

Harris Creek Baptist Church  
Nate Hilgenkamp  
Series: 7 Deadly Sins of Suburbia  
February 6, 2022

Comparison

Luke 18:9-14

**9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: 10 “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’**

**13 “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’**

**14 “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”**

Well good morning, Harris Creek. We are so glad you're here with us this morning. Whether you're in here, or in the lobby, man, I just want to acknowledge you guys out there once again. I know when you were driving here this morning you weren't expecting to be sitting out there, but we're so glad you're here with us today - even though you're not necessarily where you want to be. And I just want to acknowledge that we are aware that we have some difficulties here with space and there's a number of different ways that we can work on that and address it, and one of the ways that we have decided to address it is by having me speak this morning. So, (crowd laughs), next week it's going to be a thinner crowd, you can show up late, you'll get a parking spot, you'll find a place here in this room. So that's how we're addressing our space difficulties this morning.

Well anyway, I just want to start by sharing with you that I have so badly wanted to have one of the best things about living in Waco come true to me. And if you're watching online, and you're not from Waco, you're probably thinking he just really, really wants to meet Chip and Joanna. That's not what I'm talking about. There's so much more to our city than that. I've just really wanted to have one of these things, this one thing, which is one of the best things about living in Waco happen to me. It's happened to a few of my friends before, and I just so badly wanted to experience it. And it's this... One of the best things about living in Waco is when someone else, not from Waco, typically California, approaches you, contacts you, leaves a letter in your mail, asking to buy your house for a lot more than what you paid for it (crowd laughs). And it did happen to me! Just a couple of weeks ago, someone contacted us and said, “hey we want to buy

your house, and for a couple of different reasons it needs to be your house specifically,” and I’m like Praise Jesus! We’re moving!

So as soon as I got contacted, I was on Zillow every single day for the next week. And if you tell me what street you live on, I probably know where it is. Because I’ve researched every single neighborhood in the McGregor, Hewitt, Woodway, Waco area, and I looked at house after house after house and in that week, I spent so much time on Zillow and here’s what happened. I started really disliking our house.

Because the more I looked at other houses, the more I realized what I disliked about our own house. Because the first thing that came up in my mind was, I realized, “oh my word, our house is tiny.” We’ve got one kid, and I’m like if we have another kid, there’s no way we’re going to fit. Everyone’s house is way bigger than mine! And then another thing I realized is I had never spent, in our three years of living in that house, I had never spent more than two minutes thinking about our countertops. But now, every single time I went into our kitchen I notice that our countertops are made of this high-grade plastic. That’s what we’ve got and it’s so hard to see that and see that everyone else in this neighborhood has granite or marble. I don’t even know what countertops are made of. They have the nicer types of countertops. The other thing I noticed is that we don’t even have a garage. Which it doesn’t bother me most of the time except this week, that made things a little bit more difficult. But typically, I don’t even care but as soon as I saw that everyone else has two and three-car garages I’m like, “Holy cow! All I want to do after spending all this time on Zillow is get out of our house.” I just wanted to move.

The only problem was the deal fell through. For whatever reason, don’t need to tell you why. The deal fell through, and it didn’t work out and we were stuck in a house that I didn’t want to be in anymore. And what’s funny is if you would’ve asked me a week prior to this how I felt about our house I would’ve told you that I loved our house, and I do. I do love our house, we live in a great place, we’re so blessed to have our house. We’re so grateful for it. But what happened was the more time I spent focused on what everyone else had I started disliking what I had.

And I know that all of us have heard this before, but it’s true. What happened was comparison stole my joy. And the problem is, for me, this is something that that frequently pops up in my life, it’s a sin I struggle with. In fact, my wife Adalee, she says it’s like the green monster on my shoulder, telling me I always need more, need something bigger, need something better. Whenever I hear how much certain people make and their salaries, I can get antsy and be like, “I got to go get something bigger. I got to get something better.”

Another thing that happened recently is someone in our neighborhood bought a Ford Bronco. Those things are awesome! I see it drive by my house every single day and after the twentieth time I saw it, I’m like okay I got to go get something else. So, I’m on Cars.com, ready to sign up to test drive something else, and so my wife Adalee is like, “Nate, you have a car and it’s fine. You don’t need another car.” But here’s the thing, the more time I spent focused on what everyone else had, I began to dislike what I had. Once again, we’ve heard it before but it’s true - comparison stole my joy. Which is why this morning we need to talk about it.

As we continue in our sermon series called The Seven Deadly Sins of Suburbia; I really do believe that this sin of comparison is what we deal with in the suburbs. So, what we are going to

talk about this morning? Where we are going is we are going to talk about what it is, what it does, and how to kill it. What comparison is; what comparison does; and how to kill it. That's where we're going this morning. I really do think this is such an important sin to address in the suburbs, because it's like the air we breathe around here. It's constant. We compare everything. We compare our salaries, our houses, our cars, we compare our clothes, our likes on Instagram, our job titles. We compare our kids, our sororities, our moralities. We compare our appearance, our giftings, our social lives. We compare everything in our lives because we so desperately want to be the best at whatever we care about the most. And what I believe to be true is that everyone in this room, everyone in this room, is out there searching for the best life possible for themselves.

But what comparison does, the danger of comparison, is that comparison will convince you that the best life is somebody else's life. It will keep you from living your own life. You have got to understand that this morning, it's so key to understanding this topic. What comparison will do is it will convince you that the best life is somebody else's life, and it will keep you from living your own life. It will blind you to what God is doing right in front of you. And it will keep you from seeing the good gifts that are smack dab in front of your face and you can't enjoy the gifts He's given you, because you're too busy comparing them to what your neighbor has. We end up looking and sounding like kids at Christmas time. Parents, you know what this feels like. In fact, all of us have probably seen kids open up gifts at Christmas time. What do they do as soon as they unwrap their gift? They look and see what their brother or sister got. And if they feel slighted even a little bit - parents, I bet you've heard this before - they say things like, "Why did they get something bigger?" "Why did they get something cooler?" "Why did they get four gifts and I got three?"

That's not that much different from how we sound. Because whenever we compare, we will be prone to despair. God knows this which is why He is trying to root it out of our life. Which is why one of the ten commandments speaks to this. Exodus 20 says this, **"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."**

See all of God's commands are not trying to keep us from something good, they're trying to give us something good. Here He's trying to protect us from the sin of comparison, because comparison will steal your joy and has the potential to wreck your life. He wants to root it out. And one of the ways that Jesus roots out sin in scriptures, is by telling parables in the gospels. If you don't know what a parable is, a parable is a story told in order to emphasize a point. Frequently throughout the gospels, He would tell stories about the dangers of a specific sin in order to set people free from that sin - so their eyes might be open to it.

And this morning, what we're going to look at, is we're going to look at a parable in scripture - a story in scripture - where Jesus talks about the dangers of comparison. So, we're going to be in Luke 18 this morning. Matthew, Mark, Luke, it's the third gospel, eighteenth chapter. Luke 18. If you got your Bibles turn them on, open them up. Luke 18, we will be starting in verse nine.

As you're turning there just want to set up some context for this story. Jesus is with some of the most influential people in society at this time. He's gathered together with like the most important, influential, successful, wealthy, righteous people at that time. He's with the people

that all the other people would compare themselves to. He's with the people that everyone else wanted to be like, and this is what He says, Luke 18:9, **To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'**

So, Jesus is with these people who are highly regarded, very successful people but whose root sin was comparison. So, what He does is He steps up and calls them out on it. You know I think some of us have been led to believe that Jesus is just this like fluffy, sweet, cuddly nice guy - when He is at times. But then there are also times across the gospels where He steps up and calls people out courageously - not to embarrass them, but that He might free them from sin. He knows that whenever you're living with sin it will not lead to the best life. Specifically, here He knows that whenever you're dealing with the sin of comparison and envy it will not lead you to your best life.

So, what does comparison look like? How do we know if we have it? This is what comparison looks like. In the text it says this verse 9, this is what comparison looks like. **To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable:**

You see for these people their lives mindset was clear, their view in life was clear it was me versus everybody else. What was constantly going through their head was am I better than everybody else? Am I more influential than everyone else? Am I more well liked than everyone else? Am I more wealthy than everyone else? How am I doing compared to everyone else? Because, for them, their life was a competition and when your life is a competition you will inevitably have comparison. Which is the first thing we can learn from this passage.

1. *Comparison views life as a competition.*

This is what comparison is, comparison views life as a competition. I don't know if you've ever tried out for a sport before, but I've never enjoyed tryouts in high school. It is never something I looked forward to. But one of the days in tryouts that I vividly remember was when I was trying out for basketball during my high school years. It was at the beginning of tryouts and the coaches said that they were going to randomly split everyone up into three different courts. And then they listed off people names and sent them to each specific court, but as soon as they listed off all the names, we realized it was not random at all. They split everyone up based on how talented they thought they were.

So over here were the best players, then the middle court was the average players, then the third court were the guys that just shouldn't have even showed up. They were getting cut no matter what. And the rest of tryouts, really everyone's goal was to either move up a court or stay on the top court. What the coaches would do is they would move you around based on how you were playing. If you made a couple of shots, made a good pass, they would move you up. Conversely, if you were lazy on defense, if you had a turnover or missed a shot, they would move you down.

You were being compared to the two the entire time. Since it was a competition, tryouts were a competition, we compared ourselves to everyone else around us as well. What tryouts feel like is it feels like this, you really want to succeed - you do - but you also want everyone else to fail.

Like I was excited whenever I'd make a step back three, but then I'd also be just as excited when the guy next to me would miss. Because I wanted to succeed, but at the same time I want to make sure that guy next to me failed. Because in the competition you know that you need to keep up and be better than the next guy. And tryouts are absolutely exhausting because you know that you're being watched and examined at all times. Your worth is being valued at all times which is why tryouts are exhausting.

And for some of you this is why your life is exhausting; because you've turned your life into a tryout where everything is a competition. You're always trying to prove your worth; you're always trying to prove you're better than the next guy. Because today we don't split each other up based on their success and in different courts, because now we split each other up based on our success in different neighborhoods. Now, you are not trying to get to the next court you're trying to get to the next and biggest and best neighborhood, because that would prove your value. Now, we don't define our worth based on how good our jump shot is compared to the next guy, but we define our value based on what shoes we have versus what shoes she has. Or we define our worth and our value based on how much playing time our kid gets versus how much playing time their kid gets. Or you define your worth based on how many zeros are in your salary compared to how many zeros are in his salary. Or you define your worth based on how many likes you run Instagram versus how many likes she gets on Instagram. You see you've turned your life into a constant competition. And when that happens it will inevitably bring comparison and it's exhausting.

But here's how you know that you struggle with this. Here's how you know if you struggle with the sin of comparison if you have turned your life into a tryout. It's this, you really want to succeed - but here's the telltale sign, here's how you know if you're struggling with this - you really want to succeed, and you can't celebrate when other people succeed. You can't celebrate when they get the promotion. When they get the car; when their kid succeeds; when they get the boyfriend, when they get their girlfriend. You can't celebrate their success because their success is just a reminder that you got to keep up with the Joneses. That your value is defined in who you are and how much better you are, how much more you have, than the people around you. It's exhausting, but it's almost like we can't help it.

It's not just a Woodway problem, it's not just the suburbs problem, it's not just the Waco, Texas problem. It's a people problem, it's a humanity problem. In fact, this sin of comparison and envy has been around from the beginning of the beginning of the beginning. This week as I was studying the scriptures and looking at different examples and stories and scriptures of people falling into this trap of comparison, I realized that the book of Genesis is just full of this. The book of Genesis is full of telling us about the dangers of comparison because time and time again throughout Genesis their stories of people comparing themselves to one another and it brought them harm.

Let me read some to you, Genesis 4, Cain kills his brother Abel because Cain is jealous of the offering that Abel gives to God because God approved of Abel's offering. He killed his brother because he compared to his brother. Genesis chapter twenty-five, a couple chapters later, Jacob and Esau, they start a bitter sibling rivalry because Jacob had what Esau wanted. Genesis 29, Rachel and Leah, they're both married to one guy named Jacob and they grow envious of one another. Because while Leah is able to give birth to kids, Rachel is not but she's the prettier and more attractive wife. So, each of them has what the other wants, and there is tremendous conflict in their relationship and in their marriage. Which is why, here at Harris Creek, we take a strong stance against polygamy, we don't think it's best for you... (crowd laughs)

Genesis 37, a couple chapters later Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers because you guessed it comparison! They were jealous of how much attention their father gave to him versus how much attention their father gave them.

But it doesn't stop in Genesis! You flip ahead to the New Testament and it's like the same old story. We're doing the same old stuff because the disciples, one of the things that Jesus most had to deal with them... Think about this, you're a disciple, you are with Jesus the savior of the world, every single day, and this is what you end up doing. This is something Jesus had to respond to them multiple times, multiple times throughout the gospels this is what Jesus had to deal with. Luke 9:46 here's an example of it, **An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest.**

It's like we have this sickness where we can't help but compare ourselves to everyone else. It's this mindset of it's me versus the world. You've turned everything into a competition. And if you feel like you don't struggle with this, that that's awesome. I'm encouraged by that, and you may not. But may I challenge you to say, "hey your comparison just might not look and feel and sound the same as mine. Because there are typically two different buckets of comparison. There's one bucket of comparison that's the materialistic comparison. Those are the comparisons I mentioned at the beginning - it's an I want they have comparison. Materialistic type of comparison. But there's another type of comparison that's more sneaky and it tends to show up in the church, because it's not a materialistic comparison it's a moralistic comparison. It's not that I want what they have. It is a I'm better than they are. I read my Bible more. I go to church more. I serve more. I've got a better marriage than they do and therefore I am more valuable than they are. This right here is where this Pharisee struggled, he was a moralistic comparer.

We talked about what comparison is, comparison views life as a competition but let's now look at the story and see what comparison does as He's comparing himself to everyone else around him what does comparison in his life. Verse 11 let's read it again, **The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'**

So, this is a pharisee. So, if you don't know, a pharisee was a religious leader at the time who knew the word of God and who diligently followed the word of God. These were the people who knew and loved God more than anybody else and yet this is His prayer. It would be helpful if we could put it backup on the screen for a second. This is his prayer, this is the guy who knows and

loved God more than anybody, and this is how he prays. Think about who is the focus of that prayer? Who is the focus of this prayer from the Pharisee? Who is the focus of that prayer?

Now let's compare that to another prayer in scripture, a prayer that Jesus taught us to pray? The Lord's prayer. Now let's think about it who's the focus of this prayer, how we should be praying. **Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today Our Daily Bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil for thine is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.**

Who's the focus of that one? Our Father who art in heaven, hallow be **thy** name, **thy** Kingdom come, **thy** will be done. The focus of that prayer, how we should pray, is God our heavenly father! Yet this is how this Pharisee, the guy who says he knows and loves God more than anybody this is how he prays. Let me read that again, who's the focus? **'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'**

Who's the focus of that prayer? It's himself. The only person he can think about. So, he shows up to the temple to pray that day and he says, "God thank you." Not, God, I thank you that you're good and you're kind and you're merciful and your gracious to me, not thank you that you've given me a family and breath in my lungs but thank you that I'm not like other people. That I'm more diligent, I'm more generous, I'm more sinless. God thank you that in the game of life, I'm winning. You see this shows us what comparison does.

## *2. Comparison crushes relationships.*

Because you see he can't think about anybody else. He's so drained his brain to just think about how I am doing, am I keeping up with him, am I good enough, do I have more, am I more influential? He can only think about himself, and it crushes his relationship with everyone around him, including his relationship with God. He approaches the throne of God and even then he can't think about God because he can't get over himself.

You see it doesn't just crush your relationship with God, it crushes your relationship with everyone around you as well. Because as a pharisee, this was a guy of tremendous influence. The gospels have a lot to say about who Pharisees were and one of the things that we can learn from the gospels about who the Pharisees were is that they had tremendous influence over the people. What they said the people did, the people followed the Pharisees because the Pharisees were supposed to be teachers of the word of God. They're supposed to teach people about God, and yet this pharisee uses his influence to say this prayer in front of the people he's supposed to be caring for. Rather than caring for them, he crushes them. Rather than drawing them nearer to God, he pushes them away from himself. Because on that day the only thing that mattered to him was not that they knew how good and beautiful and gracious their God was, but how good and successful he was. See this is what comparison will do, it will crush your relationships. Because when your life is a competition, everyone else turns into the opposition. And you will isolate yourself.

But let me just tell you another example. This was an example in scripture, let me give you a real-life, present-day example of what this can look like. Recently I was talking to a buddy and his dad was really successful, they were really well off. He's got a fantastic, incredible house. I don't know what he did, but he was really wealthy - keep that in mind as I share about my friend who I was talking to. He just said, "Nate, I'm absolutely exhausted." I'm like, "Why is that?" And he said, "Well, I've got a job..." And this was a really good paying job. It's a really, really impressive job. He said, "I'm just having to work really long hours and since I'm at work all the time I don't get to see my wife very much. I don't get to see my kids very much. I am absolutely burnt out. Recently we bought this house and it was probably a little bit out of our price range, so I'm just having to keep up and it's a stretch for us to even pay for it." Then he also had recently made a different investment, it was like a get rich quick thing where if it had worked it would have been great, but it went south really fast, and he was just burnt out exhausted. He's like, "What should I do?"

I'm like, "I don't know...maybe start with your job. I know it's a good job, but it sounds like a lot of your exhaustion comes from your job. You're working long hours, you're not getting to spend time with your wife or your kids. What if you quit your job and found something else? You could quit and you'd have ten people, ten companies willing to hire you. How about you quit and just find something else?"

But he said this, and it's so telling he said, "I can't quit my job, because I want my kids to be raised in the same way that I was." Think about this. He's burnt out, exhausted, he's not spending time with his wife, he's not spending time with his kids. Why? It's because he's comparing himself to his dad. And his comparison was crushing his relationships around him. But it's not just there. Think about any divorce you've ever seen. At the heart of nearly any divorce you've ever seen, it comes down to comparison. It comes down to one spouse comparing their wife to someone else's wife. Or it comes down to one spouse comparing their husband to some other guy. Here's what comparison will do; it will crush your relationships. Which is why we need to learn to kill it. We need to learn to kill comparison.

So, we looked at what comparison is - it views life as a competition. We've looked at what it does - it crushes relationships. Now let's talk about how to kill it. This Pharisee has just prayed this prayer of comparison and one of the people he compares himself to is a tax collector. And this tax collector also has a prayer that day, this is what it is, verse 13, **"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'**"

Now I want to point out something quickly about the phrasing of that verse - the wording there. The translation from the Greek to the English doesn't literally say that. That translation is fine, but it's not a literal word for word translation. Because the tax collector doesn't say, "God have mercy on me **a sinner**." This is important! He says, "God have mercy on me **the sinner**." This is so important to understand because there's a difference and this is the difference between the Pharisee and the tax collector. They were both making a comparison that day. The Pharisee was comparing himself to everyone around him. He was comparing his good deeds to the good deeds of everyone else around him, but the tax collector, his comparison was different. He wasn't looking around at everyone else, he was looking up to God. He couldn't think about anyone else;



he wasn't one of many, he wasn't just a sinner, he was the sinner. He was the only sinner he could think about because when he viewed a holy and perfect and righteous God, he was absolutely wrecked to his core.

Which is why his prayer was approved by God. It was focused on God. It wasn't him comparing himself to everyone else, it was him comparing himself to holy and perfect and righteous God. So, God approves of his prayer. In fact, Jesus tells us this as He concludes, that this tax collector was approved that day. This conclusion would have been shocking to Jesus' listeners, because tax collectors back in that day were the worst of the worst. Think about the IRS today, but worse because these people back then they would actually steal your money. Which I know we're in Texas, and you're like yeah that's what the IRS does they steal my money but back then what they would do is they would take more money over the top and pocket it for themselves. They were the worst of the worst and yet this is what Jesus says. Verse 14, **"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."**

So, if you want to be justified before God and if you want to free yourself from the sin of comparison here's what you do here's how you kill comparison.

### *3. Comparison is killed by humility.*

Comparison is killed by humility. How do you become humble? It's actually really simple. How do you become humble? You compare yourself to someone who's bigger, better, faster, stronger - that's how you become humble. For example, if you wanted to humble me this morning, you put my net worth on the screen and then you compare it to Elon Musk's. It would be humiliating because I'm not even close. He's got way, way, way more than what I have, and it would be humbling. Or if you want to be humbled this morning, go play LeBron James one on one in basketball. Man, you'd get dunked on and it would be an absolutely humbling experience because you'd realize that you're nowhere near the best. You've got such a long way to go, but you're not even close to the best of the best of the best. It's a humbling experience whenever you realize that. Whenever you realize that you don't have what it takes, it's absolutely humbling. So, if you want to be humbled this morning stand before the presence of an almighty God and compare your holiness to His holiness.

Compare your righteousness to His righteousness. When you do that, what you will end up happening is your face will hit the floor because you'll realize you're nowhere near good enough to Him. Because this is what happens all the time in scriptures, whenever someone would encounter God, or they would encounter an angel from God what would happen is their response time and time again would be fear and terror and humility. Their response would look like this tax collector's prayer.

In fact, one of the best examples of this is so similar to this tax collectors in Isaiah 6. Isaiah is a prophet from God, and he has a vision of God. He gets to see God and keep in mind this is a good man, this is a prophet and yet this is what he says, Isaiah 6:5, **"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty."**

You see when your eyes see the king, you realize you aren't the king. And when your eyes see a righteous and holy God, you can only think about the ways in which you are not holy. When your eyes see a perfect heavenly father, you can only think about the ways in which you are imperfect. Which is a problem for us because a holy, imperfect God can only accept that which is holy and perfect. So, what does not matter is how much better you are from Jimmy down the street.

What does matter is how much worse you are from Jesus of Nazareth. If salvation is comparing ourselves to perfection, comparing ourselves to Jesus, then none of us would be approved. Scripture says that all of us have fallen short of the glory of God because we know deep down, we know that none of us are good enough. We know we're not perfect. Even if we lined up all of our good deeds, we would still have baggage. We would still have lust and lies and gossiping, comparison, envy, and greed. We know we're not good enough to get in and this is what scripture says. Since we're not perfect, we are deserving of wrath - not salvation. We're deserving of punishment, not paradise. If that's true, man that's a humbling thing to realize - dare I say even terrifying.

Well, it is a good thing that's not where the story ends. The gospel - why we're here this morning. Hebrews 10, **For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.** Verse 17, **Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more. And where these have been forgiven, sacrifice for sin is no longer necessary."**

You see while you weren't good enough for God, He was good enough to save you. Now the only comparison that matters is where you were versus where you are now. Because while you were lost, now because of Jesus you're found and while you were blind, now because of Jesus you can see. While you were an orphan, now because of Jesus you have a family. When you realize that, that you deserve nothing but, in His kindness, and mercy He's given you everything you're humbled, and you stop desperately wanting that Ford Bronco.

Right? I mean that that doesn't even come close to mattering when you understand this - the goodness and graciousness and kindness and forgiveness of our God. The other stuff just falls away because humility kills comparison. We stop thinking about what our neighbor has when we compare ourselves to a good and holy and mighty God.

So, in summary: What is comparison? Comparison views life as a competition. What does comparison do? Comparison crushes relationships. How can we kill comparison? Comparison is killed by humility.

I just want to close this morning with another story in scripture. It's found in John 21, it's the last chapter of John's gospel. We're going to read the last words that Jesus says in that gospel of John. What He does in John 21 is He's just resurrected from the dead and He wants to appear to His disciples. More specifically, He wants to appear to Peter. Because Peter, if you know this story, Peter had denied Jesus three times before Jesus was crucified. So, Jesus wants to come to him and restore him and remind him that Jesus still loves him, that He still has got a plan for him, that He still has got a purpose for him. So, this is what He says at the end of His restoration of Peter, John 21:17-22.

**<sup>17</sup> Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. <sup>18</sup> Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” <sup>19</sup> Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God.**

Church tradition holds that Peter was crucified upside down.

**Then he said to him, “Follow me!”**

**<sup>20</sup> Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is going to betray you?”) <sup>21</sup> When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?”**

But what about him? Why is he getting off easy? He's not any better than me, why are you giving him a better life than what I'm getting? This isn't fair! God, what about him?

**<sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”**

If I want to give them a better job, what is that to you? If I want to give them smarter kids more athletic kids, what is that to you? If I want to give them more influence, what is that to you? If I want to give them a nicer house, what is that to you? Even if I want to give them more difficulties, what is that to you? That's not your job! You do your job and let me do my job. Your job is to not compare yourself to everyone else and make sure that you're better than everyone else, your job is to pick up your cross and follow me and make sure I'm in your view, I'm in your focus and not your neighbor.

Because as I said at the beginning, here's the danger of comparison. All of us - I really believe this - all of us, every single person in this room is searching for the best life possible. What comparison will do is it will convince you that the best life is somebody else's life, and it will keep you from living your own life. Here's Jesus' response to that. His message to us is this, what is it to you? What is it to you to focus on if they have more or if they have less? What is it to you? Your job is not to compare what you have to what they have or who you are to who they are. Your job is to follow me, and you can trust me!

You can trust that I'm going to provide for you. You can trust that I've got your best interests in mind. You can trust that I'm going to work all things together for your good. Because after all, remember while you were deserving of death, I've given you life. While you were deserving of punishment, I've given you paradise.

So, Harris Creek we do not need to go out looking to try and find who's got the best life. As believers in Jesus, it is abundantly clear who's got the best life. We do! Nobody's got it better than we do. Because we've got a heavenly father whose love and kindness and compassion and forgiveness and mercy and grace are absolutely incomparable to what the rest of the world gets to experience. So, we don't need to go around spending the rest of our days looking around at our neighbor. We don't need to keep up with the Joneses. We don't need to be searching for the best life, because we know we've got the best savior. I want to spend the rest of my life following Him.

Let me pray that we would.

Heavenly father, I just want to thank you that you don't leave us as we are. You're constantly refining us and changing us and shaping us so that we might look more like Jesus; so that we might experience life to the full. God your commands are not for our harm, you're not trying to keep us from something, you're trying to provide us something. I pray that we believe that.

And God I just want to acknowledge that this morning, that man talking about comparison and envy I am at the front of the line, but I don't want to be. Father would I believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that you'll provide for me. That I have more than enough. I don't need to compare what I have to what someone else has and praise God I don't need to compare who I am to who someone else is. Because my good deeds would never be enough for the Kingdom of heaven. But thank you Jesus that I'm saved, and that were saved, not because of who we are but in spite of who we are. That we're saved because we've got a good God who loves us. Who is alive and He's with us and He's for us and because of that we shall not want.

And God thank you that your goodness, kindness, gracious, compassion to us is incomparable. Words don't do justice to just how good and powerful and mighty and merciful you are as a God to us. I pray that we believe it and for the rest of our days our eyes will be focused, not on our neighbor but on you. Because you're worth it. So, Father we love you. It's in the powerful name of Jesus that we pray,

Amen.