



FIRST PREZ HONOLULU
SERMON TEXT

“MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE”

Journey to Jerusalem Part 2 Sermon Series

Luke 19

by Leona Larkin

Sunday, Sept. 6, 2026

We ended last week with a miracle that leads us into today's message, which is titled “More than Meets the Eye.”

In Luke 18:31-43, there was a blind man who called out to Jesus: “Son of David, have mercy on me.” The crowd around him shushed him, but he boldly cried out again, “Have mercy on me.”

He was then brought to Jesus, who asked what he (Jesus) could do for him, and the blind man asked for his sight to be restored. Jesus did just that, giving this man a chance to behold the face of the Savior that his heart somehow recognized. He then followed Jesus, praising him, and so did the crowd.

The same crowd that earlier told him to keep quiet.

It's such a beautiful story, and it really shows that simply looking at Jesus doesn't mean we recognize him. Just like how we can read the Bible over and over again and not understand how the God of the Old Testament and Jesus are one and the same.

Jesus is truly more than meets the eye.

In our scripture passages today, we'll reflect on how we might see him and then consider what that means for how we might respond to Jesus. Especially because we're joining Jesus in restoring and transforming one another and our world.

The FPC vision gives us a broad idea of what that looks like. On our website, it says:

“As we look ahead, we're focused on becoming a church where healing is found, generations learn from one another, and love takes shape through service.”

For this vision to become a reality, each of us has a part to play in a way that is uniquely ours. But it all starts with and depends on how we see Jesus.

Luke 19:1–28

¹ He entered Jericho and was passing through it. ² A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³ He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵ When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” ⁶ So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷ All who saw it began to grumble and said, “He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.” ⁸ Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” ⁹ Then Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of

Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”

¹¹ As they were listening to this, he went on to tell a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. ¹² So he said, “A nobleman went to a distant region to receive royal power for himself and then return. ¹³ He summoned ten of his slaves and gave them ten pounds and said to them, ‘Do business with these until I come back.’ ¹⁴ But the citizens of his country hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to rule over us.’

¹⁵ When he returned, having received royal power, he ordered these slaves to whom he had given the money to be summoned so that he might find out what they had gained by doing business. ¹⁶ The first came forward and said, ‘Lord, your pound has made ten more pounds.’ ¹⁷ He said to him, ‘Well done, good slave! Because you have been trustworthy in a very small thing, take charge of ten cities.’ ¹⁸ Then the second came, saying, ‘Lord, your pound has made five pounds.’ ¹⁹ He said to him, ‘And you, rule over five cities.’

²⁰ Then the other came, saying, ‘Lord, here is your pound. I wrapped it up in a piece of cloth, ²¹ for I was afraid of you, because you are a harsh man; you take what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow.’ ²² He said to him, ‘I will judge you by your own words, you wicked slave! You knew, did you, that I was a harsh man, taking what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow?’ ²³ Why, then, did you not put my money into the bank? Then when I returned, I could have collected it with interest.’

²⁴ He said to the bystanders, ‘Take the pound from him and give it to the one who has ten pounds.’

²⁵ (And they said to him, ‘Lord, he has ten pounds!’)

²⁶ ‘I tell you, to all those who have, more will be given, but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ²⁷ But as for these enemies of mine who did not want me to rule over them—bring them here and slaughter them in my presence.’” ²⁸ After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Following hot on the heels of the blind man whose sight was restored, we meet Zacchaeus.



Verses 1-4 tell us that Zacchaeus is the Chief Tax Collector, so we know he's rich. We're told that he's short, so he can't see over the crowd, and in his excitement to see Jesus, he climbs up a sycamore tree to get a better view.

As the chief tax collector, Zacchaeus was more than likely an outcast. Tax collectors were Jewish men who worked for the oppressive Roman government, and they were known to cheat their own people. So his climbing up the tree to see Jesus suggests that he was hoping for something, but we don't ever get to what that is from his perspective because, much to his surprise, I'm sure, in verses 5 and 6, Jesus looks up, calls him by name, and says, "Hurry and come down, for I (Jesus) must stay at your house."

I have no doubt that Jesus' response was way more than Zacchaeus was expecting. There is absolutely no way that he was expecting Jesus to speak to him at all. Think about it: imagine going to a Beatles concert, the Backstreet Boys, or BTS. You might hope to meet at least one of the band, and maybe they'll say hi. But you don't go in expecting one of them to talk to you, call you by name, and then tell you the entire band is coming to your house for dinner.

And yet, here it is. It's happening. Jesus is talking to him. So Zacchaeus' response is huge. He doesn't climb down that tree and say, "Ok Jesus, follow me."

No. Instead, in verses 8 and 9, he offers to give half his fortune to the poor and to repay anyone, from whom he had stolen, four times what he had taken.

Jesus didn't ask him to do this, but it's evidence that Zacchaeus understood what the people in the crowd in verses 7 and 11 did not: that there was more to Jesus than meets the eye.

And to acknowledge that Zacchaeus was seeing Jesus correctly, Jesus refers to him as a son of Abraham (verse 10).

If the blind man could see Jesus clearly, and Zacchaeus could see Jesus clearly, what on earth was going on with everyone else? More importantly, when we're not seeing Jesus clearly, what on earth is going on with us?

The simple answer is that they were stuck in their heads, a trap that we can easily fall into as well.

To be fair to the crowd, Jewish people had a very specific idea of what their Messiah would be like. He was supposed to be a descendant of and a warrior king like David, who would come in and make Israel great again. And rightfully so because King David expanded the territory of the nation of Israel, and he united the 12 tribes under his rule. He fought and vanquished their enemies from his teenage years well into his adulthood.

So, as Jesus was nearing Jerusalem, the crowd anticipated the end of Greek and Roman rule over the nation of Israel once and for all. For them, the kingdom of God was going to be a new version of what once was. *It wasn't about healing, redemption, or the spiritual salvation of one individual at a time; it was about rising up to be a great nation, chosen by God.*

Their expectations were all very rational, grounded in the history of their faith and scripture, so it was understandable. It must have looked to them as though everything that Jesus was doing was like a politician on the campaign trail today. Doing what needs to be done to win the hearts of the people, so that they would support him when he (Jesus)

became king. It had to have been inconceivable that everything that Jesus had done, leading up to this point, was the work of the Messiah.

Jesus had been healing people; forgiving them for their sins; freeing them from demons, from physical disabilities, and conditions that made them unclean. He was saving women caught in adultery from being stoned to death, speaking to societal outcasts like the Samaritan woman at the well, feeding thousands of people, raising the dead, and calling the Pharisees out for their hypocrisy.

Their failure to really see Jesus is why they could grumble about Jesus choosing to go and eat at Zacchaeus' house because he was a tax collector, which meant he was unworthy, unwanted, and undeserving. It allowed them to completely ignore the fact that Matthew, one of the 12 who traveled with Jesus, was once a tax collector himself.

If they saw Jesus correctly, they would have understood that this decision was on-brand for Jesus and might instead use this moment to see Zacchaeus differently, if not to praise Jesus for whatever he did to make Zacchaeus offer to give back four times more than he had stolen.

In her book "The Healing Presence," Leanne Payne talks about how there's a massive separation between our head and our heart. It's in our language; we talk about head knowledge and heart knowledge. We've been taught that the two things are different. Head knowledge is good, but it's not stable because our minds can be changed with the right evidence. When something becomes heart knowledge, however, it somehow carries more weight; it changes things. The feeling that it brings can't quite be put into words, but that truth or that

promise sits, at least for me, in my gut and stays there.

For example, I didn't grow up going to church every Sunday; I mostly went when I was visiting my grandmother. In fact, growing up, I had friends who were Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, agnostic, atheist, Roman Catholic, and Greek Orthodox. My best friend, to this day, is Anglican, and we met at a Methodist private school. I believed in God; I believed that Jesus was the Son of God, that he was crucified, died, and rose again on the 3rd day. I believed that Mary conceived Jesus through the Holy Spirit. But it was all abstract; it was a fact of being Christian. It didn't make a difference to how I actually *lived*.

It was only in my early 30s that these facts became real, and it changed my life. Jesus became real. A living, breathing being, not just a story. My life became his life, and I couldn't stop talking about it. I couldn't stop talking about him. And if I'm being honest, I still can't stop talking about him. He's my everything.

If this is anything like how Zacchaeus felt, then I can totally understand why he would give away so much of his fortune. Jesus is joy, Jesus is hope, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. He is worth more than this world could ever give us.

When we know this, when we feel the weight of this truth, then that's when we know that we're starting to see more in Jesus than meets the eye. We're not just seeing him with our heads, but we're starting to see Jesus with our hearts as well.

Leanne Payne says this:

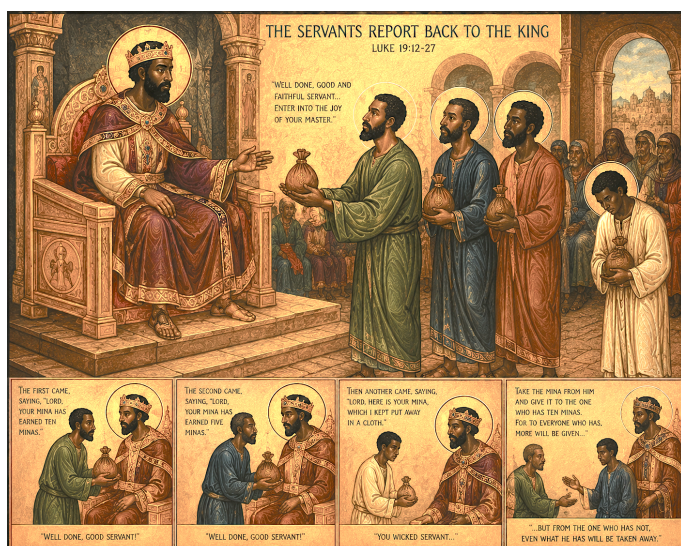
"In biblical language, the heart is the "center of the human spirit, from which spring emotions, thought, motivations, courage, and action - the wellspring of life."

In the Scriptures, therefore, the heart of man refers to both "minds," or as we say today, to head knowledge, as well as heart knowledge.

So if we want to perceive Jesus correctly, it cannot be with either our hearts or our minds; it must be with both. When you add the Holy Spirit's guidance and illumination, our faith becomes filled with awe and deep reverence for the divine, and each discovery becomes mind-blowing.

You climb trees, you repent, you give away your belongings. You drive an extra 30 minutes through Ho'omaluhia. Because in Jesus, there is more than meets the eye, and we can't help but to want more. How we see Jesus matters because it can make or break the rest of our lives.

Let's turn back to our passage and consider the parable of the 10 pounds in verses 11-27, in which a servant doesn't see the master correctly.



An unpopular nobleman, who nobody wants to be king over them, is preparing to leave to assume royal power. He gives 10 servants a pound of silver each and tells them in verse 13, "to do business with these until he comes back." And then he leaves.

When he comes back, we hear the account of three of his servants. One person has made 10 times more than he received, and so he gets 10 cities to oversee; one makes five times more than he received, so he gets five cities. The final one gives him back exactly what he was given, and he says:

"Lord, here is your pound. I wrapped it up in a piece of cloth,²¹ for I was afraid of you, because you are a harsh man; you take what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow."

Naturally, the king was upset.

And I think he was upset at two levels. There's obvious anger that comes from being disobeyed. But there must have been some level of hurt at what his servant was saying about him. This man gave 10 servants a pound each to invest. He gave each person what amounted to 100 days' pay. That's not insignificant. He trusted each person; he believed in each person and based on his response to those who did what he asked, he wanted to promote his servants, to make them more than they were.

Instead, in this one servant's eyes, he saw a master who was cruel and perhaps even lazy because he was asking the servants to do the heavy lifting, so he could enjoy the rewards. The servant may have had so many ideas for what to do with what he was given, but because of how he saw his master,

he ended up doing nothing. And so he missed out on what his master had wanted for him.

In telling this parable, Jesus was preparing these people for what was to come. Remember that everyone is anticipating the overturning of the existing power structures and the coming of Jesus as the new king.

But as we know, Jesus was preparing for his death and his resurrection. He was also preparing to go back up and be with the Father. Jesus was preparing to leave. So it would be up to the disciples to take what he taught them and change the world. He left them with the Holy Spirit, the most precious and priceless gift that they could ever receive. And every single good work that they did would all be done in Jesus' name.

Thousands of years later, we are still waiting for our Lord Jesus to come back. And we still have work to do. We have the same things the disciples had: Jesus' teachings, the Holy Spirit, our spiritual gifts, and our natural talents and abilities. The deacons are probably sick and tired of hearing this from me, but I keep saying it because we have all that we need to do beautiful and amazing things for God's Kingdom.

I genuinely believe with everything in me, that we're at the beginning of what will be the most mind-blowing five years of our lives.

The key lies in how we see Jesus.

When our heads and hearts work together, we start to see Jesus as he really is. He is fully man and fully God. He is incredibly powerful, but he's gentle with us. He loves us all so much more than

we could imagine. As the only perfect person to live, he could condemn us for all our wrongs, but instead he prays for us, and he extends his grace and mercy every day. He hurts when we hurt, he cries when we cry, and celebrates right along with us. All of this, and so much more.

I have an activity for us that I hope will help us understand the difference between seeing with the head alone versus seeing with the head and heart. When you came in, you should have received something that looks like this:



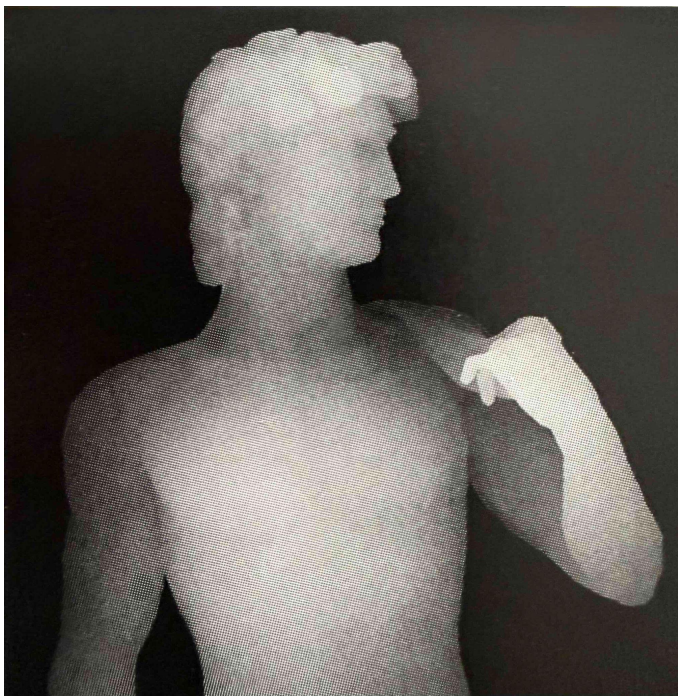
Does anybody know what this is? This is officially known as an AUTOSTEREOGRAM, or in layman's terms, "Magic Eye." It's a 2-dimensional image that creates the optical illusion of a 3-dimensional scene. Simply put, there is more to this image than meets the eye.

So do this:

- Hold the middle of this image right up to your nose. It should be blurry.

- Focus as though you are looking THROUGH the image into the distance.
- VERY SLOWLY, move the image away from your face until you begin to perceive the depth.
- Hold the page still, and the hidden image will slowly appear.

Show of hands: who saw nothing? Who saw something but wasn't quite sure what it was, or they couldn't focus on it? Who saw the image clearly? Who saw this? Michaelangelo's "David"?



This magic eye is a beautiful metaphor for us today. To look at Jesus with only our heads, we see a man. Some say he's a prophet, a guru, an incredibly wise philosopher, all of which is true, but ultimately he's an ordinary flesh and blood man. However, to see him with our heads and hearts is to see the divine being that lies beneath. It might require discipline, patience, and prayer on our part, but ultimately it's doable. On this side of eternity, we may not fully

perceive Jesus, but we should be able to answer the following questions:

Who is Jesus to us? Is he a cruel master who only wants to take credit for our hard work? Or is he a master who loves us and trusts us with his most precious creation?

Are we seeing him only with our heads and negating the heart, or are they working together, powered by the Holy Spirit, so that we get to see every day that He is more than meets the eye?

Like what happened with Zacchaeus, the good news is that Jesus sees us, and he knows us by name. And like what happened at Zacchaeus' house later that day, we are blessed with an opportunity to get to know Jesus in return.

We get to discover why Jesus is more than meets the eye.

Let's pray.

Gracious Lord Jesus, we thank you so much that you see us first, that you know us by name, and that you desire a relationship with us. We ask that you open our hearts and minds to your presence, and ask that the Holy Spirit have them work together so we can experience and see you (Jesus) anew, that we may be in awe of our Creator and his creation every single day, and that we may be good stewards of all that we've been given as we join Jesus in restoring and transforming one another and our world. We give the glory to you only, Lord, and we pray in your name, Amen!