

October 23, 2022

20th Sunday After Pentecost

Luke 18:9-14

This parable, though short in verses, is deeply packed with topics. There are so many deeper levels of understanding that what appears on the page. This parable addresses the Jewish concept of humility. Which we talked about this past summer. Humility is being honest with yourself about who you are. It is not about being a lowly creature with no self-worth. Our society seems only to judge a person by outward appearances. Yet God looks deeper and knows what is in our hearts. What is the proper attitude when praying to God? Only one person was actually praying to God in our parable this morning. Can a person transition from being a town pariah to a decent person? This is a dangerous parable to the reader. We need to always keep in mind that judgement is reserved for God and Him only!

As I said, many deep topics to think about. Since it is Reformation season, I thought it might be best to focus on another idea. That being the idea that we are saints and sinners at the same time. This is kind of

like taking the Tax Collector and the Pharisee in this reading this morning and making one new person out of both of them. Luther said we are all saints because we are saved by the sacrifice made by Jesus on the Cross. The price paid to save us was very high. That price being the life of the Son of God. That is how valuable you and I are to God. Although we are saints and are saved, we are still tempted by sin. Our free will gives us the potential to do so many great and amazing things in our world. However the opposite is also true.

Like this parable, Lutheran Theology has many deeper levels. Unfortunately many of us settle to only skim the surface. We fail to drink deeply at the well. Grace also has a very deeper level and we should talk about it also. Since we were saved at a high price we should only settle for Expensive Grace. If we settle for Cheap Grace and say well I am saved anyway, why should I work on myself or go the extra mile? These people do nothing or the bare minimum. I am saying go the extra mile and put in the extra effort. It does matter, more than you might imagine. Settling on Cheap Grace makes a mockery of the High Price paid by Christ for you and I. Always try to live up to the price that was paid for our salvation. Do not lessen its importance by settling for Cheap Grace. Honor it by settling for Expensive Grace.

Expensive Grace seems to be the thing the Tax Collector had in spades. He was humble and looked deeply at himself at some point. He did not like what he saw or became and realized a change was needed. He was very humble from a Jewish perspective. If you have to judge anyone, it should start with yourself. This is what the Tax Collector did. The text

tells us that he prayed to God. The prayer came from self-examined heart. The text also tells us that the Pharisee prayed thus with himself. So he was only having a conversation with himself and not actually praying to God. The words of the Tax Collector would be used greatly by the early church. They would form the proper attitude and approach for a person praying to God. His words would be modified slightly and given a more Christian twist. "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God have mercy on me a sinner." A simple and easy prayer to recall. I have used it daily in my personal prayer life for 32 years.

Take aways: God knows what is in our hearts. That also includes others and we do not know what is in their hearts. God knows though.

People can change if they are humble enough to look within themselves and do their work. A hardened Tax Collector changed.

Many times, societies perceptions can be way off. The Tax Collector turned out to be a decent person after all. The Pharisee was not so humble a person as maybe he should have been.

The biggest danger for you and I reading this parable, is to judge the Pharisee. Do not fall into that trap. Remember that judgement is God's.

Do not settle for Cheap Grace. You are better than that. Settle only for Expensive Grace. I hope I am not being too judgemental, Pastor D