sycamore tree. Then he goes to his house. Before he leaves, Jesus declares, "Today salvation has come to this house..." Then, he announces yet again his life's purpose: To seek and save what was lost—even someone as lost as Zacchaeus. There's no place Jesus won't go to seek out and save the lost.

My friend and mentor [Will Willimon](#) (Will was one of my professors and is currently the Bishop of North Alabama), tells a story about one of the people who works for him. Her name is Dannette and she is over communications for the North Alabama Conference. She does publicity, the conference web site, etc. Just before some big campaign, Bishop Willimon called her in and said, "Now, Dannette, this is a big campaign we need to be sure we get out all this information next week. It's a big deal."

Dannette said, "Well, I hope it can wait because I won't be here next week."

Will said, "Dannette, it's really an inconvenient time for you to be out. It would be good if you could reschedule your time off."

She said, "I'm sorry. Next week I'm doing [Kairos Prison Ministry](#). We've been planning this for a long time. I can't miss it. It's our follow up with the inmates."

Will persisted, "Yeah, but can't you get somebody else to cover it for you. This is a big campaign."

Dannette said, "Bishop, I work here at the Conference office all year long. I'm always working with all you pastors. I think I deserve one week to go be where Jesus is."

Pastor Michael