Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees

Stewardship Learning Community
Living in God's Economy
Jesus Comes To Save

Opening Prayer

Scripture Read **Luke 19:1-10.** Saint Luke had just finished telling the story of the rich young ruler in **Luke 18:18-27.** What similarities and differences are there between the rich young ruler and Zacchaeus?

Introduction

Mark Vincent writes in *Speaking About Money: Reducing the Tension*, "Most believers can express basic Christian understandings about communion, marriage, or the importance of God's word. They struggle, however, to articulate faith understandings about money in a consistent and non-anxious way…We want to place these beliefs (about money) at the very heart of our faith because the linkage between faith and practice runs as a strong current through North American wallets…There is nothing that competes so intensely for our attention toward God as money" page 21.

- What is the link between faith and how we use the money God has entrusted to us?

"One pastor said, 'Money is a sensitive and divisive issue in the church today. It is best to stay away from it altogether.' Another remarked, 'Salvation is all that matters. Money and giving are beside the point.' Still another man of God said, 'Scripture focuses on so many other more important truths that I don't want to get bogged down with a secondary issue like money.'" *Jesus, Money, and Me* by Ron Jones, page xvi.

- Is money really a secondary issue? Is it beside the point? Is it best to just stay away from it? Why or why not?

In *Meditations on the Gospels* published by Concordia Publishing House, the commentary on this passage from Luke begins with these words, "Jesus shocked His disciples when He said, 'How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.' When they in their amazement exclaimed, 'Then who can be saved?' He answered, 'What is impossible with men is possible with God' (Luke 18:24-27. In the reading (Luke 19:1-10), Jesus demonstrated that it is possible for divine grace to save even rich men, even those who acquire their riches by unjust means and becomes slaved of their sin and love of money'" page 596.

- Read **Luke 19:10**. Why did Jesus come?

A Stewardship Prayer

Lord, You have blessed us in so many ways. We have material blessings in abundance. But we know that material blessings are the least of Your good gifts.

The salvation Jesus won for us on Calvary's cross is the greatest gift. He came to seek and to save the lost and that includes all of us.

Give us generous hearts that respond in gratitude to the needs of those around us.

Forgive us when we fail, and draw us ever closer to You so that money and things never get in the way of our relationship with You.

In Jesus Name,
Amen.

A Closer Look At The Story of Zacchaeus

The story of Zacchaeus consists of two parts. The first part is summarized in verse 10. "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Read **Luke 15:1-7**. What does this parable have to say about the lost?

Read **Luke 15:8-10.** What does this parable have to say about the lost?

Read **Luke 15:11-32.** What does this parable have to say about the lost?

- What does it mean to be lost?
- Who are the lost?

What do we know about Zacchaeus from the following verses?

- Verse 2
- Verse 3
- Verse 7

What is stunning about the words of Jesus in verse 9?

The second part of the story begins with verse 8. What is the response of Zacchaeus to Jesus?

What does this response tell us about Zacchaeus?

Read **Luke 3:7-14**. Why does John respond to the questions of the crowd, the tax collectors, and the soldiers the way he does?

- How does this relate to Zacchaeus?
- How does this relate to me?

One commentator on this passage suggests that the story of Zacchaeus is the most important Lucan text on the subject of the right use of possessions. What is the right use of possessions according to this story?

Discuss the following questions:

Think about how you **acquire money**. What is God pleasing when it comes to acquiring money?

Think about how you **regard money**. How can you cultivate an attitude of gratitude and trust rather than entitlement, anxiety, or greed?

Think about how you **manage money**. How do you find balance between storing away too much and saving too little? How do you see to it that God is first in all areas of life, even in managing money?

Think about how you **spend money**. What do you think about "100% Stewardship?" Is it realistic to use all of the money entrusted to you as God would want? What changes might you need to make?

-Adapted from *Giving To God* by Mark Allen Powell

Closing Prayer

Provide time at the end of each session for questions, comments and group prayer. The prayer can take one of the following forms or be done in a way the group decides.

Adoration…
Confession…
Thanksgiving…
Supplication…
Praise…
Remember…
Ask…
Yield…

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
Stewardship Ministry
Rev. Wayne J. Knolhoff, Director
stewardship@lcms.org