

JJ<sup>1</sup>

There's a man named Jason Silva who probably considers himself one of the big thinkers of our modern age. He's all about being a "seeker" and encourages everyone else to be a "seeker" along with him. Much of what he believes and teaches is essentially what many might call the Millennial philosophy. Some of the thoughts at the heart and core of Jason Silva's "seeker" philosophy is that you need to question everything. You will have a restless mind, always seeking more, always seeking something different. You make your own reality, and therefore make your own truth and version of what is right and wrong. You love what the human mind can conjure up and are always accepting of everyone else's created reality.

The problem with this philosophy of life is that the "seeker" is always a wanderer—never has a home for their heart—never has peace—never has rest.

While you might hear this description and think it sounds crazy, even horrifying, don't we find ourselves doing just that to one degree or another? Consider the things of this world you seek comfort in. And I'm not just talking about comfort food like a grilled cheese sandwich and tomato soup on a chilly day. I'm talking

about those things you seek first. What's your "go-to" when you're feeling down or need some comfort? Is it always Jesus, or do you go to someone or something else first? What about those things you seek in order to make you feel complete or whole? Does it begin with the value Christ puts on you, or is it found in the things of this life—family, friends, grades, income, titles, accomplishments, possessions, etc.?

Isn't it strange that we can so easily get caught up in all this seeking? It happens because we've either become dissatisfied with what God gives or we fail to grasp what God gives us and makes us in Christ. Maybe for the most of us, it's a combination of the two.

A long time ago there was a man who was a seeker, trying to find comfort, identity and completeness in what this world had to offer. That man was Zacchaeus. He was a man who filled his heart and life with seeking after the things this life had to offer, even at the great expense of other people. And while he had more than most, he was still left empty, lost and seeking—seeking for something he couldn't find on his own.

That desire sent him to the streets of his city one day. He had heard that this Jesus

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<sup>1</sup> JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for "Jesus Help". It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

fellow was coming through Jericho. Certainly he had heard about Jesus' miracles and teachings. Maybe he even heard that one of Jesus' disciples had been a tax collector. Maybe he had heard that people like him were being welcomed by Jesus and not ignored.

You see, I say "people like him" because Zacchaeus would not have been a popular guy at all in Jericho. Anyone here like the IRS? Didn't think so. In a way you could say Zacchaeus was a like a big boss in the IRS. He was a chief tax collector. He collected taxes for the Romans. Worse than that, he was head of many other tax collectors as well. Zacchaeus had also used his power to extort money from people, probably by finding out those who were skimping on their taxes and instead of turning them in, had them pay him off to keep his mouth shut. In the hearts of most in Israel, he was a traitor, an enemy of the state, *persona non grata*.

But even someone like him could get near to Jesus, even talk with him. So this is what he's going to do. But the streets were crowded and he was vertically challenged (short). But this wasn't going to stop him today. A wealthy man who certainly liked his dignity didn't care today. And so he went, up a sycamore-fig tree.

From outward appearances you might think Zacchaeus did the seeking and finding. There are so many in this world, even in the realm of Christianity, who think this is how it works. Who think, we must make the effort—we seek—we find—or at least that we must meet God half-way. But today, Luke 19 destroys those philosophies and turns them upside-down.

You can argue that it was just a chance meeting. Jesus was just going through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem. But why was he going to Jerusalem? He was going to finish his work as the Savior of the world... including Zacchaeus! There is no such thing as chance or coincidence with the Creator of all things and author of salvation.

One of the reasons to go to Jericho that day was to come to that very spot below the sycamore-fig tree, look up and say, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today."

What would Zacchaeus do? What would you do? Pretend you didn't hear Jesus? Hiding, hoping that no one would notice a short rich man had climbed a tree? Zacchaeus "came down at once and welcomed him gladly."

With his invitation, Jesus basically says, 'Zacchaeus, I came here today for you! I



am **THE SEEKER**, not you. I have come to seek and to save the lost. I have sought you with an everlasting love and have come to give you what your heart longs for but has always been missing.'

And how do the people respond? 'Hur- ray! Even someone like Zacchaeus can be saved! There's hope for me too!' Nope. They grumbled, "[Jesus] has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner'." Their hearts hadn't changed about Zacchaeus, and now they reveal their hearts hadn't been changed by Jesus either.

Jesus' responds to their grumbling and Zacchaeus' beautiful fruits of faith saying, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham." 'This man you've all written off as a traitor to the Nation of Israel is indeed a son of Abraham. Not because of the blood in his veins but the faith in his heart. That faith of Abraham that depended on me and not himself. The faith I sought to plant in him. I am **THE SEEKER**.' "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

Friends, that means Jesus came to seek you out and to save you too! It wasn't just chance. It wasn't just coincidence that you ended up here today or that you ended up in God's house and God's fami- ly many years ago when you were bap- tized. God was working in time to seek you out and to save you. Just as God

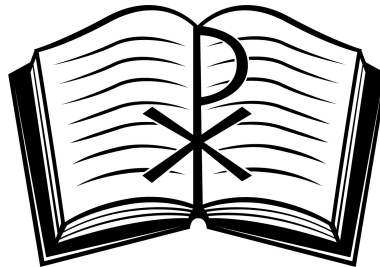
worked all of history so that Zacchaeus would be in that sycamore-fig tree the day Jesus passed through Jericho, he's done the same for me and you! It's just as King David writes in Psalm 139: "...you knit me together in my mother's womb... your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." (Ps. 139:13,16)

All those days only have meaning be- cause acts that seemed to be beyond Je- sus' control were all working according to his plan. When Jesus got to Jerusalem,

things seem to fall apart. One of his own disciples betrays him for money! The rest of them flee into the night. His enemies can't even decide which of their lies they want recorded as the truth so they can condemn him.

The government that was supposed to protect him, didn't. And his enemies put him to death.

Yet, all this was according to plan. Want proof? Just read the Old Testament. All the details are there. It starts with Genesis 3:15. Why did **THE SEEKER**, why did God himself do all this? Why did he suf- fer? He did this so that even the worst you've done would be forgiven and that you would have a new heart. A heart at rest and peace, knowing that you are complete in Christ and your life has real meaning.



Now, friends, because Jesus has sought you, found you, saved you, you have what you need to live a life of gladness and thankfulness in Christ. That means you know where to turn when you need comfort, need love, need to see your value, need to feel whole—you turn to your Savior Jesus. That also means that you have a new view on the gifts of this world. Like Zacchaeus, you see them as means to say thank you to God and help others.

Friends, have the same exuberant joy as Zacchaeus, remembering that **THE SEEKER** has found *you!* Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for “To God Alone Be The Glory”. This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn’t about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.