

10/24/10

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY Almighty and everlasting God, in His glory Jesus humbled himself, taking on the appearance of a man and humbling himself to become obedient unto death. Give us humility to know we live by your love and mercy, not by our righteousness. In Spirit given humility, help us to reach out in love and forgiveness to others. We pray through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE EPISTLE LESSON 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

(Paul continues in humble faithfulness as he awaits death.)

6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day-- and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

16 At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. 17 But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

THE GOSPEL LESSON Luke 18:9-17

(Jesus calls His disciples to lives of humility.)

9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 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. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' 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.**' 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."

15 People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

THE SERMON

"Living as a Disciple – Humility" Luke 18

INTRO - General George Armstrong Custer is famous for the Battle of the Little Big Horn. There are many stories of him. Among those I have heard is that this man thought very highly of himself. There are some who have said he hoped to be President some day (even though he finished last in his class at West Point.) Many say he looked down on the native Americans of

his time, underestimating them. One thing is sure, Custer and his men were overwhelmed in the battle of Little Big Horn. But, overestimating one self, and underestimating others can lead to a person's destruction. It did for Custer.

I. Jesus tells a parable in today's Gospel about two men.

A. One of those men, the Pharisee, was proud, even arrogant.

1. So, when the Pharisee prayed, he saw himself as better than others, especially the tax collector. He prayed, **I thank you that I am not like other men-- robbers, evildoers, adulterers-- or even like this tax collector.**

2. The Pharisee's pride also injured his relationship with God. Did you see what we are told about his prayer? **11 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself.** So, instead of trusting God and asking His help and blessings, the Pharisee trusted himself.

3. God tells us that we are saved through faith in Jesus, trusting Him. Do you see the consequences of pride on the life of this man . . . and others?

B. Unfortunately, Jesus wasn't talking about those outside the church. Jesus told this parable to those **who trusted their own righteousness and looked down on others.**

1. Somehow, God's children became so proud of themselves that they acted in sinful and foolish pride.

2. This pride, or arrogance even, damaged their relationships with others, and worse yet, their trust in God.

C. Pride can be a dangerous today as well.

1. Twenty years ago non-Christians were asked in a poll what they thought of Christians. The number one answer was "arrogant." A book the Elders and I have just read paints the same picture.

2. Sometimes Christians think so highly about themselves they don't reach out to others as Children of God, but look down on them.

3. When a church member think so highly of himself they can end up trusting their goodness rather than God's love.

4. Trusting our righteousness ignores the truth of our sin, and hurts our relationship with God and others.

II. But, Jesus' parable is not just about the Pharisee. The tax collector in this parable brings balance.

A. He didn't pray **'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'** Because he wanted to say the right thing, but because he knew he was a sinner.

1. His humility, his lack of trust in himself, his hope only on the mercy of God, gave him hope in the only really sure thing.

2. So, knowing his own failures, he did not look down on others.

3. And, knowing His sin the tax collector did not trust himself, but God.

'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' Jesus said, the tax collector, the one who trusted God's mercy, is the one who went home righteous before God.

B. If we know what God has done for us in Jesus, how can we think any differently?

1. God sent Jesus, because we are sinners. Jesus says in Luke 5, "It is not the healthy who need a **doctor**, but the sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

2. When we know our sin, instead of boasting about ourselves to God, we can have nothing but gratitude for his mercy that caused him to love us rather than to give us the punishment we deserve.
3. When we know our sin we don't see others as beneath us, but as fellow sinners. We know that together we deserve God's punishment.

III. We have been looking at discipleship.

A. What does it look like to be a disciple or follower committed to Jesus?

1. According to Jesus, a disciple seeks to live in righteousness, but knows his sin.

2. According to Jesus, a disciple Knows God's mercy Knows God's power. Knowing our failure and sin teaches humility, not false pride.

B. Knowing our sin, living in humility, a disciple trusts God and loves others.

CONCLUSION - The old testament prophet Micah put it this way. **8 He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.** Jesus calls for the same thing through today's parable.