

**Christ Community Covenant Church**  
**"Behold I am doing a new thing!"**  
**Pastor Dave Scherrer - March 17, 2013**

*When we come face to face with Christ, everything changes. How we spend our time, our money, our relationships. How we think of ourselves and how we approach the world undergoes a transformation. Now what I 'accomplish' (or 'fail to accomplish') no longer matters so much. The Lord restores our fortunes – but not always in the way you might think – sometimes He does it by redefining what good fortune is! And then my gratitude is without constraint and I cannot help but praise the Lord daybreak to dawn.*

"Behold I am doing a new thing." We are told that God is not asleep or busy with other things. He is not simply watching. He is shown to be a loving and powerful father who longs to be in a deep personal relationship with us. In the last several weeks we have seen that there is much to celebrate. God is there to confront the voices of the accuser who wakes us up at night and lies to us about our worth and our safety. He reminds us to get our eyes off the ground and to look at Him. He reminds us to celebrate forgiveness and remember His benefits. He is there all the time taking care of us. His purposes are twofold. He loves us so he is not willing to leave us as we are. Scripture says that God is busy doing a new thing and is conforming us to the image of His son Jesus. By that Paul means that God is using the hardships of our life and our obedience to God to shape our character. Secondly, this process of loving us brings glory to God. He is magnified and His majesty is revealed to the heavens. He is doing a new thing this morning in your heart, in the lives of the people you love and in this church. I know it! The Bible tells me so!

**Isaiah 43:18-21**

<sup>18</sup> "Remember not the former things,  
nor consider the things of old.  
<sup>19</sup> Behold, I am doing a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.  
<sup>20</sup> The wild beasts will honor me,  
the jackals and the ostriches,  
for I give water in the wilderness,  
rivers in the desert,  
to give drink to my chosen people,  
<sup>21</sup> the people whom I formed for myself  
that they might declare my praise.

It is a little confusing I have to admit. A couple weeks ago I reminded you to remember what the Lord has done in your life. Never forget. Now this verse says forget the past. I think it is roughly the same though - remember his faithfulness, forget the hardships and look to the skies from whence your salvation comes! He is restoring my fortune and my life day by day and moment by moment. I know because the Bible tells me so!

**Psalms 126**

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,  
we were like those who dream.  
<sup>2</sup> Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
and our tongue with shouts of joy;  
then they said among the nations,  
"The LORD has done great things for them."  
<sup>3</sup> The LORD has done great things for us;  
we are glad.

## ***Restoring the Fortunes of Zion***

The Lord has done great things for us! He is going to do even more if we remember to keep our eyes on Him. Lift your eyes up and it will change your perspective. I know this because the Bible tells me so. Even now he is restoring the fortunes of 4Cs and of you. Remember our first thoughts this morning - ***The Lord restores our fortunes – but not always in the way you might think – sometimes He does it by redefining what good fortune is!***

Paul had his perspective changed. He wrote about it in a letter.

### ***Philippians 3:7-14***

<sup>7</sup> But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— <sup>10</sup> that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

### ***That I might know him and the power of His resurrection!***

This passage is one of the most important passages in my life. It helps to center me and to help me deal with an ever present pride issue. It reminds me to seek to know Him and more than that to experience the power of his resurrection - To live in such a way as to bring back to life that which was once dead. Jesus can do this. Hearts once made of stone can be made alive and new. Hearts that once embraced Jesus and have walked away can be won back by the winsome and pursuant love of Christ.

### ***Luke 19:1-10***

He entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. <sup>3</sup> And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. <sup>4</sup> So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. <sup>5</sup> And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” <sup>6</sup> So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. <sup>7</sup> And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.”

<sup>8</sup> And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” <sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup> For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

### ***The transformed life! Saved from sin to righteousness!***

- 1. Jesus has come to find us***
- 2. Jesus came to forgive us***
- 3. Jesus came to free us***

#### ***I. Jesus has come to find us***

Luke tells us that as Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem He was passing through the city of Jericho. And as He does so, a very rich tax-collector who lived there named Zacchaeus wanted to see who Jesus was. Now working for the IRS may not be the most admired job in our society -- especially at tax time -- but in

ancient Israel tax-collecting was the lowest rung on the occupational ladder. Tax-collectors were the scum of their society for two reasons. First, Zacchaeus is a Jewish name and he worked for the occupying power of Rome and was, therefore, considered a traitor to Israel. Second, they were almost always greedy and dishonest, men who economically raped their own people. They didn't get a salary, but lived off what they could steal. The idea of a 'good' tax collector was something of an oxymoron. In fact, it was so rare that one Roman writer told of a town that encountered an honest tax-collector and erected a statute in his honor. Luke's point is that Zacchaeus was a bad man and that local people hated and despised him.

We're not told much more about him other than the fact that he was a powerful chief tax collector, he was rich and that he was short. But when he hears that Jesus, who had a reputation for being friendly with tax-collectors, prostitutes and the other ragged and unruly elements of society, was coming through town he wants to see Him. So he tries but because he's short -- and I suspect also because of the hostility of the crowd towards him -- he can't, so he climbs a tree to see Jesus. And please note that Luke describes this as a sycamore fig tree. That is a very important little detail in this story.

The *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* says this about the sycamore fig tree: "Because the branches of the sycamore-fig are strong and wide-spreading, and because it produces many lateral branches, it was an easy tree for Zacchaeus to climb, and in which he could easily be hidden." He's curious and wants to see who Jesus is but he doesn't want Jesus to see him!

But then comes the surprise. Jesus walks down the street, looks up in the tree and says, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down because I'm coming over for lunch!" Zacchaeus had been running but Jesus had chased him. Zacchaeus had been hiding but now Jesus found him. Jesus wasn't so concerned with Zacchaeus' occupation or reputation, but was deeply concerned for his salvation because He loved him.

But, why call Zacchaeus? There were better men in the city. Why him? Simply because the call of God comes to unworthy sinners. There is nothing in man that can deserve this call; nothing in the best of men can invite it.

That's exactly what Jesus did for us. He traveled all the way from that distant country called heaven to find us and save us from destruction. Perhaps, as some of us hear this story about Zacchaeus we realize that instead of him, we're the one hiding up in that tree. But what we must also realize is that Jesus is seeking us out because He loves us! He wants to initiate a relationship with us or make our current relationship even more intimate. Therefore, we have to do the same thing that Zacchaeus did -- quit hiding, come down out of the tree and let Jesus come into our lives.

Do you know why it's absolutely crucial to quit hiding and invite Jesus over? It's because He's the only One Who can cure us of the cause of our hiding - which is our sin!

## **2. *Jesus came to forgive us, to die for us and our sinfulness***

Zacchaeus hustles down out of that tree and receives Christ gladly but all the people grumble because Jesus has gone home with such a notorious sinner (vv. 6-7). That wasn't news to Zacchaeus. He knew he was sinful, but I think he also knew, perhaps at some deep, intuitive level, that he had finally met the one person who could forgive his sinfulness and help him deal with all the brokenness that his sin had caused in his life and in the lives of others.

What was true for Zacchaeus is equally true for us. Our sin -- every aspect of it and every sin we've ever committed -- needs to be brought out of the tree of hiding and into the light of forgiveness. And the only One who can forgive our sin and heal us of our brokenness is Jesus. In fact, just a few short days after Jesus encountered Zacchaeus, He went to a hill called Calvary outside Jerusalem and there died on the cross for the sinfulness of Zacchaeus, the sinfulness of everyone in that crowd in Jericho and the sinfulness of you and me. And just a few years after that cosmic event, the apostle Paul wrote in the book of Romans that 'God demonstrated His love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.'

I never met Debbie Johnson but I know her story. She was a bright and beautiful mom to two young kids and a great wife to her husband, Dave, who was a pastor in Denver. In late 1993, Dave and Debbie got a call to serve a church in Minnesota so they packed up their belongings and made the long trek in mid-winter to their new ministry and new home. About six months after they arrived, Debbie was diagnosed with cancer and less than a year later she died. But she didn't have to die! They caught the cancer in time and with the proper treatment she could have been cured. But two months before she was diagnosed, she discovered that she was pregnant with their third child and in order for the child to live, she had to refuse the chemotherapy and radiation treatments. She struggled desperately over the next seven months and finally gave birth to that baby and then, not too long afterwards, she went to be with the Lord. But she died so that her child could live!

That's exactly what Jesus did for us! He died so that we might live! Not only has He come to Find us but He also came to Forgive us! And there's not a person alive who doesn't need the saving, sacrificial, forgiving love of Jesus in their life. The reason why is because our sin gets us all tangled up. It binds us and holds us and eventually drags us down to destruction.

### **3. Jesus came to free us**

After having Jesus over to lunch, Zacchaeus makes this incredible claim -- he's going to give one-half of his possessions to the poor and if he has defrauded anyone, he'll pay back 4 times as much. This was an incredibly generous act which was not required by the Old Testament law. So, why does he do this? Jesus' response in verses 9 and 10 provides the answer: "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Zacchaeus had been lost but now he was found. He had been lost in sin but now he has been saved to righteousness. And ultimately, in its fullest sense, that's what salvation is: its freedom from the power of sin and to a new thing! It appears that the major sin that Zacchaeus was trapped in was materialism. He was hiding in the pursuit of wealth, perhaps out of a legitimate desire for significance and security but it had so controlled his life that it caused him to hurt others and himself. But when he's found by Jesus and knows that he's been forgiven, he's finally set free from of the power of Mammon in his life.

In his great novel *The Robe*, Lloyd Douglas uses the story of Zacchaeus to describe the liberating impact which Jesus makes on us. After Zacchaeus promises to give away all this money, Douglas has Jesus ask, "Zacchaeus, what led you to do that?" And Zacchaeus answered, "Master, when I looked into Your eyes, I saw mirrored there the Zacchaeus I was intended to be." That's exactly what salvation does for us: it sets us free to be the people whom God originally intended us to be.

There are two morals to this story. Maybe many more but two that come to my mind this morning.

The first is a personal challenge to each of us. What are you hiding in today? What's keeping you from becoming the person that God wants you to be? There's only one power in the universe that can liberate us from the power of sin and that's Jesus of Nazareth. He has come to find us, to forgive us, and to free us, just like He did with Zacchaeus.

There is a second moral and it is for the church. It is found in that final verse. Verse 10, where one of the most valuable and most glorious and the most important truth ever revealed in Scripture is voiced. As far as we are concerned, this is why we are saved, because God is a seeker and a saver of those who are lost. This is true to the nature of God. From the fall of man in the garden, when the Lord came searching for Adam and Eve who were hiding from Him, and He said, "Where are you?" [Genesis 3:8](#) and [9](#), God has continued to seek for lost and hidden sinners. It all began in the garden and it still goes on. In one of the most beautiful Old Testament passages, Ezekiel quotes God as saying this, "I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the weak," [Ezekiel 34:16](#). God is a seeker of those who are lost and in grave danger. Today this is a reminder and a challenge. Why are we here as a church? To follow after Christ as he seeks to save the lost.

Sohan Singh has banned customers from his grocery store in England. He told a London newspaper that he was forced to take such drastic action because of people's bad manners. First, he banned smoking,

then crude language, baby strollers, pets and finally customers themselves. Shoppers now must look through the window to spot items they want and then ring a bell to be served through a small hatch in the door. "I have lost business, but I cannot say how much," Singh said. "I am a man of principles, and I stand by my decision." (In *Flagstaff Live*, June 4-10, 1998.) It seems to me that a grocer who bans customers from his store has lost sight of his purpose! If your aim is to sell groceries, then you must put up with some people whom you may dislike in order to achieve your purpose. Just like that grocer, many churches have forgotten their Savior's purpose: to seek and to save those who are lost. We don't like the sinful habits and worldly ways of outsiders. If they want to come to the door of the church and tell us what they want, we will serve them. Otherwise, let them shop elsewhere! We must maintain our principles!

Not here. Not at 4Cs by God. Not here. God is doing a new thing right here right now!