

DIGGING DEEPER



Humility Finds Us:

4 Oct 2026

Lessons from the Pharisee and the Tax Collector

What does it really mean to stand before God? The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector in Luke 18 puts that question directly in front of us, and the answer might be more unsettling than we expect. On one side stands a man who has done everything right -- he fasts, he tithes, he avoids wrongdoing. On the other stands a man who has done nearly everything wrong, a traitor to his own people, living off what he has stolen from his neighbors. And yet it is the second man who walks away justified before God. This parable forces us to examine not just our behavior but the posture of our hearts. Are we approaching God with a list of our accomplishments, or are we coming to him with open hands and an honest cry for help? The spiritual lesson here cuts deep: righteousness that feeds our pride becomes a barrier between us and God, while brokenness that drives us to our knees becomes a doorway. The prayer "God, have mercy on me, a sinner" is not a prayer of defeat -- it is a prayer of profound spiritual clarity. It is the recognition that no amount of rule-following, moral achievement, or religious consistency can substitute for genuine dependence on God.

1.

The sermon opens with the warning that it is easy to hear a parable about pride and immediately think it applies to someone else rather than yourself -- in what specific area of your life might you be most tempted to sidestep this teaching on humility?
2.

The Pharisee in the parable was genuinely devoted, disciplined, and morally upright, yet his prayer revealed a rotten heart -- how is it possible for sincere religious practice to become a source of pride rather than gratitude?
3.

Pastor Daniel describes the tax collector as someone with nothing to offer God except his need, and yet Jesus says he went home justified -- what does this tell us about what God is actually looking for when we come to Him in prayer?
4.

The sermon draws a distinction between growing in humility and growing in dependence on God, suggesting that the moment you recognize your own humility you have already lost it -- do you agree with this tension, and how do you personally navigate it?
5.

Pastor Daniel reflects on moments when he needed God's help at work to control his reaction to feeling disrespected -- what are the specific situations in your own life where you most consistently find yourself needing to pray 'God, I need you'?
6.

Luke 18:14 teaches that those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted -- can you think of a time in your own life when this principle proved unmistakably true, either in your own experience or in someone you observed?
7.

The sermon points out that the Pharisee's prayer contained six genuinely good things he was doing right, yet the prayer was still unacceptable to God -- what does this reveal about the difference between a righteous record and a righteous heart?
8.

Pastor Daniel makes the point that we cannot humility our way into heaven any more than we can Pharisee our way into heaven, and that the only path is through Jesus -- how does this reframe the way you think about your own spiritual effort and what role it actually plays in your relationship with God?
9.

The sermon connects this parable to 2 Chronicles 7:14, where humility, prayer, and turning from sin are tied to God hearing, forgiving, and healing -- how do you understand the relationship between personal humility and communal or spiritual restoration in your own context?
10.

Pastor Daniel closes by saying that the prayer 'God, help me' needs to always be close to our hearts, whether someone is attending church for the first time or the nine hundred and first time -- what habits, practices, or reminders help you maintain that posture of dependence rather than self-sufficiency in your daily life?

Remember...

“Humility is not about being righteous enough or even humble enough; it’s about recognizing that, as much as it depends on us, it’s impossible—and we need Jesus.”