Sermon Discussion Questions
Human Depravity, Hot Air Balloons, and the Mercy of God

Read Luke 18:9-14 together.

What do you notice about the contrast between the Pharisee and the tax collector? Beyond their public reputations, how do their postures, prayers, and assumptions about God differ?

Why do you think Jesus' original audience would have been shocked that the tax collector went home "justified," rather than the Pharisee? What assumptions about who is "close to God" does this parable challenge today?

The image of the hot-air balloon suggests that spiritual "weight"—self-righteousness, achievement, ego, resentment, self-pity, or possessions—can keep us from receiving grace freely. What kinds of things might be weighing down your soul or making it difficult to come honestly before God?

The sermon suggests that repentance means "coming to the end of ourselves." What might that look like in ordinary life—in our habits, relationships, work, conflicts, or private thoughts?

What are some ways we resist repentance? Consider excuses, blaming others, minimizing harm, comparing ourselves favorably to others, self-justification, or assuming that our failures are simply "who we are."

What would it mean this week to pray, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner,” in a way that leads to a concrete response? Is there a confession to make, a relationship to repair, a pattern to turn from, or a specific act of trust and obedience God may be inviting you into?