



# FIRST LUTHERAN CHURCH MONMOUTH, IL

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**Gathered by God, We Live Our Faith With: Compassion, Grace, Gratitude, and Joy.**

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## Who Is Jesus: Epiphany 2025 Bible Study

### Jesus, the Savior

**Opening Premise** Here is a definition of “salvation” as Christians define the word: Salvation is wherever Jesus intrudes into your space, wherever Jesus makes your sinful table the site of his salvation feast. Hardly anyone in scripture chooses Jesus or decides to be saved by him. The gospel is a story about Jesus’ choices and decisions for the lost, not our choices and decisions for Jesus.

### Zaccheaus

Zaccheaus wanted to see Jesus, but what did Jesus decide to do?

Zaccheaus was a chief tax collector, he was a person of prominence and wealth and status by Roman cultural standards, but was reviled by his Jewish family and neighbors. How might Zaccheaus feel about the label “lost”? Did he think he was lost?

What do you suppose prompted Zaccheaus’ response to Jesus’ visit?

What came first—Jesus declaring Zaccheaus found or Zaccheaus giving away all money?

### The Wicked Tenants

Consider this metaphor, God was determined to send us a personally addressed letter of love. And we responded, “Return to sender.”

How does this parable tell us about God sending his son to rescue us from ourselves?

What are we being rescued from?

### The Church

The church is called by Paul “the first fruits” of the great worldwide harvest, the vanguard, the initial results of the dragnet of salvation, a clue to what God shall one day, somehow, do for all of creation. When Christians gather to worship on Sunday, assembled on the basis of nothing more than the embrace of God, we say and sing, “This is the world’s ultimate destiny, this is how it will all look once God is all in all and the kingdom comes.”

— Will Willimon, “Why Jesus”, page 84

### Closing Thought:

To Save means, in the Greek, “rescue”, “liberate”, “heal”, or “comfort.” Salvation is what God is doing in Christ.

### Closing Prayer

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for your gift of salvation made known to me by faith. As we bask in the glow of this gift, empower us to make room for others at our sinful table, that they too may taste from your salvation feast.  
Amen

## Today's Bible Verses

### Luke 19:1-10

19 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."

### Matthew 21:33-44

33 "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went away. 34 When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. 35 But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other slaves, more than the first, and they treated them in the same way. 37 Then he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' 39 So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. 40 Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" 41 They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time."

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures:

'The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
this was the Lord's doing,  
and it is amazing in our eyes'?

43 "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces its fruits. 44 The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls."

### Ephesians 1:7-10

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight 9 he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.