

WHY AM I HERE? LUKE 19:1-10

Questions for Christianity #1

◆**Intro:** If you could say anything to God knowing he would answer, what would you say? Here is a thoughtful clip of several folks responding to the chance to say something to God... (show "An Audience with God").

◆Chances are that you have some of those questions. We all do. Today we're starting a short study of some of the most asked questions in life. At this point I'm planning on looking at six of them, but frankly there are many, and if you have one you'd like us to address, please bring it to me, and we'll try to investigate it. Here are the ones I'm planning on in the next 6 weeks:

- ◆Why am I here?
- ◆Why believe in God?
- ◆Why trust the Bible?
- ◆Why is there evil?
- ◆Why the conflict between science and religion?
- ◆Why is Jesus so important?

◆These are questions that even people who have known God a long time keep thinking about. There are several options for your time on these questions: 1) you can attend our weekend services themed around these big questions. 2) your small group can meet and discuss together what we talk about. If you are not part of a Life Group come see me or Mike and we will form one with you. 3) I will attempt to provide each week a personal guide with some biblical texts for you to read and questions to meditate on during the week. You could also use these in your group.

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◆ Before we get into today's question, Why am I here?, a few fundamental thoughts about asking life's big questions...

◆ **1. To find answers I need to be willing to search, and seek.** Sometimes we imagine that it's wrong to ask God questions, as though it is an offense or immoral. I'm here to tell you it is not. God knows we have questions whether we voice them or not. Further, he encourages us to search and ask:

◆ Seek first the Kingdom of God... Mt6:33

◆ You will seek me and find me if you seek me with all your heart.
Jer.29:13

◆ Ask of me and I will tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. Jer.33:3

◆ Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find. Mt.7:7

◆ So, do not be afraid. One note: Asking is not the same thing as "testing". Testing is when we demand proof out of unbelief.

Asking is when we admit to not knowing and open ourselves to wisdom. The Bible strictly warns us not to test the Lord. But the Bible also encourages us to ask him things. So pray, put questions in your prayers. Tell God you don't get it when you don't get it. Ask him to show you things, bearing in mind that God, like anyone else, may answer "no", "go", or "slow", ie "yes, no, or not now." Just because you don't get what you expect doesn't mean God didn't answer. So ask. Ok, on to our question for today: Why am I here?

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◆2. To understand my life's purpose, I need to get close to my life's purposer.

◆A. Asking why we exist shows our innate knowledge of what we call purpose. Without purpose life becomes meaningless. The very fact that we crave meaning points to the reality of our purpose. In our text Zacchaeus was looking for that something more. Everyone knows there must be something more to this life. Zacchaeus was a **tax-man**. As a tax man, he's somewhat similar to a modern day mob boss. Rome allowed him (a non-roman) to squeeze whatever he could out of the common citizen as long as Rome got the level of tax they wanted. So he's a wealthy man. He can take a limo to the airport. He can leave work and jet to the Caribbean for the week end. By the world's standards he had it going on. Lots of party people who hang with people that have it going on. Lots of bling. Not only a tax man, but the "chief" one (v2)

◆But he wasn't happy was he? You can tell because he hears about this penniless preacher who's traveling around the country and for some odd reason, Zacchaeus, the Player, wants to see him. He's searching. Good step Zach. At least he's to the point in life where he admits there's something more than all this.

◆Now he's a short fellow. And, of course, the people in the crowd aren't "feeling the love." They know who he is. But he's willing to park his stretch-camel on a side street and climb a tree for goodness sake! Have you felt that

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desperation ever? That "I gotta know."? There's gotta be reasons. In the Old Testament Solomon was the same way. Filthy rich, super smart, king, and inquisitive as the day is long. Listen...

◆ 1 ¶ I thought in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. 2 "Laughter," I said, "is foolish. And what does pleasure accomplish?" 3 I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly--my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was worth while for men to do under heaven during the few days of their lives. 4 I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. 5 I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. 6 I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. 7 I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. 8 I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well--the delights of the heart of man. 9 I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me. 10 I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my work, and this was the reward for all my labour. 11 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun. Eccl.2:1-10

◆ Solomon was searching. Hey, you might want to read his book Ecclesiasties this week. You will find a reoccurring conclusion in

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it. Zacchaeus was searching. And I'd like to suggest to you that your internal searching for meaning is evidence that God is calling to you, because God is a God of purpose. Do you know that internal quest I'm talking about?

◆ Have you ever done something you usually really enjoy, and suddenly realized it's not "floating your boat". Maybe a kind of out-of-body experience where you are watching yourself there fishing, or eating your favorite chips –and you suddenly realize it's just not all that fulfilling? You glance around yourself and wonder for a moment if in 25 years you're still be eating these same chips, sitting in this same chair, what it will all mean?

◆ I worked with a fellow who was constantly stepping outside, not to smoke, but to sit in his car and listen to some tapes (remember those?) by motivational speaker Zig Ziglar on getting ahead as a person and being a success. He was searching. Later on he ended up in jail for stealing from the company. I'm sure Ziglar did not endorse that on the tapes. Another thing's for sure, this fella was searching. Just like Zacchaeus.

◆ **B.** If questions of purpose and meaning and value to your life pop up in your mind I'm not sure that Ziglar tapes will help or not, but I am sure the one place to find your meaning is not in your own heart. Self-help books and TV talk shows will tell you all the time to search your heart for the answer, be true to your

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heart, let your heart lead you. That's straight up foolishness, but highly popular. The more times you ride around the block the more you discover that the human heart is the problem!

◆ *The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? Jer.17:9*

◆ "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time." Genesis 6:5, NIV.

◆ That was *before* God sent the flood. He said it again after the flood, so the problem continued! Jesus said

◆ "For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly." Mark 7:21, 22, NIV.

◆ So God's advice is "Don't search your heart for your purpose. Come and seek it in me!" I'm not here to tell anyone the answer lies within, because it doesn't. You didn't decide to get born. You didn't chose your parents. You had nothing to do the GPS position where you were born. The answer to your "why am I here?" is not within you. It is within the one who put you here.

◆ "In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps."

◆ *"Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails."*

◆ "A man's steps are directed by the LORD. How then can anyone understand his own way?"

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- ◆ "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases." (Proverbs 16:9; 19:21; 20:24; 21:1, NIV.)
- ◆ "I know, O LORD, that a man's life is not his own; it is not for man to direct his steps." Jeremiah 10:23, NIV.
- ◆ Is it getting clearer? Doesn't it make sense to ask the inventor about the purpose of the invention?
 - ◆ Illy: Charlie Steinmetz built the great generators for Henry Ford in his first plant in Dearborn, Michigan. Once everything was in place, the assembly line worked like clockwork. Things ran along smoothly for months. Suddenly, without warning, everything ground to a halt. Ford Motor Company went dark. One mechanic after another was unable to locate the problem, much to Ford's frustration. Finally, he contacted the brain behind the system.
 - ◆ Steinmetz showed up fiddled around with some switches and a gauge or two. He tinkered with this motor and that one, pushed a few buttons and messed with some wires. He then threw the master switch, and lights blinked on, engines began to whirl, and things were back to normal. A few days later Henry Ford received a bill for \$10,000. He returned the bill with a note: "Charlie, isn't this bill just a little high for a few hours of tinkering around with a few wires and switches?" Steinmetz rewrote the bill and sent it back. It read: "For tinkering around on the motors: \$10. For knowing where to tinker: \$9,990. Henry Ford paid the bill.
 - ◆ Warren: "The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest

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dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet you must begin with God. You were born by his purpose and for his purpose.”

◆**3. Why am I here?** Here’s part one of the answer. Say it with me: God made me to love me. That’s really a simple statement isn’t it? You should whisper it to yourself a couple of times, to let it sink in. What this means is that prior to the abilities you have to *make money*, or to market *services*, or to *research* well, or to *speak* to audiences; prior to that *perfect fit* you have with a mate that just seems the person you were “meant” to live with; prior to all those really good things about yourself, your intelligence, your beauty, your rugged jawline –there is something first, and more important, and that is true about you regardless of all those other trappings. You were created by God so he could display his greatest attribute; Love.

◆Like a gardener who decides to plant a Gerber Daisey, or an artist who decides to paint a sailboat, or a parent who adopts a child... God made you for the pure, simple purpose of loving you and having a relationship with you. Everything is secondary to that. God did not make you and me so that first we could do something great, be something famous, show particular moral strength, or work for him. He is the original artist, the Creator, the first One to love.

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◆B. Did you see it in Zacchaeus' story? Zacchaeus is up his tree, right, seeking Jesus. But he comes to find out that Jesus was already seeking him!

◆"When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."" Luke 19:5, NIV.

◆He already knew who Zacchaeus was. He already knew where Zacchaeus was. He already had determined that he was going to stop in and stay by Zach's place. And verse 10 says it outright.

◆"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."" Luke 19:10, NIV.

◆Zacchaeus didn't know it. God was looking and coming for Zacchaeus even though he was actually hiding! Have you ever seen a **sycamore**-fig tree? The leaves are huge. You could pretty much hide in one. Who else in the Biblical narrative tried to use fig leaves to hide? (Adam & Eve after they sinned.) What do you remember about that scene in the Garden of Eden? Who was hiding? Who was seeking? (God). Why did God call and say "Where are you Adam?" He's God. He knows the word before it's on your tongue (Ps.139). He sees you when your sleeping! (Job34:21, Jer.23:24 - stolen by Santa Claus)

◆"*For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths.*" Proverbs 5:21 NIV.

◆God knows where Adam is. He wants Adam to think about where Adam is. And he wants you and me to think about where we are too. What fig leaf are we hiding behind even though we

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know there's got to be more to life? Here's the thing: even though Adam has brought sin into creation, and even though Zacchaeus was a thug, God came looking for them. And he's calling to you and me too.

◆ **Conclusion:** Maybe you don't have the foggiest idea of where you are. Not even sure there is a Garden or a tree. Maybe you've been coming to church for years and you're not even sure why you do it. Maybe you're going through hard times and you're pretty sure it won't get prettier. Maybe you're riding the wave. Doesn't matter. In the next couple of weeks we'll ask some deep questions and I promise you, we're going to find some energizing answers. Here's one...

◆ *From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. Acts 17:26-27*

◆ You are here to find and live with and be loved and led by God. There are more purposes the Bible tells us about, but this is our first one, and it's a beautiful one!