



Homily for 10/30/22

31ST Sun. O. T., Year C

Very Rev. J. David Carter, JCL, JV

Today Salvation Has Come to This House

*Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord,
"Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor,
and if I have extorted anything from anyone
I shall repay it four times over."*

And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house." We have to unpack this statement, because there may be some confusion as to what this salvation of Zacchaeus consists of. Zacchaeus is not saved because he gave money away. As if we can buy salvation or are saved by doing something. Elon Musk just gave half his money away to buy Twitter. That doesn't make him a saint. Bill and Melinda Gates have given half their possessions away for humanitarian purposes - and sometimes anti-human purposes, if you consider unborn-human-beings human. But that doesn't make them holy. People give money for all sorts of reasons that do not end in salvation. So many people use their money to buy favor, power, or influence. These may provide earthly gain or some sort of self-esteem or worldly honors. But to equate those things with salvation from sin and death is an error. Salvation doesn't come merely from parting with wealth, but rather the parting with wealth frees us to embrace the right thing. Rather than exchanging his money for some favor, going from the possession of money to the possession of influence, Zacchaeus makes a renunciation of wealth for the purpose of making room for Jesus in his home. This is a repentance of the unjust use of the goods of the world in order to make his house a place of welcome for the Son of God, who alone can bring salvation. Zacchaeus is saved not because he gave away possessions, but rather because he let go his grasp of money and the false power it promises, **in order to grab ahold of Jesus and so allow God to save him.** When Zacchaeus climbed the sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, Jesus looked up and said, *"come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house."* Of course, Jesus quite literally entered into the physical home of Zacchaeus, as was recorded in Scripture. But more importantly, Jesus entered the spiritual home of Zacchaeus, that is, his heart. In order to make room for the one his heart desired, he knew he had to cast out everything that had cluttered his home. His many possessions had occupied his heart and his home. Now they are given away to make room for the true object of his heart's desire, Love Himself. *"Today, salvation has come to this house."*

This is what salvation consists of – being united with Jesus who is the true power and authority and wealth and joy of the heart. *"Where your treasure is, there also is your heart. . . You cannot serve two masters."* (Matthew 6: 21; 24) In other words, you love that which you value most. Where is your heart? What is your heart's desire? This is the constant examination that must be made for those who seek holiness. That begs the question, *"where is my heart supposed to be? What ought I be desiring?"* If God, and His Kingdom, is not the answer, you have missed the mark. Salvation consists precisely in realigning the heart to its proper end in God. Salvation is possessing God alone in our hearts.

The art of prayer, which is given to every Christian soul, is to enter frequently into the house of the soul and there to welcome Christ. This means that the Christian must frequently take stock of what is filling the soul and to what the soul is clinging. Now sometimes the evil one likes to lurk around the entrance to our soul and to fill it with unholy things, causing us to embrace lies and falsehoods. He likes to whisper evil lies to us. And sometimes we believe them. We imbibe them and they color our interior homes with unholy hues. These lies are things like, "you aren't worth it", "you are unloved", "you aren't good enough", "you can't be saved", "your sin can't be forgiven", or, perhaps like Zacchaeus, "you are too small." These lies can only be dispelled with the saving light of truth. The Book of Wisdom gives us this very light. It is true that we are small, *"Before the LORD the whole universe is as a grain from a balance or a drop of morning dew come down upon the earth."* But with God all things are possible, *"You have mercy on all, because you can do all things;"* And with God there is Mercy, *"you overlook people's sins that they may repent."* He does this



because he loves us, *“For you love all things that are and loathe nothing that you have made; for what you hated, you would not have fashioned.”*

This is the truth that destroys the lies and dispels the darkness of the evil one. And this is the good news that we proclaim, *“God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.”* (John 3:16) *“God is Love, and all who live in Love, live in God.”* (1 John 4:16) This is the light that dispels the dark lies of the evil one. *“The Light has come into the world and the darkness has not overcome it!”* (John 1:5)

Today salvation is coming to your house – *“Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world.”* What will you do when Jesus is passing by? The Church has provided a response, but it needs to be made with faith. We must climb the sycamore tree of faith and say, *“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof.”* It is true, we aren’t worthy, on account of our low status as sinners; but God, looking up, still says, *“you are worth it!”* Wisdom says, *“you spare all things, because they are yours, O LORD and lover of souls, for your imperishable spirit is in all things!* So, enlightened by truth himself, we will then say, *“only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”* The healed soul is salvation. The healed soul is the one that has let go of all those things that clutter our heart/home so that the Light Himself may enter and take up his dwelling there. If we enter there with faith in the One who Loves us, we too will hear those words, *“Today salvation has come to this house.”*