

Common Reactions to an Uncommon Christ
Self-righteous Pride or Genuine Humility – Luke 18:9-14

Intro

Last in our series, Common Reactions to an Uncommon Christ

Confusion, Denial, Disbelief, Joy, Shock, Uncertainty

Look at 2 common reactions that Jesus addresses in this parable –

Self-righteous Pride and Genuine Humility

A few quotes –

Martin Luther – “Until a man is nothing, God can make nothing out of him.”

Cornel West – “Those who lack humility are dogmatic and egotistical. That masks a deep sense of insecurity.”

Jimmy Hoffa – “I may have my faults, but being wrong ain’t one of them.”

That’s typical of the self-righteous pride that Jesus was addresses

It’s that sanctimonious, holier-than-thou, attitude that some people have

It’s paying lip service to humility on the surface, but deep down thinking –

I’m pretty good and kind of proud of it

Jesus warns against that self-righteous pride by contrasting it with genuine humility . . .

One of the main things we get from this parable is an enlarged view of God’s mercy

Read Luke 18:9-14 (p 877)

In this parable – earthly story with a heavenly meaning – Jesus uses a Pharisee and a

Tax Collector to illustrate self-righteous pride and genuine humility

Most people who have been in church have this parable all turned around

We think that Pharisees are bad, and tax collectors are good

Opposite of the first century mindset

Pharisees were highly respected religious leaders by the people

Tax collectors were greedy scum who cozied up to the Roman government

Synonymous with sinners; Classed with robbers and murderers

Could be lied to with impunity

Pharisees were the good guys, tax collectors the bad guys

With that in mind, the first truth we see here is that . . .

I’M SELF-RIGHTEOUS AND PROUD . . .

When I think I’m different than everyone else (10, 11)

10 – *Two men went up into the temple to pray*

Pride and humility may look similar at times, but doesn’t take long to differentiate them

10 – *One a Pharisee and the other a tax collector*

Gasps in the crowd – A tax collector who prays or even dares go into the temple?

11 – *I’m not like other men* – Thought he was different

This mindset fueled his separatism – Pharisees were big on that

If you didn’t believe like they did, you were different, and they stayed away from you

If you weren’t as good as them, you were different, and they stayed away from you

• I grew up in a church like that

Had nothing to do with other churches in town; Thought only 2 missionaries in Africa

No one else crossed their theological t’s and dotted doctrinal i’s like our church

We were self-righteous/proud because thought we were so different than everyone else

I’m thankful that God extracted us out of that church early on

The solution to separatism is not to compromise on doctrine, throw the Bible out, ignore grave differences of belief, and . . .

Become one big happy, ecumenical family defined by nothing more than a *lack* of conviction

“Hey, what do you believe – nothing at all – me either – great, let’s partner together to do nothing at all”

That’s not the solution to our differences in the body of Christ –

The solution is to continue to rightly divide the Word of truth and stand firm on it while –

Partnering together for kingdom purposes we *do* agree on, in ways where our biblical convictions are not sacrificed in the name of mushy religious unity

• This Pharisee couldn’t do that, which is why he was . . .

11 – *Standing by himself*

He had no need for community; No desire for partnership

He knew his beliefs; He knew his practices

He needed no help, no encouragement, no accountability, no fellowship

Because he thought he was *so* different than everyone else

Some of you have the same mindset

“I don’t have the issues you have, so leave me alone”

“I don’t have any problems and if I do, I’ll take care of them myself”

That’s an insidious form of self-righteous pride because you think you’re different than everyone else

Another truth we see is that I’m self-righteous and proud . . .

When I look down on others because of their sin (9, 11)

He was addressing those who *treated others with contempt* (9)

The Pharisee stood up to look down on . . .

It’s worth asking whether our attitudes are like the Pharisee’s, when it comes to people

who don’t live right

Do you look on them with contempt?

I can’t stand them; I hate them; I would just as soon they would die

Do you judge them?

Form an opinion of them, pronounce your verdict, and move on?

Paul said in 1 Cor 5:13 – God will judge those outside the church; It’s not for us to do

Instead of looking down on them for their sin, we should have an attitude of mercy

And bend over backwards to love them into the kingdom

The third truth displayed by the Pharisee is, I’m self-righteous and proud . . .

When I think I’m better than others because of the things I do (12)

The Pharisee’s things were fasting and tithing; He went over and above on both fronts

Our things are –

Serving on teams; Teaching kids; Going to prison; Raking leaves for elderly

We have this attitude . . .

“I serve on the tear down team, do you? See, I’m better than you.”

“What do you do? See, he can’t even think of any *things* he does!”

We tend to place a lot of stock in the things we do, and it allows for pious comparisons with others – that’s self-righteous pride

The result?

The result of self-righteous pride: rejection and brokenness (14)

Pharisee had years of religious service, was a leader of God’s people, but still was rejected

He wasn’t saved; wasn’t justified – declared righteous by God

Because he did not have a repentant heart before God

He was rejected, and so too will you be rejected if your heart is filled with unrepentant, self-righteous pride

And that rejection *will* result in brokenness – being humbled

It’s either going to happen on this side of death – that’s the hope

Or it’s going to happen on the other side when you stand before *God* and he says
depart from me into the eternal punishment of hell, I never knew you

The other side of the contrast that Jesus teaches us is that . . .

I’M GENUINELY HUMBLE . . .

When I fear God’s holiness (13)

Fear is a biblical word; nothing else is strong enough

It means hold in awe; respect highly; revere as set apart

That’s what was going on here when the tax collector stood *far off* (13)

He didn’t dare come near to the holy of holies – symbolic place of God’s presence then

His condition was sinful and he wasn’t worthy

He wouldn’t even *look heavenward* (13) he had such respect for God’s holiness

That’s genuine humility that *I* fear is lost on us these days

We have a such a piddly view of God and his holiness . . .

His grandeur; his overwhelming might; all-pervasive presence; Searing purity

A purity and holiness we dare not breach apart from the escort of Christ Jesus

Genuine humility starts with an exalted view of the holiness of Almighty God

The second truth we learn from the tax collector is that I’m genuinely humble . . .

When I’m honest about my sin (13)

He saw his sin for what it was – an offense against God’s holiness – and calls himself a sinner!

13 – *God, be merciful to me, a sinner!*

That’s honesty; And we need more of it in our lives and in our church

When you see your sin in light of God’s holiness, a cry for mercy will be your only recourse

Oh God, withhold your just and deserved punishment from me; Be merciful!

That’s genuine humility – Get honest with God about your sin

See it in light of His holiness; Cry out form mercy – for the first time or the 10th

Make Psalm 51 your prayer this week

Closely associated with this honesty about our sin, is an openness about our weakness I’m genuinely humble . . .

When I’m open about my weaknesses (13)

13 – *beat his breast*

Normally associated with great distress

Also an action reserved for women that indicated great weakness

Oh how that requires genuine humility

We are loath to publicly express our weakness due to sin in our heart

We don’t want to look bad before his people

It’s one of the impediments to genuine humility before God

I’m not saying it’s appropriate to dump all your sin in every gathering of believers

We should show much discretion in that

But if you’re never open about your weaknesses, with anyone, anywhere – you’re not genuinely humble

If you spend your time in SG holding your cards close to your heart and worrying what others will think about you, you’re not genuinely humble

Sat across from a man this week who was open and honest about his weaknesses

Though it was not easy, it was one of the clearest demonstrations of genuine humility that I’ve seen in a long time

When it was all said and done, I commended him for it

Because genuine humility that leads to openness before God and his people, is prerequisite for righteousness and acceptance

The result of genuine humility: righteousness and acceptance (14)

The repentant tax collector was *justified* – Accepted; Saved from his sin

The one who humbles himself will be exalted as a child of God – with all the accompanying benefits of salvation, both now and later

Summary

Which person best describes you? Which characteristics fit?

God still loves genuine humility and still hates self-righteous pride

Urge you to rid your life of self-righteous pride

Fully embrace genuine humility, trusting that God, in his way and timing, will exalt you

God waits – his mercy is so patient and so stunning that he will even forgive/accept the worst of the worst who turn to him in repentance and faith