

PASSION READING SERMON TEXT: Luke 18:9-14

Vs. 9 - To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable:

Vs. 10 - “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

Vs. 11 - The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector.

Vs. 12 - I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

Vs. 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.’

Vs. 14 - “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

GREETING: Jesus says: heaven & Earth will pass away, but My Words will never pass away. (Matt. 24:35)

Brushing your teeth. Checking your emails. Eating a meal. Opening a door. Picking up a book. Turning a page. All these routine tasks have a common denominator. You use your hands.

As one thinks about it, our hands are a great blessing. Imagine how difficult it is for those people who have disabilities or are missing limbs or hands. (Pray that the Lord would give them continued strength & courage)

This year for Lent, we will be following a sermon series entitled: “*The Hands of the Passion*”. We will be looking at various sections of Scripture, and then we will make note of the use of hands. The culmination of this Lent Series comes with the Hands of our Savior being nailed to the cross, and then our Savior Jesus, will show those same hands to His disciples, after His resurrection.

This evening we hear Jesus telling a parable, that is “*An Earthly story with a heavenly meaning.*”

As parables have one central message, one main point that Jesus is trying to portray, as we make our way to that one main point in this parable, we want to make note of the hands of the two men involved in this parable.

In this parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, we see two men going to the temple to pray. (Prayer is an Act of Worship, in which we talk to God from the heart, about anything we want, anywhere we want, any time we want.)

As we look at the Pharisee, we see that he stands up and as the text points out. He prayed about *himself*.

Listen to the prayer of the Pharisee:

Vs. 11 - The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector.

Now as we hear this prayer, we might be able to say some of the same things. *Thank you, God.* Have you ever said that? Of course. Thank you, God, that I am not like so and so. Thank you, God, that I am not one of those rioters that we see on the news. Thank you, God, that I did not go to a medical clinic and shot someone.

Thank you, God, that I did not _____ - And you can fill in the blank.

After the Pharisee thanks God for all the things that he is not, he then tells God what he did.

(As God needs to be told. God Who knows all things.)

Vs. 12 - I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

Have you ever looked at your end of the year offering statement and thought, "Wow, I really gave a lot to church this year!"

Or thought about or voiced out loud how great a job you did at helping others?

Even though Scripture does not tell us what the Pharisee was doing or did with his hands, we can hear from his words what he was doing even if his hands were folded in front of him.

"Thank You God that I am not like that Tax Collector." What is the Pharisee doing?

Pointing to that guy over there. The Pharisee is saying: "Hey God, I am nothing like him."

And then as the Pharisee says, Vs. **12 - I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'**

The Pharisee is saying: Hey God. Hey God!!!! **LOOK AT ME!** As the Pharisee points to himself.

As Jesus is telling this parable we can look back at verse nine:

Vs. 9 - To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable:

Jesus is directing this parable at anyone who is confident in their own ability to make it to heaven, and those who then look down on everyone else.

Don't look down on someone else just because they _____ ...

The Pharisee was confident of his OWN Righteousness.

The bottom line regarding the teachings of the Pharisees was that they thought that if they did enough good deeds that they could work their way into God's Good graces and earn heaven.

As believers in Christ, God the Holy Spirit enables us to see how bad we are, and how great our need for a Savior is.

The Lord through the power of the Holy Spirit has led us to recognize that we are sinful from the moment we are conceived. (Ps. 51:5)

That all our righteous acts are as filthy rags. (Isa. 64:6-7)

That by nature we are dead in our trespasses and sin. (Ephesians 2:1-5)

And because of that sinful nature which we inherited from our beloved mom and dad, we are hostile to God and enemies of God. (Romans 8:5-8)

During the season of Lent, beginning with Ash Wednesday, we look once again at our sinfulness and our lack of living up to God's perfect law.

During Lent, we look again at our need for a Savior, and we look right at our Savior Jesus as the only hope for heaven.

In Matthew 23:27, Jesus referred to the Pharisees & teachers of the law when He said:

"Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs / sepulchers which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean."

In the Parable that we are looking at this evening, Jesus then turns our attention to the Tax Collector. The Jews did not like the Tax Collectors, because the Tax Collectors were Jews who worked for the Roman government, collecting money from the Jews for the despised Roman government. (The IRS)

The Tax Collector in this parable has a simple prayer as we are told what he did with his hands: **Vs. 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.’**

The Tax Collector was talking about himself. He straight forward said: I Am a Sinner! I am Guilty! I have fallen short of Your Demands dear God.

The Tax Collector then turns to what it is that he needs. GOD’S Mercy.

God’s mercy! - ο θεος, ιλασθητι μοι τω αμαρτωλω.□ -

“God be merciful / gracious / atone / make reconciliation - for me – the sinner.

Do you hear what this Tax Collector is saying?

Lord, The Pharisee is right! I am a sinner. I am *the one* whom the Pharisee is talking about.

As the Tax Collector is saying this, he strikes his own chest. He is pointing to himself.

In Ho 6:6 we hear the Word of our Lord.

“For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”

[See also Matthew 9:9-13 / Jesus called Matthew as a disciple and the Pharisees complained. And see also Matthew 12:1-8]

Matthew 9:12 – **“On hearing this, Jesus said, It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but the sinners.”**

In verse 14 of our text this evening the Lord Jesus comes to the main point:

Vs. 14 - **“I tell you that this man - The Tax Collector -, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”**

The Tax Collector was JUSTIFIED! Not because he was such a humble person, but because he placed his trust in God, not in himself.

The Tax Collector was declared not guilty of all his sin. Those people who place their trust in God and the Savior that God sent – Jesus our Risen Savior, have heaven.

They are forgiven, they will be exalted in heaven praising God with hands held high or folded in thanksgiving forever and Ever.

And so, let us not look down on others, but let us look to Jesus our Living and Gracious Savior. AMEN

THEME: Hands of Repentance

Ash Wednesday -- February 17, 2021

