
‘Today, Salvation has Come to this House.’ God’s Salvation of God’s People in Luke’s Gospel

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Introduction

One of the challenges of the church in the twenty-first century is to bear witness to Christ’s salvation within a modern, diverse, and often non- or post-Christian society. If there was a time when words like ‘sin,’ ‘repentance,’ ‘salvation,’ and ‘eternal life’ resonated with a Western audience, such vocabulary sounds largely impenetrable—when not obsolete, irrelevant, or suspicious—today. Consequently, if there was a time when questions such as “How can I be saved?” or “How can I be sure that I am saved?” seemed quite natural, today, if people ask any question at all, it is more likely to be: “What do I need salvation from, and why?” “What does this salvation entail or what does Jesus save to?” or “What does this salvation have to do with my life here and now?”

In this context, it seems to me that the Gospels, and particularly the Gospel of Luke, provide the church with some interesting tools to engage our culture with the good news. Indeed, rather than presenting salvation through propositional statements whose terminology would necessitate long explanations, the Gospels tell the good news through narratives, through the stories of people from all levels of society who encounter Jesus in everyday life situations. Stories have an immediacy that makes the significance of Jesus and the good news much more concrete and intelligible, and easier to relate to. They thus help us to see the nature, effect, and relevance of salvation in everyday life. And in my experience, our society is quite fond of personal stories.

If Luke is particularly helpful in this endeavor, it is because, of all the Gospel writers, it is he who most emphasizes the *salvific* aspect of the good news. In fact, most exegetes concur that salvation constitutes a—if not *the*—central theme in Luke’s Gospel.¹ The very first chapters of the Gospel are filled with soteriological vocabulary, presenting Jesus as a ‘horn of salvation’ (1:69), a ‘savior’ (2:11), even ‘salvation’ itself (2:30), and associating his birth with God making ‘redemption’ for God’s people (1:68; 2:38). Those passages of Luke’s infancy narrative have long been

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prominent texts in Western musical compositions and Christian liturgy (they include the Annunciation, the Magnificat, and the Benedictus), and have thus become some of the most famous texts of the New Testament. Their presentation of salvation, however, might first come as a surprise: indeed, they speak of God’s salvation of the people Israel from their enemies and those who hate them (1:68–71). On first sight, therefore, salvation seems to have more to do with a national military liberation, than with personal salvation to eternal life and forgiveness of sins (although forgiveness of sins is mentioned in 1:77). The following chapters of the Gospel, however, show that those personal elements are just as much a concern for Luke.

Indeed, one of the fascinating aspects of salvation highlighted in Luke’s Gospel is that it is both intensely personal and unambiguously social.² In other words, God saves both individuals and a people, and the salvation of the one and the other are intimately linked with each other. In this essay, I look at two individuals’ stories of salvation that illustrate this dimension and shed further light on the nature of salvation in Luke: Mary and Zacchaeus. Both accounts are situated in strategic places in Luke’s Gospel, Mary’s story being situated at its very beginning and Zacchaeus’ in a climactic position of the travel narrative.

2. On the social dimension of salvation in Luke, see especially Luke Timothy Johnson, “The Social Dimensions of *Sōtēria* in Luke-Acts and Paul,” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* (1993): 520–536.

1. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 22.

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Mary and God's salvation

Our first story of salvation concerns Mary. She is the first in Luke's Gospel to speak of salvation by calling God her savior (1:47). Being situated at the beginning of the Gospel, this text plays a particularly important role in setting up a framework for our interpretation of the Gospel.

The reader of the Gospel of Luke can hardly miss the importance of the events unfolding in its first two chapters. Those contain an extraordinary number of angelic apparitions and prophetic speeches aiming to communicate the significance and meaning of what is happening: Gabriel's annunciation to Zechariah and then to Mary (1:13–20; 1:30–37), Mary's song of praise (1:46–55), Zechariah's prophecy (1:67–79), the message of the angels to the shepherds (2:9–14), and Simeon and Anna's reaction when Jesus is presented in the temple (2:28–35, 38). What is happening is, in fact, nothing short of God's eschatological intervention in favor of the people of Israel, announced by the prophets of old and fulfilling God's promises to Abraham, the fathers (1:54–55, 73–75) and David (1:32–33; cf. 2 Sam 7:12–16). God is thus raising a king from the house of David whose kingdom will have no end, 'a horn of salvation' who will deliver Israel from all its enemies and those who hate them (1:69–72). Not only so, but the significance of Israel's savior will extend well beyond Judea, for he will also be "a light for revelation to the nations" (2:32).

For all their concern about the national and even world significance of the birth of Jesus and, in a lesser measure, the birth of John, those first two chapters are also the story of an elderly priestly couple who is childless and a young peasant girl. It is the story of how God acts in their favor just as much as it is the beginning of God's act of salvation for Israel. In fact, the personal story of those individuals is intimately intertwined with God's salvation of God's people. Thus, Luke begins his narrative by describing the situation of Zechariah and Elizabeth as a priestly and blameless couple, but with a serious problem: they are childless and advanced in age. In a context where children are the lifeline of the family, and obedience to the law is supposed to bring life and blessings, this description is perplexing at best. Something is wrong. Then,

the narrative moves to the temple in Jerusalem and describes Zechariah exercising his priestly duty while the whole people is in prayer outside (1:10). At this point, the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth is so closely intertwined with Israel's, that when the angel appears to Zechariah near the altar and declares "Your prayer has been heard" (1:13), the reader is not quite sure whether the angel refers to a prayer Zechariah made for a child, or his prayer in favor of Israel during his priestly duties. Zechariah's incredulity to believe the angel's announcement because of his old age (1:8–20) would seem to suggest that he was not praying for a child in the temple. Indeed, if he was praying for a child when the angel appeared to him, why did he struggle to believe God's answer to his prayer? It seems more likely that, if Zechariah ever prayed for a child, he had given up by the time of our story because of his great age. So, does the angel refer to a prayer Zechariah used to make for a child many years ago, or to his present prayer for Israel while the people is praying outside?

This ambiguity is, in my opinion, intentional. With John's birth, God is answering both the couple's prayers for a child and Israel's prayers in favor of God's people. The angel's announcement details the significance of the ministry of John for the whole people, prophesying that he will turn many of the people to the Lord their God. Yet the narrative also presents his birth as a saving act for the couple and in particular for Elizabeth, who claims: "This is what the Lord has done for me when the Lord looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people" (1:25). In a world where childlessness was a sign of divine punishment and source of shame (cf. Deut 28:15ff.), God's gift to Elizabeth testifies to God's blessing and becomes a source of honor for her in the community.³

This dual dimension of personal and national salvation is transparent in Mary's story as well. And in her case also, divine intervention takes the form of the gift of a child. There is an important difference between Elizabeth and Mary in that Mary is not in desperate need of a child: she is young and about to get married. Yet Mary is described as the object of God's favor (Luke 1:30), and she calls God her 'savior' (1:47). It is her song of praise—the Magnificat (1:46–55)—that helps us understand more precisely why. What is fascinating about it, is that Mary praises God as much for what God has done for her as for what God has done—or will do—for Israel. Indeed, both are intertwined.

What then has God done for Mary? God has given her a child. In the Magnificat, Mary interprets this as God having "looked with favor on the lowliness of God's servant" (1:48). She continues: "Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is that One's name." As Mary's own interpretation shows, God's gift of this child means more than an extension of her family through an offspring: it brings about a change of status and an elevation in honor. In antiquity, a woman's status was dependent upon her

3. Green, *Luke*, 65.

husband and came through her son.⁴ Mary has neither: she is not married, and has no son. And she is very young. She thus has no status in society, neither social, nor economic. This is what she means by her 'lowliness.' Mary, however, is promised a son, and not just any son, but a son who will be the eternal king of Israel and called 'son of God.' This is why she claims that all generations will call her blessed. The 'great thing' that God has done for her is that, through a miraculous action and without human help (i.e., without a husband), God has given her a 'royal status' through Jesus. Mary is blessed, because she believed (1:45) in God's promise that she would bear God's son, the king of Israel, and thus would become, in the words of Elizabeth, "the mother of the Lord" (1:43).

As the following verses of the Magnificat show, Mary interprets God's favor toward her as a reflection of God's larger dealings with the humble (1:52), and Israel (1:54) more generally.⁵ It was not uncommon in those times to reinterpret one's own experience of salvation collectively in such hymns of praise.⁶ Based on what the angel has told her and her own experience, Mary expresses the belief that through this coming child—God's anointed eternal king—God will bring honor and status to Israel, God's lowly servant, just as God has done for her. A few verses later, in a prophecy, Simeon confirms this interpretation by claiming that God's salvation—Jesus—will be for the "glory of God's people" (2:32).

To conclude then, in this story, God's salvation embraces both Mary personally and God's people as a whole. And as Mary's experience and the Magnificat suggest, salvation entails the taking away of shame and the miraculous gift of a new dignity and extremely elevated status offered by God through Jesus.

Zacchaeus and God's salvation

The pericope of Zacchaeus (19:1–10) has been described as "a summary of Lucan soteriology."⁷ It is part of specifically Lucan material, and occurs at the end of Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem (9:51–19:48), containing in condensed form several of the evangelist's favorite themes.⁸ It thus seems to be a form of climax in the narrative, before the Jerusalem events.⁹ In the account itself, Jesus' words to Zacchaeus—"today I *must* (*dei*) stay at your house"

4. François Bovon, *L'Évangile selon Saint Luc (1, 1–9, 50)* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1991), 87.

5. Note that both Mary and Israel are called God's servant, cf. vv. 48, 54.

6. See for example Hannah's song in 1 Sam 2:2–10.

7. Gerhard Schneider, *Das Evangelium nach Lukas: Kapitel 11–24* (Würzburg: Echter, 1984), 376. Cf. François Bovon, *L'Évangile selon Saint Luc (15, 1–19, 27)* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2001), 243.

8. The Gospel of Luke is usually divided into three parts: (1) the prologue, infancy narratives, and Galilean ministry (1:1–9:50), (2) the travel narrative (9:51–19:48), and (3) the passion and resurrection (20:1–24:53).

9. I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Paternoster/Eerdmans, 1978), 694. For a helpful discussion of the way this episode relates to other parts of Luke's Gospel, see John O'Hanlon, "The Story of Zacchaeus and the Lukan Ethic," *JSNT* 12 (1981):1–26.

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(19:5)—give the whole event a particular importance. Indeed, this use of *dei*—"it is necessary"—recalls the way Jesus speaks about the divine necessity of particular aspects of his mission, such as the necessity of his preaching the good news to other cities (4:43), or the necessity of his coming death and resurrection (9:22; 17:25; 22:37; 24:7, 44). This story is also the first recurrence of the noun 'salvation' (*sōtēria*) since 1:77 and its last occurrence in the Gospel.

A lost son of Abraham

Zacchaeus is introduced as a 'chief tax collector' and a 'wealthy man' (19:2), thereby drawing together two themes that the evangelist has carefully developed in his narrative. Tax collectors are usually associated with 'sinners' in his gospel and despised by the Pharisees and the scribes (5:30; 15:1–2; 18:11), a sentiment that seems to have been general in the first-century (cf. 7:34), both because tax collectors used their position to steal and enrich themselves (cf. Luke 3:12–13; 19:8), and because they were accused of colluding with the Romans. Although technically an Israelite, then, Zacchaeus is nevertheless an oppressor working for the political masters of Israel—the Romans. His title of *architelōnēs*, literally 'chief' tax collector, also suggests that he has a position of power and leadership.

Unsurprisingly then, as elsewhere in Luke, the crowd describes Zacchaeus as a sinner (19:7). The rest of the story corroborates the validity of their assessment. Zacchaeus' decision to retribute if he has defrauded someone (19:8) shows that he was stealing in his official capacity, and had not acquired (all?) his wealth through honest means. Likewise, Jesus' comment that "salvation has come to this house" and his implicit reference to Zacchaeus' 'lostness' (19:9–10), show that Zacchaeus was a sinner, or, to use Jesus' terminology in this text: he was 'lost.'

Zacchaeus thus needs salvation.¹⁰ He is a sinner and stands

10. Because Zacchaeus' declaration in v. 8 is in the present tense and seems to be answering the accusation of the crowd in v. 7, some exegetes have concluded that Zacchaeus does not thereby indicate his resolve to practice charity and give back the money he has stolen (futuristic present), but rather speaks of his usual practice of regularly giving to the poor and returning fourfold if he happens to take too much (iterative present). According to this reading, Zacchaeus is not

under God's judgment. But as the narrative shows, he also stands under his peers' judgment. His situation is one of broken relationship with God and broken social relationships. In fact, the text comments that 'all' (v. 7)—and not just the Pharisees and the scribes or even just the crowd of v. 3—accuse Zacchaeus. This unanimous accusation reflects the strain of his social relationships despite his wealth. As a tax collector, Zacchaeus is also a traitor to his people, siding with the oppressor, unworthy to be counted among the people of Israel. In the eyes of the people (and maybe even in his own eyes), he has thus lost his identity as a son of Israel, and stands in a state of alienation. In this light, it is not improbable that the crowd, which prevents Zacchaeus from seeing Jesus because of his small size, does so intentionally. As it stands, the story unfolds in two progressions (v. 3 and v. 7) and each time, it is the crowd that stands between Zacchaeus and Jesus: first it prevents him from seeing Jesus and the second time it grumbles against his fellowship with Christ.¹¹

As Luke shows through Zacchaeus' story, personal sin has social consequences, destroys relationships, and leads to alienation. His depiction of Zacchaeus' situation recalls the parable of the lost son in chapter 15 (which Jesus precisely tells in response to the Pharisees' complaint about his welcoming of sinners). After the younger son has left his father and squandered his possessions, he finds himself being forced to feed pigs in a foreign country. Thus, his own situation of lostness becomes characterized by isolation, hunger, and loss of joy and dignity. In addition, his being forced to feed unclean animals in a foreign country underscores how much he has become alienated from his identity as a Jew.

A transformative salvation

Moving back to Zacchaeus' story of salvation, the text shows an interesting interplay between human and divine activity. When

repenting from his sins, but rather defends himself before the crowds. Those exegetes also note the absence of the mention of repentance or forgiveness in the narrative. They thus suggest that the episode is not a story about the conversion of a tax collector, but rather of Jesus vindicating the righteous Zacchaeus despite the fact that he is a tax collector. Jesus is thus affirming that the outsider is actually also part of the people of God—a son of Abraham—since he practices almsgiving. For this view, see, for example: Green, *Luke*, 671–672; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV)* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1985), 1220–1221; Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 286–287. The vocabulary of 'lost' and 'salvation' in vv. 9 and 10, however, suggests that Zacchaeus was lost before Jesus entered his house. Furthermore, as the text's syntax shows, there is a parallel between Jesus entering Zacchaeus' house (v. 5b) and salvation entering it (v. 9a), showing that it is Jesus' visit that leads to Zacchaeus' salvation. Such an assertion would make little sense if Zacchaeus were already righteous before Jesus' visit. Cf. Bovon, *L'Evangile selon Saint Luc* (15,1–19,27), 242; John Nolland, *Luke 18:35–24:53* (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 906; Michael Wolter, *Das Lukasevangelium* (Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, 2008) 613; Dennis Hamm, "Once Again: Does Zacchaeus Defend or Resolve?" *JBL* (1988): 431–437.

11. Jacques Dupont, "Le riche publicain Zachée est aussi un fils d'Abraham," in *Der Treue Gottes Frauen: Beiträge zum Werk des Lukas, für Gerhard Schneider* (Freiburg: Herder, 1991), 267.

As a tax collector, Zacchaeus is also a traitor to his people, siding with the oppressor, unworthy to be counted among the people of Israel. In the eyes of the people (and maybe even in his own eyes), he has thus lost his identity as a son of Israel, and stands in a state of alienation. In this light, it is not improbable that the crowd, which prevents Zacchaeus from seeing Jesus because of his small size, does so intentionally.

the crowd prevents him from seeing Jesus, the tax collector takes an unusual and somewhat extravagant initiative: he runs ahead and climbs a sycamore tree to see Jesus. It thus becomes clear that Zacchaeus is more than just curious. He wants to know who Jesus is. When Jesus arrives at the place, however, it is he who looks up at Zacchaeus, and says: "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down (*speusas katabēthi*); for I must stay at your house today" (19:5). Zacchaeus does exactly as he is told: he hurries and comes down (*speusas katebē*) and receives Jesus with joy. The text does not say, as in other cases, that Jesus ate with Zacchaeus, but it is very likely that this hospitality included a meal.

One cannot help but see in Zacchaeus the attitude of a child, which, as Jesus emphasized a few verses earlier (18:16–17), is necessary to enter the kingdom. After all, he climbs a tree! And he joyfully obeys to the letter Jesus' instructions to be his host. Although the terminology of faith does not explicitly occur in this text, Zacchaeus' actions shows that here, like elsewhere in Luke, an attitude of faith, trust, and hospitality toward Jesus make salvation possible.

In the ancient world, a meal with somebody meant communion between the two parties. It is thus unsurprising that the crowds begin to grumble saying: "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." (19:7) Once more, however, Zacchaeus responds to the challenge with measures that show no less determination than in the first case:¹²

"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" (19:8).

12. Dupont, "Le riche publicain," 267.

The fourfold restitution probably does not reflect a legal requirement, even if such a restitution for stealing is enjoined in Exod 22:1–4 and seems to have been required in certain circumstances under Roman law.¹³ What the text seeks to emphasize at this point, however, is the magnitude of his restitution and gift to the poor.¹⁴ Clearly, something has happened, and Zacchaeus has been radically transformed. It is at this point that Jesus declares:

“Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham.

For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost” (19:9–10).

Jesus' words help us to see how salvation happened. The parallel between v. 9a (“Today, salvation has come to this house”) and v. 5b (“Today, I must stay at your house”) is unmistakable and illuminates a key point: *Jesus* made salvation present in Zacchaeus' house.¹⁵ At the same time, it is clear that Jesus' declaration in v. 9 is a comment on Zacchaeus' resolution in v. 8. Salvation is thus proclaimed not after Zacchaeus has welcomed Jesus into his house, but after Zacchaeus makes a declaration that attests to his change of heart. The structure of the passage suggests that if salvation is made present in the person of Jesus, it manifests itself in a change of heart and life. In other words, salvation is transformative.

Zacchaeus' resolution to restitution what he has stolen testifies to his repentance, even though the terminology does not appear explicitly. Repentance is a major aspect of salvation for Luke.¹⁶ It is often presented as a human response to God, but also, interestingly, as a gift of God (Acts 5:31; 11:18). In other words, God not only calls people to repent, but it seems that God also provokes them to repent. Zacchaeus' story demonstrates this interesting dynamic. Indeed, the flow of the narrative suggests that Zacchaeus' resolve to repent is a result of Jesus staying at his house. It is Jesus' presence and his communion with Zacchaeus that provokes in him the repentance and transformation that characterizes salvation. Jesus' person and his implicit offer of grace and forgiveness—reflected by his staying at Zacchaeus' house—thus precedes and stimulates his repentance, and turns his life upside down.

Repentance and forgiveness are thus part of salvation. It is in God's offer of forgiveness that Zacchaeus is transformed and that he is indeed saved. In the Benedictus, Zechariah had prophesied that “knowledge of salvation would come to God's people through the forgiveness of their sins” (1:77). ‘Knowledge’ here means ‘experience.’ The word ‘forgiveness’ (*aphesis*) literally means ‘release.’ Zacchaeus' experience of forgiveness in Jesus does indeed set him free from his former practices and produces in him a new life. It

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is a life “free of those things that damaged [him] and others.”¹⁷

Indeed, salvation leads Zacchaeus into the practice of righteousness, which is expressed in Luke's Gospel not only by reparation but also by charity for the poor. Salvation thus also has social and practical implications. Zacchaeus has become ‘righteous’ in his dealings with others. The text does not tell us if this new life led to reconciliation and the healing of his broken relationships, but it is clear that, ultimately, this is part of what God intends for this child of Abraham.

Zacchaeus and the salvation of Israel

Jesus' explanation for his gift of salvation in v. 9b—“because he too is a son of Abraham”—shows that by bringing salvation to Zacchaeus' house, Jesus sees himself as fulfilling his task of savior of Israel. In the infancy narrative, God's salvation of Israel is presented as a remembrance of God's mercy and promise to Abraham.

God has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of God's mercy, according to the promise made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever (1:54–55).

The verb ‘helped’ is a common soteriological expression. The salvation brought about by Jesus is thus, in Luke, the result of God remembering the covenant and promises to Abraham and his family (cf. also 1:72–75). Hence also in Acts, salvation is offered first to the Jews as the children of Abraham (3:25; 13:26). And in Luke 13:16 Jesus justifies his healing of a crippled woman on the sabbath by underscoring her dignity as a “daughter of Abraham.”

“And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?” (13:16)

Zacchaeus, as a “son of Abraham,” was thus also part of Jesus' mission of salvation. As Luke shows, one of the problems of the sons of Abraham was that they did not always produce fruits of

13. Nolland, *Luke*, 906; Bovon, *L'Évangile selon Saint Luc* (15,1–19,27), 242–243.

14. Bovon, *L'Évangile selon Saint Luc* (15,1–19,27), 242.

15. Bovon, *L'Évangile selon Saint Luc* (15,1–19,27), 243.

16. Cf. Robert C. Tannehill, “Repentance in the Context of Lukan Soteriology,” in *The Shape of Luke's Story: Essays on Luke-Acts* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2005), 84–101.

17. Tannehill, “Repentance,” 101.

repentance. Thus, John the Baptist warned the crowds coming to him to be baptized:

“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham” (3:7–8).

As John points out, Abrahamic descent is not sufficient to be saved from the wrath to come: one must also produce fruit of repentance.¹⁸ What happens when Jesus saves Zacchaeus, however, is that this lost son of Abraham begins to produce fruit of repentance! Jesus has thus successfully saved a lost son of Abraham.

Jesus explains that he came to seek out and save the lost (19:10). As François Bovon rightly comments, Jesus’ very task is to seek the lost sheep of Israel (cf. 15:6) to restore them and enable them to fulfil the call which belongs to their Jewish identity as children of Abraham.¹⁹ He continues: “This is what happens with Zacchaeus who, welcoming and welcomed, bears fruit of repentance.” By saving Zacchaeus, God is thus actively working at restoring God’s people as a holy people who bear fruit of repentance, just like Zechariah had prophesied:

“Thus God has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered God’s holy covenant, the oath that God swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, *might serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before God all our days*” (1:72–75).

Zacchaeus’ salvation is thus also expressed in that he has now become able to embrace his identity of child of Abraham and member of God’s people, and serve God in righteousness.

Conclusion

The stories of Mary and Zacchaeus show that God’s salvation is both intensely personal and yet part of—and interlinked with—God’s project of saving “a people for God’s name” (Acts 15:14). Several other stories of personal encounters with Jesus in Luke’s

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Gospel could have been examined in this essay to illuminate this dynamic. God’s ultimate aim is to set free a *people* “who will serve God without fear in holiness and righteousness” (1:75).

Additionally, the stories of Mary and Zacchaeus, both in their own ways, help us to see different dimensions of God’s salvation. The favor of God to Mary reveals God’s plan to give a new status and honor to the lowly and the poor by associating them with God’s family through Christ. And Zacchaeus’ story illustrates the transformative power of salvation that lies in the forgiveness embodied by Jesus visiting his house. As Zacchaeus’ experience shows, this salvation not only restores him in his relationship with God, but affects his social and economic practices, and enables him to take up the call of his true identity as a son of Abraham—to live righteously before his God (Luke 1:75; cf. Gen 17:1).

The Gospel of Luke thus reminds us that God’s salvation not only refers to a future inheritance of eternal life (although it is also that! cf. 18:18ff.), but that it has already begun to express itself concretely in our present lives. As a saved community, the church is called to bear witness to this salvation, showing that when, like Mary and Zacchaeus, we receive Jesus in the “hospitality of faith,” he transforms our lives, our identities, and our relationships.²⁰ Indeed, he brings shalom into our lives.

18. Note that the book of Acts will show that Abrahamic descent is not even necessary to be saved.

19. Bovon, *L’Evangile selon Saint Luc* (15,1–19,27), 243.

20. Cf. Johnson, *Luke*, 286–287: “It is in this hospitality, which is faith, that salvation comes.”