

## Family Stories

### The Surprise of Grace

Luke 18:9-14

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt

Luke 18:9

## A Purpose Statement

- How do we see ourselves?
- Often we compare ourselves with others
- Who is righteous? not righteous?  
– this parable addresses this theme

## The Problem

- This parable identifies the problem of justification by works – seeing yourself as righteous
- Condemning others who are not as good as you

## The Parable

Luke 18:10-13

## The Context

- 2 men go to the temple to pray – a Pharisee & a tax collector
- Both go to the house of prayer
- Both pray to God

## Similar & Contrasting

- These two men share in this fundamental desire to meet with God
- The temple as a metaphor speaks of contrast – insiders & outsiders

The temple is the map, the metaphor, that stands for the insiders and outsiders. Since this is a parable of contrast, the temple will map out the contrast. The contrast form does not decide in advance whether the first or second one will be favoured, although the temple map surely favours the Pharisee."

Bernard Scott

## The Pharisee

- A Pharisee is seen as a model citizen of Israel (v11)
- A good person, respected in the community
- A pious individual – fasts 2x/week; tithes in all he does (v12)

## Weak Link

- He sees his goodness by looking down on others – he thinks he is better than the tax collector who prays nearby (v11)
- He sees himself as righteous – no stealing, cheating as he views the Publican

## The Problem of Comparison

- 'The death of the spiritual life' (Teresa of Avila)
- Pride rises up – moves in the direction of the false self
- Tendency of hypocrisy (Luke 11:37-44)

## The Tax Collector

- The tax collector was seen as an enemy of the people (v13)
- A scoundrel – selling out to the oppressors (Romans)
- Living well by cheating others

## The Publican Prays

- He calls out to God with no comparison
- He understands himself – “God, be merciful to me, a sinner”

## Looks Up

- He does not look down on others but looks up to God – his only hope
- It is either mercy or death
- His life is totally in the hands of God's mercy & love
- No confidence in his own goodness

## Why does the Publican cry out?

- What is happening in his life?
- What reality check is going on?
- Coming to an end of self

## Closing Commentary

Luke 18:14

I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.

Luke 18:14

## Justified

- Jesus declares that the tax collector goes home justified/made righteous and not the Pharisee (v14a)
- A shocking statement to his audience – how can the tax collector be better off than the Pharisee/a pillar of the church?

## Humility Over Self-Exaltation

- Jesus recognizes that before God we are all needy
- We are not to look down on others but look up to God

Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

Matthew 11:29

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;

Luke 1:52

## The Surprise of Grace

- Grace is available to all of us – look to God - we are all in need of grace
- The point is not to leave thanking God that we are not as the Pharisee but to open our hearts to the love and grace of God – the Pharisee & Publican both dwell within us

## Become Like Christ

- We are to grow into the image of Jesus (Ephesians 4:2) who was humble of heart (Philippians 2:8)
- As we focus on Jesus we will bear the fruit of Jesus
- We are only justified by Jesus & his grace – never by even our best works!

## So What?

- Now is the great beginning!
- Stop looking down on others – only look up to the mercy and love of God for all