

:: summary

Jesus calls his followers to pursue righteousness, or being morally guiltless before God. The challenge in a society that values the ideal of the self-made person is allowing that mentality to shape how we relate to God. Contrary to those who would proudly stand on their outward behaviors, Jesus teaches in a parable of opposites that righteousness is credited to those who humble themselves before God. It is God's mercy on those who put their faith in Jesus who are covered in his perfection and restored into relationship with Him.

:: explore and discuss it

For many outside the church, Christianity can seem like a religious means of self-righteousness and looking down on others. For those inside the church, a lingering danger is falling into self-righteousness out of a desire to always do the right thing, achieve for God, please God or earn eternal life with Him.

Have you ever identified with either of these camps? If so, how?

Read Luke 18:9-12

In the time of Jesus, a Pharisee and a tax collector would have been considered polar-opposite figures. As a religious leader, a Pharisee would have been held up as a hero for others to follow, while a tax collector serving the Roman empire that occupied Israel would have been the obvious villain to Jesus' audience.

Considering the details Luke provides in verses 9-12, how does the Pharisee live up to his pious reputation and what seems to be the problem Jesus is pointing out to us?

Read Luke 18:13-14

Because tax collectors were regarded as political traitors and extortionists who exploited their neighbors for financial gain, Jesus' audience would not have expected a redemptive end for the tax collector in this parable.

Given a tax collector's reputation as a cheat and a social outcast, what is surprising about the description Jesus provides of this person?

What is Jesus teaching us about the nature of righteousness and what is pleasing to God through the two figures in this parable?

:: make it personal

In Jesus' words, "those who humble themselves will be exalted" (Luke, 18:14).

Is your standing before God based on what you think you deserve?

Are there areas in your life where you need to be humbled and freed from trying to earn God's love and grace?

Does not feeling good enough keep you at a distance in your relationship with God?

Do you need to be freed from carrying guilt that God wants to lift from your shoulders?

:: pray it

Invite the Holy Spirit to help you acknowledge your shortcomings and affirm in your heart the reality that by God's grace through faith in Jesus, your sin has already been taken care of. Ask God for the confident humility that comes from thinking less about yourself and more about what God has done on your behalf that you could never do for yourself. Invite God to help you live as a person who is covered by the perfection of Jesus and restored into abundant life with Him.

For more details and messages in this series, visit: [Messages](#).

To see notes from Sunday's message, please click: [Message Notes](#).