

# The Pharisee & The Tax Collector

December 31, 2023

Luke 18:9-17

*the gospel according to*

# LUKE

## Begin with Prayer

Beginning with silence, invite the Holy Spirit to guide your time. Consider Mary's prayer: **"I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled"** (Luke 1:38) or Jesus' prayer: **"Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come"** (Luke 11:2).

## Reconnecting and Debriefing

Take a moment to reconnect with one another using one or both of the following questions:

1. *What was your highlight from Christmas?*
2. *Where do you find yourself comparing yourself to others?*

### **Introduction**

*When we gather, our goal is to be a people apprentices to the life of Jesus.  
As you begin this week, remind your group to give every person an equal  
opportunity to share, even if it takes time to form or finish their thought.*

## Listening to God's Word

As Christians, we can be so quick to adopt a self-righteous attitude based on our outward actions. We can believe that our piety or morality makes us better than others, slipping into elitism or unhealthy comparison. In this passage in Luke, Jesus pushes back against these postures, pointing to the most unlikely of examples as models of faith – children and tax collectors. The call for apprentices of Jesus is not to a life of perfection or greater performance, but of dependence upon him and childlike receiving.

For a guide this week, choose one of the following options. The first option is a contemplative exercise, more focused on prayer and reflection on the passage; the second option a study guide for group discussion, much like our typical guides. Next week will return to our typical study guide rhythm.

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## Option 1: Lectio Divina

**Leader:** Slowly lead your group through this meditative exercise. **DON'T RUSH.** Leave periods of silence (i.e. >30 sec) *between each sentence* of instructions. Before you begin, have the group open their Bibles to this week's sermon passage from the Gospel of Luke, or another Scripture of choice.

1. **Ready:** Spend time in silence - long enough to let your mind, breathing and heart rate slow down. Pray silently and simply, in 2-3 words expressing your desire to hear from God. (~ 2 minutes)
2. **Read:** Have someone read the assigned passage slowly, out loud. (~ 3 minutes)

3. **Ruminate:** Individually, silently, slowly and prayerfully re-read the text. (this section ~ 10 minutes)
- *What word, phrase, image or character catches your attention?*
  - Of this word, phrase, image, character - ask God: "Why do you want me to hear those words?"
  - Then be still and listen. *What ideas, memories, hopes, faces, feelings emerge?*
  - Ask God: "Why did you want me to pay attention to this Scripture and these thoughts?"
  - Then be still and listen. *What insight (idea, feeling, principle) emerges?*

**Pause to Share:** *Invite all to briefly share what they heard in this time.*

4. **Respond:** Invite each person, if they are comfortable, to express a brief prayer of response to the insight they sensed – ex. thanksgiving, praise, confession, repentance, request, desire, love.
5. **Rest:** Sit silently in the quiet. Feel God's loving gaze on you. He is happy to be with you. (~2 minutes) Close with a simple, "Amen."
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## Option 2: Small Group Discussion

**Read this week's passage from the Gospel of Luke** twice. Then discuss together:

- ***What is your first thought when you read through this passage?***
  - Try to imagine the situation (physical, emotional, spiritual) from the perspective of various characters in the story. *Who or what do you relate to in the encounter described here? Why?*
  - *What part of this teaching do you find most compelling or relevant to you today?*
  - *What questions does this passage of Scripture raise for you?*
  - *From this passage, what do we learn about*
    - *Jesus' character, priorities, or practices?*
    - *God and God's kingdom from what Jesus teaches or does?*
    - *our own character, priorities, or desires from this passage?*
  - *What is the "good news" in this passage?*
  - *What surprises or intrigues you the most about Jesus or Jesus' teachings in this passage?*
  - *Are there other stories, teachings or pictures from Scripture that this passage reminds you of?*
  - *After reflecting together on this passage, what new insight have you come to?*
  - ***How is God speaking to you in this Scripture? How do you intend to respond?***
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## Caring for One Another

Using **Luke 1:38** or **the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)** as a guide, based on what you've shared together, spend time listening to God and praying for one another.