

Connect Group Discussion Guide – 8/25/2024

Kingdom Stories Week 13 – Lk 18:9-14 Parable of the Pharisee and Tax Collector

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQvR0S5fB8AzraGYts4eQfg> (Posted on Monday)

Audio Only: On Spotify or Apple Podcasts: Connection Point Podcast

Highlights

- **Luke 18:9** It seems like this parable is for other people. But we are all a mess too! So this parable is for me too!
- **Luke 18:10**
 - **Pharisee** – seems to always be the villain throughout the New Testament
 - However, they have given up their entire life to lead others to God and to be God's representative to the people of Israel
 - They understand the Torah (the Law) more deeply than probably anyone else
 - They actually are not the villain, however, they didn't understand Jesus and were always trying to get Him.
 - **Tax Collector** – a Jew who worked for the Roman Empire
 - Jews had to pay Rome a tax to live in the land that was given to them by God
 - Tax collectors were fellow Jews who should have been against the concept since God gave the land, but actually charged MORE than the amount of the tax as their payment.
 - They were hated by the Jews – were considered the worst of the worst.
- **Luke 18:11** Is this really a prayer?
 - A prayer is supposed to be about and to God. How many times does the Pharisee say "I" in the "prayer?" 5 times.
 - It's not really a prayer but a proclamation of how "great" he is compared to everyone else.
 - **The Comparison Trap**
 - We decide we're enough by looking at others
 - When we compare ourselves to everyone else to make us "okay" it's a trap.
- **Luke 18:13** While the Pharisee stood alone, isolating himself, the Tax Collector stood at a distance, away from the Temple out of fear/reverence.
 - Beat his breast continuously to acknowledge his flesh; his sinful nature
 - He's not looking at everyone else
 - He's understanding who he is without looking at everyone else.
 - When we look only at God, it changes our posture
 - The Tax Collector is hoping for mercy
 - He doesn't believe he deserves it, but if I stand away in reverence, and I understand and acknowledge who I am, will You have mercy
 - He is HUMBLE before God.
- **Luke 18:14** God sees the Tax Collector as righteous – because of his humility
 - You can receive your exaltation on earth in the temporary or for eternity.
 - You want all the praise now? You will be humbled in eternity.
 - You can live in this life in humility and the Lord's response will be to exalt you in eternity.
 - Our comparison is not with others, it's with God. And when we realize God is superior to us all the way around, we respond in humility.
 - Don't be a religious Pharisee, be a fallen, humbled tax collector.
 - We are just one or two decisions away from being one of those "other" people
- So what do we do with this? How does this apply today?

- The eyes of the Pharisee were on the world around him.
 - His “prayer” was all about himself.
 - Comparison to others leads us away from God; it puts the priority on me.
- The Tax Collector kept his distance and saw his own failure.
 - He’s saying, I’m not enough, but You are, God.
 - Acknowledging our brokenness to God reminds us He is all we need.
 - Everything we *want* is temporary; what we need is found in Jesus
- The Tax Collector asked for mercy but wasn’t sure he’d receive it.
 - We can have confidence that because of Jesus we are justified and have been shown mercy by God.
 - When you ask for mercy, His answer is yes. (See Romans 3:23)
- **Keep your distance, beat your chest, ask for mercy, and God says “yes.”**

Car Conversation

1. Why does comparing ourselves to others create such a problem for our relationship with God?
2. What did the tax collector do that mattered so much more to God?

The Bottom Line

The life Jesus is calling us to has nothing to do with how we compare to the people around us.

It’s simply, “Here is my sinful life, thank you for your mercy through Christ, teach me to live more like you, and whatever you have for me, my answer is Yes.”

Surrender yourself.