



DISCUSSION GUIDE

WEEK 10: THE PHARISEE AND TAX COLLECTOR

Read the Text

Luke 18:9-14

⁹ He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰ “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Main Point

As we conclude our Parables series this week, we once again see Jesus point to the Kingdom of God and show how vastly different it is than this world and its arbitrary ethics and morality that shape and shift with culture and time. In this particular parable, Jesus focuses on our heart posture toward God.

At the beginning of this story, we see that Jesus is addressing the very people He is talking about. There were “*some*” in the audience who were struggling with self-righteousness and treating others with contempt. This word “*some*” is an important nuance to notice because it means He’s talking to some of US! Even though we may profess to follow Jesus, we can be prone to falling into the pit of self-righteousness and works-based-salvation. This mentality fails to acknowledge the devastating impact of our sin. It leads us to take credit for where things are going well and to blame others where things are going poorly. The truth is that there is *nothing* we can do to earn our way into the Kingdom. Our sin is too great to pay off with good works and righteous living. ***Getting into the Kingdom requires allowing God to pay our way through His Son.***

Through the comparison of the pharisee and tax collector, we see the vast contrast between self-righteousness and humility. Here's the thing that makes it a bit complicated though: the pharisees did lead pretty righteous lives. They tithed, followed the law, prayed, and checked all the boxes of holy living. Meanwhile, tax collectors betrayed and profited from their own people and took their money to fund the Roman empire, while also keeping a cut for themselves. On paper, it would seem as though the pharisee is the one worth modeling our lives after. But in this parable, Jesus is giving us insight into what really matters: their hearts. Whereas the pharisee prays with self-righteous comparison, the tax collector prays with humble confession. It's the conviction and confession of the tax collector that Jesus delights in and shows us that ***paying the cost for sin looks different than what we might think.*** It's not our following of rules and religious structures that gets us into the Kingdom, but rather our humble acceptance that we need Jesus to reconcile us to the Father because nothing we do will ever earn us that spot.

The parable culminates in Jesus declaring the tax collector justified and exalted. By accepting the free gift of Jesus' blood, the tax collector is declared righteous. This is such amazing news for us. This tax collector was not a great example of how to model one's life. He was justified because he begged God for mercy, and God granted it to him. This mercy is available to us as well. No matter what we have done, God can and will welcome us into the Kingdom if we repent and put our faith in Jesus. There is nothing we can do to earn that kind of mercy. As we see from the pharisee, ***paying your own way will cost far more than anticipated.*** It requires us to acknowledge our sin, recognize our need, admit that we can't fix anything on our own, and to humbly seek the mercy of God.

Reflect Together

1. God cares more about our internal hearts than our external behavior. Why do you think that is? How does it sit with you – does it bring relief, discomfort, confusion, etc.?
2. How do you sometimes fall into works-based-righteousness? What helps you identify it and move towards Jesus?
3. Looking back at the parables of the past 10 weeks, how has it formed your understanding of the Kingdom of God?

Abide Together: We are now into Holy Week. Please pray for the people, leaders, staff, and elders of Doxa and that this week would draw people towards Jesus and that God would be glorified.

Mission Together: Easter is this week! Who are you going to invite?