**Lent Series: Sermon 5**

**Give Up a Bad Habit**

First week - Give up bitterness, apathy and discouragement

Second week - Give up harsh condemning judgments

Third week - Give up the enemies within (Envy, blame-shifting, self-pity)

Fourth week - Give up running away

Fifth week - Give up a bad habit

**Luke 19:1-10** Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. 5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”9 Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

**Jesus knew about the power in good habits. In the sermon on the mount Jesus said to us, “Cultivate these good habits in your life. Cultivate humility, compassion, mercy, righteousness, peace-making. Cultivate these habits and you will discover true happiness.The power of a good habit is something extra special, and Jesus knew it. We also know that bad habits are destructive. They can rip us apart, devastate us, demoralize us, and choke the very life out of us.**

**STEP ONE: RECOGNIZE YOUR BAD HABIT AND CALL IT BY NAME**

Be specific don’t whitewash it. Call it what it is. Be honest with yourself even if the truth hurts.

Somehow the presence of Jesus, the goodness of Jesus, the light of Jesus, exposed the bad habits of Zacchaeus.

**STEP TWO: MAKE UP YOUR MIND TO STOP IT NOW**

Habits are strange because they are often formed subtly and gradually, but often they have to be stopped “cold turkey” - abruptly and immediately. Sometimes a radical break is necessary. It’s not enough to say, “I won’t tell as many lies today as I did yesterday.” No! We have to say, “I will not be a liar anymore!”

**STEP THREE: REPLACE YOUR BAD HABIT WITH A GOOD ONE**

We can’t just take something away or we leave behind a vacuum. We have to replace the bad with something good. For Zacchaeus greed had been taken away. Generosity had been out in its place.

**STEP FOUR: REALIZE THAT YOU HAVE AN OUTSIDE SOURCE OF STRENGTH**

Look what Jesus says at the end of the story: “Today salvation has come…the son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.”