

“What’s in the Way of Me Seeing Jesus”

Senior Sermon by Cassie Carlson

Top Ten Ways the Bible would be different if it were written by college students:

Ten—Last Supper would have been eaten the next morning cold.

Nine—The Ten Commandments are actually only five, double-spaced, and written in a large font.

Eight—New edition every two years in order to limit reselling.

Seven—Forbidden fruit would have been the apple you snuck into your pocket when leaving the commons.

Six—Paul's letter to the Romans was received via text.

Five—Reason Cain killed Abel: They were roommates.

Four—The place where the end of the world occurs: Finals or midterms, not Armageddon.

Three—Out go the mules, in come the mountain bikes.

Two—Reason why Moses and followers walked in desert for 40 years: They didn't want to ask directions and look like freshmen.

One—Instead of God creating the world in six days and resting on the seventh, He would have put it off until the night before it was due and then pulled an all-nighter.

Morning, guys. I am really excited to be up here and to speak to you all. I’m given ten minutes to give some words of wisdom. This was a tough choice on what to choose. I went back and forth and I am now confident in my decision to talk about Zacchaeus. A few people when asking me what I was going to speak about, I told them Zacchaeus, which was taken with a confused look. Then I started singing... And they quickly realized who I was speaking about.

Let’s dive right into the text. “Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today,” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.”

Zacchaeus, a tax collector/ a sinner, when he heard Jesus was coming, he wanted to see Jesus. He came running to the crowd, and because of his size he couldn’t see Jesus over the crowd so he climbed into a tree just to catch a glimpse of him. People in the crowd were in his way, and he wasn’t going to let them separate him from Jesus.

As college students it is so easy to let the business of life: friends, homework, extracurricular activities, boyfriends or girlfriends, and so much more get in the way of our relationship with Jesus. One of the reasons I wanted to talk about this is because I see this happen in my life so much. I want to challenge you with the question: What is in your way of seeing Jesus? And what are you doing to get around it? People were in Zacchaeus’s way, so he climbed up in a tree. In the text it is physically seeing Jesus. Well I am talking about emotionally and relationally fixing our hearts on Jesus.

So many times in my life I come before God, as a sinner and I want to see him, but because I am putting things in my life before him my relationship with him suffers. It amazes me though because at the times I need him most, he is ready arms open. He is faithful to me even when I am not faithful to him.

This week has been crazy. When Carol asked me if I wanted to do a senior sermon I was in Greece. She said the next available day to speak and only one for awhile was October 22nd. Well since I was in Greece I didn't consider that this week was midterms. Now I know why the date was free. So I decided what to speak on and Tuesday night I had a choir concert and I was so frustrated and was wondering how I was going to get everything done, studying, writing papers, taking care of my floor as a PA, and writing this sermon. And I caught myself doing the very thing that I wanted to speak about. Instead of turning my eyes upon Jesus, I was trying to handle everything by myself. God doesn't want us to just acknowledge him, he wants us to have a personal relationship with him. In that moment Tuesday night I asked God to help me to draw near to him and give control to him. And just like that time started opening up: activities were canceled and classes were let out early giving me time to study. Now I'm not saying that if we focus completely on God when are going to get all A's—we do have to study too!! God is in control and he will honor us if we spend time with him.

I want to tell you a story of a man who like Zacchaeus was born in such a way that could have separated him from Jesus. Nick Vujicic was born with no arms and no legs. And at the age of ten, he tried drowning himself in the bathtub. He was quoted, "I felt cold and bitter. I hated God for doing this to me." Then one day he was reading an article about a man who had a similar disability as him and was inspired by his work, "I realized why God had made me like this—to give hope to others. It was so inspirational to me that I decided to use my life to encourage other people and give them courage. I decided to be thankful for what I do have, not get angry about what I don't." Now Nick travels the world as a motivational speaker.

I don't know what cards you have been dealt. Maybe you were born with something that is hindering your relationship with Christ, or maybe growing up something you haven't been able to let go of, or maybe you are letting something else in the way of you seeing Jesus. Through Nick's adversaries that caused him bitterness, he is able to find and see Jesus and develop a personal relationship with Jesus.

I want to read this quote out of a book I am reading that really stepped on my toes and got me thinking. And I think it relates to our topic because sin is one thing that separates us from Jesus. It is talking about lukewarm people, who may see Jesus, but they are holding him at a distance. It says: "Lukewarm people do whatever is necessary to keep themselves from feeling too guilty. They want to do the bare minimum, to be "good enough" without it requiring too much of them. They ask, "How far can I go before it's considered a sin?" instead of asking themselves "How can I keep myself pure as a temple of the Holy Spirit?" They ask, "How much time should I spend praying and reading my bible?" instead of "I wish I didn't have to go to work, so I could sit here and read longer!"

What is keeping you from seeing Jesus? What is keeping you from being excited about knowing him more? And what are you doing so you can know him better? I want to leave you with this verse. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith."