Amen.
Amen.
It's difficult to follow that, boy.
Hallelujah.
If you want to turn with me the Bible,
it's the Gospel of Luke chapter 18.
The Gospel of Luke chapter 18,
we'll begin reading in verse number nine.
Boy, good to see this good crowd here today.
Luke chapter 18,
we're going to begin reading in verse number nine
and read down through verse number 14.
Over the last few weeks,
we spent a little bit of time studying the parables of the Lord Jesus.
And if the Lord doesn't lead differently,
we're going to wrap, temporarily at least, wrap this
study up this morning with this final parable of the Lord.
And again, we reserved the right to go back
and there's about 30 to 40 different parables that the Lord spoke.
That was his preferred method of teaching.
But what really stood out to me and I felt led to go here
in this great big Bible that we have,
66 books,
so much information,
a lot of different writers,
just one author,
God inspired the entire thing.
But if there's one thing I believe that we really need to look at
is the teachings of the Lord Jesus himself.
As familiar as some of those may be,
they're sufficient.
They're the Lord's word.
I want to share something yesterday.
I texted this to Mitzi.
And let me say this first of all.
It is not my job
to critique other men's preaching.
That ain't my job.
I'm a basket case all by myself
and trying to keep myself in line.
But I've got some convictions
about what preaching is supposed to be
and what it's not supposed to be.
I read this yesterday and it really jumped out.
It says,
this man posted,
he says,
I'm glad to hear that Baptist preachers say
that the Bible is the preserved,
infallible,

inerrant word of God.
My question is, do you believe that the Bible is also sufficient?
This man replied,
why wouldn't it be sufficient?
Which of my fellow Baptist preachers don't believe this?
And the man replied this, and it really grabbed me.
The ones that stand in the pulpit,
read one verse from it, and spend the next 40 minutes telling jokes,
stories,
rants, and one-liners.
Wow.
It's one thing to believe
that the Bible is the word of God.
It's another thing to stand up and go,
what the Lord has to say
is far better than anything that I have to say.
And it's just simply declaring
the message,
the parable,
the scripture,
that that is by itself
with the Spirit of God
sufficient to the saving of a soul,
sufficient to the strengthening of the soul,
encouragement,
conviction,
all that we need
isn't found in the man that's doing the preaching.
It's found when we say,
thus saith the Lord
and let it be.
This morning, I want to share this parable
of the Pharisee
and the publican.
Luke chapter 18, verse 9.
Verse 9 is very important.
It gives us a setting.
And he spake this parable
unto certain
which trusted in themselves
that they were righteous
and despised others.
Two men went up into the temple to pray,
the one a Pharisee and the other a publican.
The Pharisee stood and prayed to us with himself,
God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are,
extortioners,
unjust,
adulterers,
or even as this publican.

I fast twice in the week.
I give tithes of all that I possess.
And the publican,
standing afar off,
would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven,
but smote upon his breast, saying,
God,
be merciful to me,
a sinner.
He doesn't get out of them doors.
He doesn't make it to the pew.
Verse 14,
Jesus says, I tell you,
this man went down to his house as justified rather than the other.
For everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased.
That means everyone that lifts himself up will be brought low.
And he that humbleth himself
shall be exalted.
He that brings himself low
shall be lifted up.
Let's pray.
Heavenly Father, today I truly do believe
that you,
your spirit,
and your word
are not only perfect
and eternal,
it is sufficient
for every need that is found
in this building today.
God,
I pray that you would enable me this morning
to share your word in a manner
that is pleasing unto you.
That above all things, Lord, we might see you.
And in seeing you, we might see ourselves.
Lord, and in turn,
turn to the throne of grace,
the God of all comfort.
Lord, I ask you to take this time, you use it.
In Jesus' sweet name we pray.
Amen.
And amen.
Folks, one of my greatest wishes in this world,
and this may make you uncomfortable,
but I believe it.
It's how I feel.
I wish that every man,
everywhere,
who is aware

and overwhelmed by his failures,
I wish every prostitute and pedophile,
drug addict and deadbeat dad,
adulterer,
adulteress,
thief,
crooked politician, crooked politician,
I wish every one of them
would see and believe
and embrace the great grace of God
that we find in the word of God.
I wish they could go to Luke 15
and see that pursuing love of God
that chases after one sheep that leaves the 99
to go and rescue just that one who is caught in the mess
and the thorns and is in peril
that they would see that this is a picture
of the pursuing love of God.
That they would see that woman who searches after the lost coin,
that they would see that great reception that the father gives in the parable
of that lost son who would just waste it everything,
say, father, father, I just assumed you'd be dead
and wasted all of it.
You say, who is grace for?
None of us are deserving of it,
but God,
in his grace, this man comes back,
puts the best robe on him, a ring on his hands,
shoes on his feet,
kills the fatted calf, let us eat, be merry,
for this my son was dead and alive again, now he's lost and is found.
If the man who is aware of his failure
and overwhelmed by his failure,
if he would see the reality of God and the word of God that it's meant for all,
if he would see that, it would change his life.
Matthew chapter 13,
that great net of grace that is lowered down,
man doesn't erect a ladder to heaven,
the great net of grace comes down to man and Jesus said
it catches every kind,
all kinds.
We got no right to determine who's net worthy
because the reality is none of us are net worthy,
but the net comes in and it reaches out.
Matthew 13 again,
that merchant man
who goes to the bottom of the sea
to secure that pearl,
just this great love of God, the power,
that permeates,

it comes in
and it changes a man.
It cleans a man.
It's the work of God
and I wish the lost man would see that.
Why is that so important to me?
Because that's exactly
what one needs.
That is exactly
what captured my soul.
But church, my next desire
is for every individual
that takes pride in his pedigree,
that is secure in his self-righteousness,
that is blind
to his moral
and spiritual failure,
would move directly
to Luke chapter 18.
I say that to say this because the message found here
is just as needful as the other
and perhaps probably even more so.
Jesus in this passage of scripture tells a parable.
He tells a story.
What is a parable?
It's an earthly picture to reveal divine truth.
It's something that people could understand,
they could see,
they're familiar with sowing,
they're familiar with trees coming up,
they're familiar with things.
So here,
in this case, this isn't a farming parable,
it's not a fishing parable,
it's not a net parable,
it's about, if you don't have it, it's about a church service.
In fact, it is about a church service.
Two men who come to this service, they're very similar in many ways,
but they're very different in many ways.
I want you to see here in this parable that they come to church on the same day.
Not only do they come on the same day, they attend the same service.
In other words, their environments are absolutely the same.
But in many ways, these men are very,
very,
very different.
Multiple things they're different about.
One is a Pharisee,
one is a religious man, he makes his profession in the ministry,
the other
is a publican,

not just a tax collector,
but a scoundrel.
Those things are different about them, but that's not the main thing.
It's the difference, and I want you
to remember this and hear this.
It's the difference that we find in these men
that determine
the outcome they experience.
And the same thing
is true here today.
The same God
that's present here in the temple this day
is the same God that is present here at New Bethel Baptist Church today.
He's present all over the place.
This God doesn't change, this God
is eternal,
this God
is no respecter of persons, and all of this
here is a work of God, but what really stands out to me
is the outcome is determined
not upon the
differences in God, but it's determined
by the differences that we find
in the men.
Let's look at this parable this morning.
This may be brief.
Differences that we find in these men.
Number one,
the Pharisee was blind,
and the publican could see.
Look at verse number 10.
The Bible says,
two men went up into the temple to pray,
the one a Pharisee and the other a publican.
The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee that I,
if not as other men are,
extortioners, unjust,
adulterers,
or even as this publican.
I fast twice in the week,
I give tithes of all that I possess.
This Pharisee struts
into the temple.
I've got
just a little thing,
it's my personal pet peeve.
Boy, I didn't know I was going to say this, but I'm going to say it anyways.
The Bible talks about giving honor to whom honor is
due and those types of things, and I believe all that.
I was at a, I went to a revival,

I visited a church one time,
and I was running late,
and I just had my blue jeans and my work shirt, and I come in,
and I just sit down and sit down on the back row.
Well, the pastor saw me, and the evangelist saw me,
and there's about two or three other preachers sitting over here in Amen Corner,
and they just wouldn't have it if I didn't come up and sit with those men.
I said, preacher, what's wrong with that?
There ain't anything in the world wrong with that.
Not at all.
I just don't ever want to even give the perception that I'm strutting into the
temple
of God, and everybody needs to recognize the fact that I showed up today.
This man struts into the temple of God.
Adrian already said, there'll be no peacocks in heaven.
You know what a peacock looks like, right?
He has the audacity to tout his resume.
I fast twice in a week.
I give tithes of all that I possess.
He makes the dreaded mistake of comparison.
Folks, this is a deadly,
deadly mistake.
Look what he says here in verse 11.
The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself,
God,
I thank thee that I am not as other men are.
I can say this, I'm thankful that I'm not the man that I used to be.
But he said, I think that I'm not as other men are.
I'm not
an extortioner,
an unjust,
an adulterer,
or even as this publican.
God, I thank you that I'm not like him.
I want to say this, the man was absolutely blind to what was so obvious to God.
The Pharisee did not see an issue at all.
And all the Lord Jesus could see,
all that God could see,
was the issue.
I want you to see this, man.
He saw
nothing wrong, so much so that he could just strut up into the temple,
he could tout his resume,
he was prideful in his pedigree and what he wasn't, he wasn't like them,
and all the things that he has done,
he's absolutely oblivious
to any issue,
but all the Lord could see was an issue.
I said, preacher, where do you get that from?
I get it from verse 9.

Again, look at who this parable is addressed to.
It says in verse number 9,
and he spake this parable
unto certain which trusted in themselves
that they were righteous and despised others.
That word trusted literally means induced
to believe
to the suffering
of oneself.
They trusted in themselves,
they were induced to believe what?
That they were righteous to the very suffering
of oneself and they despised others.
It means contempt and absolutely no use for.
I heard Adrian Rogers ask this question years ago and it just stood out to me.
I was driving from Cleveland
to Belmont the first time I was here.
He said, did you ever wonder what a church full of Pharisees would look like?
That's a good question.
He said, the church house would be full.
Not just on Easter and not just on Christmas but every Sunday.
I mean, it would be full on Sunday morning, it would be full on Sunday night,
it would be full on Wednesday night and it wouldn't just be full of anybody,
it would be full of people who knew the word of God, who had memorized the word
of God and could teach the word of God.
The church finances and the budget would be stellar
because they all tithes.
So imagine
a church this morning
where every seat is full.
Everybody knows the word,
everybody studied the word,
everybody has memorized the word,
everybody here could teach the word.
All these men are tithing.
I remember Adrian and I just saying this,
he says, in your estimation,
I just described a very healthy church.
he said, the reality is the majority of them would be on their way to hell.
This is the parable
of Jesus.
The Pharisee was blind but this publican could see, look here in verse number 12,
and the publican, verse 12
says, I fast twice in the week, I give the tithes of all that I possess,
and the publican standing afar off would not lift up so much his eyes up to heaven,
but smote upon his breast saying,
God be merciful to me,
a sinner.
This man was too ashamed to come close.
Too ashamed.

Standing
afar off
would not shovel up nuts as lift up his eyes unto heaven.
See,
this publican was a thief.
He was an extortionist.
He was a man who got rich by robbing his very own people.
But let's give this man some credit,
not for the things that he had done, but for what he had now saw and saw it himself.
He realized that he was too dirty to nestle up in the pure
presence of God.
He saw himself for what he was.
Now, it's a very
important point here.
This did not keep this man out of the house of God.
And if this is where you're at, it should not keep you out of the house of God.
I'm just not a church guy.
All the more reason to become a church guy.
He could have easily stayed out and said, I don't fit in.
Well, in this case, if it's a bunch of Pharisees, I'm glad you don't fit in.
But the picture of this individual,
see, it didn't keep him out of the house of God.
What it did lead him to do was enter the house of God, Brother Lowell,
the right way.
That strikes me.
His life for mine,
his life for mine, his life for mine.
But because this man could see,
he wasn't blind,
he saw what he was,
and he was able to enter the house of God the right way.
We find more about this man.
This Pharisee was peaceful,
but the publican was weary.
There were no sleepless nights for this Pharisee.
There were no deep meditations,
no troubling in his soul.
There was no problem for him because he didn't see a problem.
Folks lost or saved, it has nothing to do with your preacher.
Lost or saved,
if we can come in and out of church Sunday after
Sunday after Sunday and never feel trouble,
that isn't a sign that all is well,
that is a sign that you have a problem.
If I can get in my Bible
and prepare to preach three times a week
and there's never any sleepless nights with me, there's never any conviction with
me,
there's never any trouble with me,
never to say oh me before I can say amen to anything else.

If I can come in and out of the word of God, if I can come in and out of the house of God and there's never any trouble down deep in my soul,
there's never anything that steps upon my toes,
there's never anything that distracts me,
there's never anything that makes me feel small, makes God feel big,
that doesn't mean that all is well with me,
that's a clear,
clear,
sirene, danger,
stop sign,
that there is trouble in my life.
The publican was weary.
See, the publican was living Proverbs 13,
it says the way of the transgressor is hard.
This man was weary,
he was tired.
So the reality of his sin,
the reality of his shortcomings,
the reality of his shame,
shame was a heavy chain around his neck, he began to see who God is.
I notice in this passage of Scripture,
the Bible says that faith cometh by hearing,
and hearing by the word of God.
God uses preaching,
not the preacher,
God used the preaching of his word to stir people and point people to his word,
but in this scene there isn't even a message that's spoken.
There's no message that's preached.
There's one man that's struts into God's house
and says Dickie Nickie Newell has arrived today.
Oh, I'm sure thankful you ain't like fairy and cradle.
I give tithes of all that I possess,
I do this, I do that, I'm man.
Blind as a bat.
And this other guy doesn't get out of the foyer.
He recognizes what he is,
and he can't even lift his eyes up to the Lord.
He sees the sin,
but see, he's weary and he's tired.
Folks, that's what sin would do to us.
That's what being out of fellowship with God would do to us.
It would rob our song, it would rob our joy,
that we're disgruntled and we're grumbling
and everything's wrong and everybody's wrong.
It just wears you down, wears you down, wears you down.
But praise God, this man,
it did not keep him out of the house of God.
It led him to the house of God.
Listen,
and if that's where you are, I need you to listen

and listen closely, not to what I got to say,
but what the Lord Jesus says.
I love it.
It's called the great invitation.
I believe it's really called the great commandment.
What Jesus says,
come unto me,
that's not an invitation,
that's telling,
Dickie,
come unto me,
all ye that are weary and heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.
I believe the same God that showed him himself
also showed him that great commandment,
that great invitation,
and this man came
to heed the invitation.
Folks,
what this really is about,
and let's ask ourselves a question.
Now,
how many times have we come to church,
but how many times have we come to church and then
left different than we were the day that we come?
Jesus said he spoke this parable to certain men
which trusted in themselves and they despised others.
In other words,
Mitzi had absolutely deceived herself that all
was right with her to the suffering of herself.
And because she felt that way, she had absolutely no use for anyone else.
Pharisee was blind,
the publican could see.
The Pharisee here,
he's peaceful,
this publican is weary.
The Pharisee was whole.
And the publican was broken.
Let's look here at verse 11.
The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself,
God, I thank thee that I and those other men are,
extortioners,
unjust, adulterers,
or even as this publican.
I fast twice in the week, I give times of all that I possess.
And the publican standing afar off would not lift up so much as his eyes into
heaven,
but smote upon his breast saying,
God, be merciful to me of a sinner.
This Pharisee in his view was a very picture of spiritual fitness.

He was healthy,
he was whole,
there was nothing wrong in his life,
but the publican from the back row,
from the very back row,
his head is low, he's beating his chest.
This is a man who is broken.
He's broken.
You say, why is he broken?
Friend,
because God
has brought him low.
Y'all ever heard them old preachers say, a man can't get saved, he gets lost.
That's not a Bible verse, but it's true.
I heard an old preacher say one time, I actually read it.
It says
that conversion occurs only through a crisis in the soul.
Conversion
occurs through a crisis in the soul.
I'm not trying to be funny this morning.
I want y'all to see what happens.
Brother Brian comes to church,
I've arrived,
I've arrived, I've arrived,
I've got a suit on, I'm the only one in the house, a bunch of ragged muffins,
and I come in and I'm looking good and I stand here and go,
Lord,
I think I'm not like Ted Sparks, I know all about him,
I'm nothing like him at all,
I give tithes of everything that I got, I fast twice a week,
I'm glad I'm here,
you're glad that I'm here,
and here's this other man,
he don't get out of the foyer,
there's not a word that has been said,
he stops right here,
he can't even look up to that scene in the baptistry,
all that he does is all that he does, he looks at himself and smokes his breath
because he realizes he has seen the greatness of God and in doing so,
he has seen the sin in himself and he has come
to a spiritual point of crisis in his life.
Folks, this is not
about emotion,
it's not about shedding tears,
it's not about any of these things,
it is about a man who saw the glory of God,
the reality of his sin and he saw
the seriousness of the matter.
He saw the seriousness
of the matter.

You say,
preacher,
and listen,
folks, this is bigger than a man that is lost and a man that is saved.
This speaks to born-again Christians,
this speaks to born-again believers.
I'll say this and I'll say it again,
Ricky Criddle, if you can come to church every Sunday morning, every Sunday night, every Wednesday night and you never ever feel any conviction in your soul, you can go
to that Bible and I've been to your house and sitting right next to your chair,
you can read that thing and there's nothing that ever stirs you or steps upon you.
That don't mean everything is good with you, that means there's a big,
big problem.
How do I know he saw the seriousness of the matter?
Look at his one appeal.
Seven words.
Look here at verse number 13.
And the publican standing afar off would not lift up his eyes so much into heaven but smote upon his breast saying,
God be
merciful to me a sinner.
God be merciful to a self described title.
God be merciful to me a sinner.
See, here's what jumps out.
To the Pharisee,
mercy is irrelevant.
to the publican,
mercy is absolutely
essential.
No appeal for fairness.
No appeal for justice.
No appeal
for patience or understanding.
Just a desperate plea for mercy
to a God of mercy
for a man in desperate need of mercy.
folks,
I read something not too long ago.
It was an article titled,
What Does the Church Need Most?
And if I did a,
what do you call it, if I did a
questionnaire today,
if I asked Josh and Jake what the church needs most and I said, give me three things,
they're not going to be the same answer.
It's different.
But it's crazy to me some of the things that I read.
The church needs to become more creative.

Preachers need to quit wearing suits and ties and dress more casually.
Others say the church needs to be more old fashioned.
They need to be this, they need to be that,
they need to be the other.
Some we need to do away with song books, some we need to know the song.
All of these different
man-made things,
all of these different
preferences and all of this different stuff.
Folks,
it ain't got a thing in the world to do with it.
What the church needs most is what we find in this passage of Scripture,
that we see the glory of God,
that we see our shortcomings,
and that we see a God whose business is to
invite and change men.
That's what we need to see the most,
is a picture of who the Lord is,
a picture of who we are,
and that this great God,
that He came to save and to change men.
Listen,
friend,
if we get that right,
all those other things will fall in place.
Me and Ronnie was talking about something the other day.
I said, Ronnie, would you be in favor of us getting
one of the smoke machine and strobe lights in here?
He said, no, Brother Brian, I can't blow for that.
By the way, I don't want one either.
I don't want to go to church in a carnival.
But I'm also not for taking
the padding out of our pews.
I'm also not for doing away with our air conditioners.
Do you understand where I'm going?
Neither one of them things has got to do anything with anything.
It is the condition to which we come into this house.
Jason,
are you a Pharisee or are you a publican?
Do I have a pharisaical spirit?
Do I have a publican spirit?
Do I see this great God?
Do I see me?
And in reality,
that turns to me.
See, I love this appeal.
What he's doing, he's appealing to God.
He's appealing to God.
See, all of this stuff ain't a bad thing.
It's a really,

really good thing because it got him to the place that now he can go to the God,
to the God, the only God that can save, the only God
that does give mercy, the only God that does give grace.
All of these things work to point him to the Lord.
And I love the Lord's pronouncement.
Look here verse, if you would, in verse number 13,
14.
It says, I tell you,
now let's look at 13 again.
And the public, he standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes in heaven,
but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me,
a sinner.
What does it take to be saved?
I'm telling you seven words.
And it ain't just the seven words,
it is the spirit behind these seven words.
God,
it's addressed to God.
What does he need from God?
He needs the mercy of God.
He sees God, he sees what he needs,
he sees himself,
and he turns to God.
Now, brother, it's hard to get there.
It's hard to get there, but if you get there, God, have mercy will meet you.
But I love what Jesus said.
Look, verse 14,
this is the point,
the whole point.
Underline this in my Bible, I tell you.
That's a mouthful there,
Byron.
I tell you.
the only opinion that matters.
The only vote that counts.
I tell you.
This man went down to his house justified
rather than the other.
Our new Sunday school class is going to the 18 articles of faith.
Preacher, what's the 18 articles of faith?
It's 18
tenets of what we believe in the base upon scripture.
value of the scriptures of the one true God, of the way of salvation.
We got here this morning, their lesson was on justification.
You know what justification is?
It's a declaration by God himself that I've made that individual righteous.
It is authoritarian,
legal terms.
Jesus said, I'll tell you what just happened this morning.

This man went home because I have justified him.
I have declared him righteous,
not because he's done anything at all,
but the difference in that man has turned him
to me and now I have done a work in his life.
This man
went home justified
rather than the other.
See, here's the thing.
Two men came dead, one left alive.
Two men showed up stained, one left clean.
Two men arrived lost, one left saved.
Folks,
there's no better place to be changed than right here in this church building.
But your presence in this church building does not guarantee one single thing.
They're at the same service,
same time,
same songs,
same message,
two entirely different outcomes.
I jotted this down.
I want us to look at the end of verse 14.
I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.
Look at the end of this.
For everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased,
and he that humbleth himself
shall be exalted.
Seven words.
The change
is found
in the humbling.
The change,
see there was a change,
Nikki,
and it's found
in the humbling.
can I tell you,
Tiffany,
that's hard to do.
It's hard to do.
Because what it means to humble ourselves,
it means we set ourselves beneath the other.
That here is God,
and here is me.
here is his righteousness,
and here is my righteousness.
And I no longer exalt myself or lift myself up,
but I take all the I am,
and I set it, and I place it, and I humble myself here at the feet of the Lord.
This man is looking down and says,

God,
be merciful to me, a sinner.
And Jesus says,
yes,
yes,
yes, I will.
And yes, I have.
New Bethel,
we must
never get to a place that we rise above our knees.
That we stay humbled before this God.
Though I have been justified and though I have been saved,
there's not a day that goes by that I don't
need the mercy and the grace of God in my life,
Brother Joel.
Alton, if you'll come and get us a song.
He said, he spake this parable to those which
trusted in themselves that they were righteous
and despised others.
Can I tell you what the Pharisee didn't get?
And it's what many don't.
It's that the standard for righteousness is not the righteousness of men.
The standard for righteousness,
Tommy Crane, is the righteousness of God.
Amen.
And ain't one of us got it
apart from God.
But praise God, he's in the business.
He's in the business
of dispensing this grace to men.
Let's pray.
Heavenly Father,
Lord, I thank you for your word.
God, I thank you that you sent mercy to me,
this sinner.
That you condescended low, that you looked down.
that you searched and that you pursued.
And Lord, you didn't leave me in that state, but that your hand touched me,
and it changed me,
and it justified me, not based on anything that I've done,
but based all upon what you have accomplished.
And God,
I pray today, if there is someone here who has made the deadly and tragic mistake,
or to believe in that their pedigree or their resume
or their preferences have got anything to do with this,
or that your word has spoken to their heart.
And God, I pray that the most
vilest sinner in this place today
would recognize that grace is for them.
And I also pray for me,

the faithful in this church,
that any pharisaical spirit would be crucified in our lives,
and that there would be this humbleness of the
public within us.
But we love you and thank you.
In Jesus'
name we pray.
Amen.
Amen.
Amen.
Amen.
Amen.