

Notes And Helps to Instructors

Thank you for volunteering to lead a group through the treasures of God's word! You may feel overwhelmed or inadequate, but you can do this! The leader notes are designed to help you grow in knowledge and love for Christ and for you to help pass what you have received to your group. Here are some suggestions to help equip you to grow in your teaching and leading ability.

- These lessons could simply be read, and a group would receive something but that is not how they are designed. The notes are designed to grow you as a leader so you might tailor the lesson for the needs of your group. Some groups may not have much of a knowledge base in the bible, so the concepts must be brought down to their level. Other groups may have a large knowledge base and you may challenge them with more information. The key is to know your group. If you begin leading a group in one way and find that it is not connecting, it is alright to modify and bring down or raise up the level of information.
- The more preparation you do the stronger you will be as a leader. Let the study material be a joy for you! Let it feed you as you prepare! The more you are fed the more you have to give to your group.
- There is no set time on how long a lesson may take. Lessons could be slowed down and take several weeks to finish. Perhaps in leading a group, one question captivates the group and leads to a fruitful conversation. If that happens, that is good! You are in no hurry. If you can finish the material in a week, then great! But if it takes several, that is great as well! The important thing is that they receive deeply from the gospel of Jesus.
- Pray about your lesson! Pray as you prepare! Pray as you teach! Remember we do not teach or exercise our gifts in our own strength. The Holy Spirit is the one who opens the heart and mind. Pray for the Spirit to move in your heart and the heart of the group.

May our merciful Triune God bless your study and your group that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith-- that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

In Christ,

Prison Discipleship Ministry

Lessons in Luke -- Lesson 11 – Jesus, the Pharisee, and the Tax Collector

Introduction:

Simeon prophesied over baby Jesus that He would raise up many weak persons and bring down many proud persons (Luke 2:33-35). This week we study Luke 18:9-14.

Read this passage at least five times then answer the questions as best you can:

⁹ Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

¹¹ "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men-- extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² 'I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

¹³ "And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'

¹⁴ "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

(Lk. 18:9-14 NKJ)

“knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ . . . for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” Galatians 2:16

To what group of people did Jesus tell this parable?

He told this parable to those who saw themselves as having enough good works to get themselves into heaven. They saw themselves as righteous. This self-evaluation led them to judge others, find them lacking, and thus they despised those less righteous than themselves.

Who were the Pharisees? The tax collectors?

As mentioned in Lesson 3:

The Pharisees were a group of religious leaders that rose after the return from exile. God told them that because of Israel's unfaithfulness to their covenant with God as revealed in the Law, they lost their nation and went into exile. They never wanted that to happen again. So, they came up with something called the traditions of the elders. The traditions of the elders were, they believed, a tradition of unwritten laws that came from God to Moses and were passed orally through faithful rabbis. The tradition of the elders was what they called a "fence" around the law. So, if the law said not to go five steps, then they would say the law says you can't go three. In that way they would protect the actual law from being broken. To see this tradition of the elders in action read Mark 7.

The problem with man-made laws is that men make laws they think they can keep. Because they keep the man-made laws, they think they are keeping the law of God. Since they thought of themselves as keeping the law, they were very self-righteous. That self-righteousness filled them with sinful pride, and their pride looked down on others as less

than they. So, they did not see themselves as sinners. The law to them did not show them their sin. They saw themselves as the one who did not need salvation from God, but the ones who had earned salvation from God. Yes, certainly grace was necessary and appreciated, but salvation was still based on their obedience and their work.

The Pharisees are those to whom Jesus told this parable. They had manipulated God's law so that they could keep it in such a way as to declare themselves "righteous." See Matthew 5:21-35 for ways they re-defined murder and adultery and how Jesus shows that the Law cannot be kept in such a way as to earn salvation into heaven.

Tax-collectors were considered the worst of sinners. Not only were they known for taking advantage of all the people by cheating, stealing, and over-charging their brethren, but they were working for and with the Roman Empire that conquered the Jewish nation. The Jews hated the Roman occupation and they hated any Jew who cooperated with the Romans. Tax collectors were cut off from all the family (if that family was not in the tax-collecting business). Their only company would have been the other outcasts and unclean of society such as criminals, prostitutes, pagans, and those removed from the community.

What does the Pharisee pray about?

The pharisee stood and prayed about himself and thanked God that he was so righteous and holy. He said, "God, I thank You that I am not like other men-- extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess." What he was in essence praying was, "God, thank you for me not needing you at all! Look how righteous I am all on my own and look at all I do! Aren't I so awesome! And thank me that I'm not like that man over there!" He talks about all the outward actions that make him think he is so righteous, but he prays for nothing about his heart. For him life with God is all outward action. He is oblivious to the deceit and sin in his heart. This man thinks God looks at the outward appearance and doesn't see the heart. This of course is directly contradicted in 1 Sam 16:7, "For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." The pharisee did not think God looks at his heart and only sees his outward appearance, and he judged the tax collector by his outward appearance and not by his heart. He thought God was just as superficial as he!

What does Jesus mean when He says "the Pharisee . . . prayed thus with himself"? Was God hearing his prayer? Why/why not?

Jesus means that the prayer of the Pharisee had no standing with God. His god was himself. He was praying to himself. In this sense his god heard his pray, but his god was a false god, so his prayer was worthless. Prayer assumes that the one praying needs someone outside himself who is bigger than himself who can help him with his life. Praying *to* yourself is a worthless exercise. It is inherently contradictory. The one praying is bound up in a worthless deception. To further his deception, he uses his prayer to judge another to give himself assurance that his prayer is heard, but His prayer is not heard because he is not praying to the only true God.

God who knows all things and sees all things was certainly aware of this prayer, but He did not hear it in the sense that He would answer his prayer. God does not answer the prayers of the proud, the self-righteous. Their words echo off the ceiling.

How does the tax collector pray?

The tax collector stood afar off. The temple was the one place all knew that they could truly be in the presence of God so he kept his eyes down and he beat his breast. These are outward signs of deep contrition and sorrow for sin. This man knew the depth of his sin and did not think he was worthy to come near to God. He also did not think he was worthy to even lift his eyes to heaven. Who is he, he thought, that he could approach or look upon God? A sinner such as he has no right, he felt, to do that.

What does the tax collector pray about?

In his prayer, he did not beat his chest towards God in praise of himself. Instead, he beat his breast in repentance of his sin, and begged God that He would be merciful to him, a sinner. He prayed for mercy because he knew he did not deserve anything from God except the just judgment of a good God for his sin. He pleaded for mercy because he knew himself a sinner. He knew that his only hope was for God to show him mercy.

Who leaves the Temple right with God? Why?

The biblical word for being right with God is “being justified.” The Westminster Shorter Catechism question 33 defines justification as, “an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.” “Imputed” here means that God counts the righteousness a sinner needs, which is only found in Christ, to the sinner.

Jesus declares that “I tell you, this man [the tax collector] went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” It was not the pharisee who outwardly seemed to have everything together, but it was the tax collector that went home justified. It was the tax collector that knew he was a sinner, called out in repentance and faith to God, and asked for his mercy. That is the prayer that God heard and answered with YES! The pharisee prayed to himself, in praise for himself, and so he has himself and his own righteousness to stand on alone. Since the standard for righteousness before God is perfection, he was not justified, but still stands in his sins. Thinking that he did not need God’s mercy, he did not ask God for his mercy thus God gave him no mercy. He was lost in his sins.

Based on Galatians 2:16, what is the significance of Luke 18:14 when Jesus says, “this man went down to his house justified”?

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ . . . for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” Galatians 2:16

The law cannot justify. The law was not given to us so that we could justify ourselves. It was given as a mirror to show us our sin. It was a school master to lead us to Christ (Gal 2:24). This means that keeping the law is a futile effort if one is seeking to be righteous before God. If one looks to the law to justify himself, then the standard is perfection:

“12 For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law 13 (for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified (Rom 2:12-13).”

Galatians 3:10-14 further says,

“10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." 11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith." 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them. 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree "), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

The law is meant to point us to Christ, not to justify us before him as the standard is perfection, and we are not perfect. So, James tells us, “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all (James 2:10).”

The irony: The Pharisee, the man who seemingly knew God, had no knowledge of God. He was praying to a god that did not exist. His god was a god he made up in his own mind. His god was small and incapable of doing anything.

The tax collector knew God, and that he was merciful. He knew that he was a sinner and prayed to God for his mercy and received it and was justified. And he received that by grace alone, through faith alone, in the work of Christ alone. The Tax collector, the man who seemingly had no knowledge of God, had a true knowledge of God. He was praying to the true God, the God of all reality. His God was great, high and lifted up, yet He was near to sinners. (Isaiah 57:15) He could declare a sinner righteous.

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