

+ Lesson Introductions + 9th Sunday after Pentecost: VBS Sunday + 29 July 2012 +

Back to Jerusalem – The Boy Jesus Visits the Temple – Luke 2:41-52

He was like no other human being. Every thought, every word, every action was perfect—without sin, without even a hint of disobedience. Jesus was like no other human being because he was different than any other human being. Jesus is the sinless Son of God. His heavenly Father had given him an important task—to live a perfect life as your Substitute and mine. You see, Jesus lived the perfect life you and I could not. He perfectly obeyed the will of his heavenly Father, while you and I so often ignore or reject that will because we want our will to be done. Jesus loved to hear and learn the Word of God and spend time in worship, while you and I neglect that Word and too often find our minds drifting. Jesus submitted to the earthly authorities God placed over him, while you and I too often find ourselves among those who rebel. For every one of us, it is true what the Bible says, *“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23), but Jesus never did. Jesus never fell short of God’s demanded perfection, but there was a reason why. It was never for himself, but for you! Jesus’ life counts for yours in the sight of the holy God, because your sinful life could not. Years after our account, Jesus would die on a cross to pay for all the guilt of your sins and rise from the dead to defeat death for you. Now forgiven by your perfect Substitute, you can live each day as God’s obedient and grateful child.

Back to Jericho – Zacchaeus Sees His Sin and His Savior – Luke 19:1-10

Jesus came to save sinners. Zacchaeus was a sinner. He was a tax collector—a Jewish man who had sided with the hated Romans to collect taxes from his own people while overcharging them to fill his own pockets. Tax collectors were considered the scum of the earth, the crud on the bottom of the barrel, the worst of “sinners”, yet it was for people like that Jesus came into this world. Jesus came to save sinners because his love for them knows no bounds. So Jesus sought them out to bring them to faith through his saving Word. Jesus showed love to cheaters and swindlers and prostitutes and outcasts and sinners—even sinners like you and me. Yes, on the outside we may come across as nice people who are helpful to our neighbors, but every one of us knows we’re rotten on the inside corrupted with the guilt of sins from our youth, sins of the past, secret sins, and public sins. Yet Jesus in his boundless love came to save sinners, even you and me, and he comes with his saving Word. After all, *“faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ”* (Romans 10:17) For sinners like you and me, Jesus came to bring us to faith through the hearing of his saving Word just as he did for lowly Zacchaeus so long ago.

Back to Golgotha – Jesus Pays for Our Sins – Luke 23-24 (Selected Verses)

You and I sin every day. We disobey God. We deserve to suffer punishment from God for our many sins, yet God chose to let his very own Son suffer that punishment for us. God sent Jesus to pay for what you and I have done wrong, even though Jesus never did anything wrong. He received what we deserve or as the Apostle Paul put it, *“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). Isn’t that remarkable? God’s self-sacrificing, undeserved love sent Jesus to die for your sins and mine! Even more remarkable is that Jesus didn’t just pay for our sins, but he also conquered death, which we all deserve. He abandoned his tomb and triumphantly rose three days after his death. Jesus, God’s Son, has not only paid the impossible burden of debt that we owe for our sins, but he also proved that he has the power to raise us to life someday and give us a home with him in heaven—not because of anything we have done, but purely because of his love and forgiveness.

Back to a Lonely Road – A Samaritan Man Shows Kindness – Luke 10:25-37

So how do you say “thank you” for all that Jesus your Savior has done for you? After all, Jesus is the God who loves and forgives and saves you! Eternity isn’t long enough to fully thank our Savior Jesus, but you can still thank him every day of your life by living for him. So what does that look like? Jesus once told the story of a Samaritan traveler who helped a badly beaten Jewish man. Their respective peoples hated each other, but for no other reason than compassion and mercy for a fellow human being, the Samaritan helped the man who was beaten. In fact, the Samaritan went far over and above what any of us would expect in caring for a friend, let alone a possible enemy. Likewise, you and I can show our grateful thanks to Jesus by being good neighbors, by helping others no matter who they are, by showing love for others as Jesus did for us and as he commands us to do. *“Since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another”* (1 John 4:11). Out of grateful thanks for the love of Christ shown to us, let us be “good Samaritans” showing that love of Christ to everyone we meet!

Back to Athens – Paul Preaches About Jesus – Acts 17:16-34

What do you do with good news? Trust me—it's extremely difficult to keep to yourself. So what do you do with the best news of all—the good news of Jesus? You can't hold it in, but if you need more incentive, consider this. Before Jesus went back to his home in heaven, he commanded his disciples, including you and me, to tell others the good news that he died and rose to save them from their sin. In fact, that's the most important job that every believer has—to spread the good news of Jesus, to tell others—young and old, rich and poor, friend and stranger—about their only Savior who loves them. That's what we had opportunity to do this week in sharing that good news with many children at Vacation Bible School. God continues to give you and me opportunities to share the good news of Jesus with others, especially people we know and love. Like the Apostle Paul and so many others, let's look for those opportunities to share the best news of all—the good news of a Savior who lived for us, who died for us, who rose for us, who loves us, and who saves us.