

Luke 18.1-17

How to Come to God

Prayer is HARD WORK – Tired – Lazy – Indifferent – Rebellious – Discouraged

Jesus KNEW it is HARD > This Message KEEP GOING – Do NOT GIVE UP

LIVE between 2 ADVENTS of Jesus / between ALREADY and the NOT YET

JESUS PRAYS in GREATEST Hour of TRIAL and ADVERSITY

"Pray that you will not fall into temptation." He withdrew...knelt down and prayed

Luke 22.40,41

Continue FOLLOW Luke's THEMATIC ARRANGEMENT – Words/Works Jesus

...it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account

Luke 1.3

THEMATICALLY Organized Stories, Told at Various Points/Places by Jesus

LUKE – Stories about MEN and WOMEN Interwoven by HS's INSPIRATION

1) PERSISTENT WIDOW - seeks for justice from an unjust Judge

2) 2 Men at Prayer - Proud Pharisee and Repentant Tax Gatherer

3) Children brought to Jesus by BOTH PARENTS – Fathers & Mothers

2 Parables, 1 Event >> 1 BIG IDEA = HOW TO COME TO GOD

1. Barriers to Finding God

a. Deny God Many do NOT Want to Find God – Many say No NEED for God...

vs. 2,4 a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men...I don't fear God or care about men

Ch 17 – Jesus > Days of NOAH & LOT – People NO THOUGHT for God

Eating – Drinking – Marrying – Buying – Selling – Planting – Building

NO Thought of LIFEGIVER > Too Busy Enjoying to the Full all GIFTS of LIFE

Too Busy UNPREPARED: NOAH: Flood! LOT: Fire! Final ADVENT of Jesus?

Judge NOT a PICTURE OF GOD – SHARP CONTRAST – ANTI-God
 IGNORES Primary Command of God > Does NOT LOVE God or Neighbor
 SHARP Contrast to God's IDEAL of what JUDGE Should BE

Jehoshaphat king of Judah...appointed judges in the land...He told them, "... Now let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Judge carefully, for with the LORD our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery." 2 Chronicles 19.5-7

UNJUST JUDGE > should be OXYMORON – Unfortunately NOT UNUSUAL
 PENNILESS Victim – WIDOW - had NO CHANCE with a JUDGE like This
 b. 'Dealer' with God

TODAY when Pharisee comes on STAGE we BOOO and HISS!

JESUS Day the people would have CHEERED! Highly RESPECTED by Many
 (Pharisees are) "a certain sect of the Jews that appear more religious than others, and seem to interpret the laws more accurately" Josephus

BEST REPUTATION in Israel > GOOD Guys PRAY > He was a GOOD GUY!
 TOO GOOD – He tells ALL about just HOW GOOD he is – 5 X's 'I'---

Charles SPURGEON'S sermon on THIS MAN 'TOO GOOD TO BE SAVED!'

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

God OWES him Something > His PRAYER is BI-LATERAL Negotiation

Really UNI-LATERAL > 1 Person in FOCUS, ONE Person IMPORTANT - SELF

Parable NOT AN EXAGGERATION - Prayer of Pharisees at time of Jesus:

"I thank you Jehovah my God, that you have assigned my lot with those who sit in the house of learning, and not with those who sit in the street corners. For I rise

early and they rise early; I rise to study the words of the Torah, and they rise to attend to things of no importance. I weary myself and they weary themselves; I weary myself and gain thereby, while they weary themselves and gain nothing. I run and they run; I run toward the life of the age to come, while they run toward the pit of destruction."
Talmud, Berakhoth

Temple SEGREGATED: Jew/ Gentile, Men/ Women, Priests/ Laity, Clean/Unclean

We are the Chosen Few, the rest can all be Damned,
there's room enough in Hell for you, we won't have Heaven Crammed.

Jacob made a vow (*at Bethel*), saying, "If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."
Genesis 28.20-22

Surely GOD must have said 'Oh, Thank You so Much Jacob!!' I Needed that 10%!
PRAYER is Supposed be UNI-LATERAL > but God not Man DICTATES Terms

The Pharisee's prayer is so laden with self-congratulation that it can hardly get off the ground, let alone wing its way to the listening ear of God. Michael Wilcock

NOT JUST Pharisees > Many PASTORS – Christians Today – Religious Leaders
MAN is the MEASURE – SELF is the CENTER – GOD is his AUDIENCE
CONGRATULATING God on how Wonderfully He had make HIM!

WOODPECKER - pecking on TRUNK of DEAD TREE
Suddenly LIGHTNING Bolt STRIKES - SPLITS TREE IN TWO
Woodpecker flies to safety and says "**Look what I did!**"

The only thing we contribute to the plan of salvation is the sin to make it necessary.
Eric Alexander

Cannot STRIKE DEALS with GOD > We have NOTHING to BARGAIN With

c. Direct God's Plan DISCIPLES *"we're establishing Kingdom of God on earth"*

v. 15 People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them.

Greek LIT. 'they were EVEN bringing babies' > RIDICULOUS INTERRUPTION

JESUS ONLY HAS TIME FOR PEOPLE THAT COUNT

// Advance men for a POLITICIAN - Little Kids Can't Vote

Disciples NEEDED to Lean on Jesus BREAST > HEAR His Heart & FOLLOW

Been with Jesus on LONG MARCH to Jerusalem – Since ch 9 – Intensive Teaching

Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again." *The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.* Luke 18.31-34

Have WE made OUR Plans for God? Expect Him to Carry Out OUR AGENDA?

Do we HEAR His Heart – KNOW His Word – LED by His Spirit – Do His WILL

2. Bridges to Finding God

Jewish Concept - DON'T PRAY TO MUCH - GOD MIGHT GROW WEARY

JEWISH Model of Prayer – based on DANIEL'S Example – THREE Times a Day

MOHAMMED wanted a MORE IMPRESSIVE Ritual – ISLAM 5 X's

Woman is RIGHTLY CALLED the PERSISTENT WIDOW - DOESN'T GIVE UP

a. Demanding Widows were DEPENDENT on FAIR System of Justice

v. 3 And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.'

IMAGINE Elderly woman > Ancient World WIDOW often be in her 30's

Many Scriptures in OT & NT about GOD'S CONCERN for WIDOWS

SHOCKING DISREGARD for Person in OBVIOUS Need by SO-CALLED Judge

"Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow."
Deuteronomy 27.19

The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. 1 Timothy 5.5

v. 1 Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

Like ANNA this Woman PERSISTED in FERVENT Quest for JUSTICE a prophetess, Anna...She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying
Luke 2.36,37

v. 5 because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!"

LIT. This woman is going to GIVE ME A BLACK EYE / BEAT ME UP!

Her prayer is continual and persistent, hurling its petitions against long periods of silence...the life of prayer is asking, seeking, knocking, and waiting, trust sometimes fainting, sometimes growing angry. Fred Craddock

Requests for MAGAZINE Subscriptions sent to people in USA by COMPUTER Rancher in Powder Bluff, CO received 9,734 separate notices NAT'L Geographic Drove 10 Miles to Nearest P.O. sent Letter & Check to N.G. with Note: 'I give up!'

DEMAND is for GOD'S WILL – JUSTICE – NOT her SELFISH IDEAS

Prayer is asking God for what He has already promised...I besought the Almighty with great vigor. I attacked him with his own weapons, quoting from Scripture all the promises that I could remember, that prayers should be granted, and said that he must grant my prayer, if I was henceforth to put faith in his promises. Martin Luther

KING DAVID after PROPHET Nathan told about GOD'S ETERNAL KINGDOM
 "And now, LORD God, keep forever the promise you have made concerning your
 servant and his house. Do as you promised, so that your name will be great
 forever."
 2 Samuel 7.25,26

BOLDNESS Without BRASHNESS / CONFIDENCE not COCKINESS

v. 7 cry out to him day and night?

His elect cry to him day and night, in fact, not because he does not listen, but
 precisely because he does. Michael Wilcock

v. 8 when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth? // LIKE Widow?
HELPLESS Widow ARMED Only w/ TRUTH/ Seeks JUSTICE Not VENGEANCE
 God is EVERYTHING the UNJUST Judge is NOT > PRAY Confidently!

Great Example: DEMANDING TENACITY of William Wilberforce
 "So enormous, so dreadful, so irremediable did the slave trade's wickedness appear
 that my own mind was completely made up for abolition. Let the consequences be
 what they would: I from this time determined that I would never rest until I had
 effected its abolition." William Wilberforce (24 August 1759 – 29 July 1833)

Elected to PARLIAMENT in 1780 – Bill End Slavery passed 3 Days before Death
 53 Years of STRUGGLING for JUSTICE – Severely Opposed, Hated, Mocked

Until you have stood for years knocking at a locked door, your knuckles bleeding,
 you do not really know what prayer is. Elderly Black American Pastor

b. Desperate

BOTH Men STOOD in Prayer: STANDING was NORMAL Jewish Prayer Posture
INTENSE Prayer – KNEEL > Jesus in GETHSEMANE

TAL: ONLY Either Stand or Kneel > STOOD for Fish & Chips on Newport Beach

ROMANTIC Notion – IF Pharisee BAD, Tax Collector Must be REALLY GOOD
 NOT TRUE – BOTH of them were BAD, UNWORTHY before a HOLY GOD

In today's culture, the closest social equivalent (*to tax collectors*) would be drug pushers and pimps, those who prey on society, who make money off others' bodies and make a living stealing from others. Kent Hughes

v. 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.'

2 Great Sinners > DIFFERENCE – 1 was HONEST Sinner – DESPERATE Man

If the Pharisee is a venomous villain and the publican is generous Joe the bartender... then each gets what he deserves, there is no surprise of grace and the parable is robbed...but what both receive is 'in spite of' not 'because of.' Fred Craddock

HONEST Admission MERCY of God was ONLY HOPE, PURE DESPERATION

Biblical prayer is impertinent, persistent, shameless, indecorous; it is more like haggling in an outdoor bazaar than the polite monologues of the church. Walter Wink

DANGER OF PLANNING OUR PRAYERS TO BE HEARD BY MEN

BODY Language was Clear as CONFESSION: 3 Key Words: **God, Mercy, Sinner**

c. Dependence > JESUS speaks TO the Children ABOUT the Children

WORLD EXPLOITS – ABUSES – and ENSLAVES Children Then and TODAY

Few of the world's great religious teachers have been concerned with children.
 Jesus is different. Leon Morris

v. 16 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."

Incident Recorded in THREE of 4 Gospels > Shows Jesus CONCERN for Children

BACK on Track with Mark & Matthew / From End Ch 9 – Unique Material LUKE

World Cup CUTE Child SOCCER Players hold hands walking out with BIG GUYS
 Before Game Players EMBRACE – Game: ELBOW, SCRATCH, KICK in GROIN
 NOT taught to IDEALIZE Children – Not Angels > Kids are SMALL Sinners

But they are PRECIOUS in God’s Sight and have MANY Things to TEACH Us
 Whole-hearted Trust – Unworldly – Openness – Acceptance - **Utter Dependence**

INBREAKING Kingdom undermines SOCIAL Expectations: **Weakness = Strength**

BEGIN life TOTALLY DEPENDENT > END life TOTALLY DEPENDENT
 During our LIVES we are to CARE FOR those who DEPEND on US

Christ himself takes on the dignity of dependence. He is born a baby, totally dependent on the care of his mother...And at the end, on the cross, he again becomes totally dependent, limbs pierced and stretched, unable to move. John Stott

v. 17 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

MEMBER of CHRIST'S KINGDOM – Fully SUBMIT to His RULE: Dependence

3. Blessings of Fellowship with God

a. Justice Luke: WIDE Application of God’s Promises > JUST Kingdom of God

good news to the poor - freedom for the prisoners - recovery of sight for the blind,
 release the oppressed - the year of the Lord's favor – Jesus is GOD’S JUBILEE

vs. 6,7 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?

God has PURPOSE in DELAY – Do NOT Always know WHAT Purpose IS

1) ELECT are Strengthened in Faith by Waiting 2) MORE can REPENT be Saved

Abraham: “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Genesis 18.25

ANGELS spoke to POWERLESS YOUNG VIRGIN > AMAZING News of SON
 "...you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son
 of the Most High...his kingdom will never end" Luke 1.31,33

Jesus TAUGHT Disciples to Pray like HIS MOM: He said to them, "When you
 pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come." Luke 11.2

Mary: "the Mighty One has done great things for me-- holy is his name. His mercy
 extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. He has performed
 mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost
 thoughts. He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the
 humble. He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away
 empty." Luke 1.49-53

Few 1st C Christians would have IMAGINED the FALL of the ROMAN Empire

Few in 20th C expected SUDDEN COLLAPSE of the IRON CURTAIN

21st C may witness RADICAL Changes of in City of MAN - Nations – Religions

KNOW with CERTAINTY > City of GOD will ECLIPSE THE City of MAN

v. 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son
 of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

b. Justification > God's PROMISES will have WIDE FULFILLMENT >

Enter thru NARROW Door

v. 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."

One came to the temple a self-confessed sinner and went home justified; the other
 came to the temple virtuous and went home condemned. Douglas Milne

Tax Collector ASKS for MERCY from God he KNOWS he has OFFENDED

What the Pharisee said about himself was true. His trouble was not that he was not far enough along the road, but that he was on the wrong road altogether. Leon Morris

‘Be MERCIFUL’ = To EXPIATE or To PROPITIATE: ATONE for Sin thru Blood

MEANING of ATONING Sacrifices in Time of Christ: Leviticus – Priest’s Book

The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the LORD. The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover. "This is how Aaron is to enter the sanctuary area: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering..." Leviticus 16.1-3

SYMBOLIZED in OT > SINS Symbolically TRANSFERRED to Bulls & Goats

Believer placed HANDS on Animal Symbolizing Transfer > Killed it Themselves

VIVID Picture of DEADLY Consequences – ULTIMATE Cost of SIN > DEATH

BLOOD of Animal PROOF that ATONEMENT (payment) for Sin was MADE

BLOOD Stood between OFFENDED, HOLY GOD and GUILTY, Helpless Sinner

AARON Painfully AWARE Dangers of APPROACHING God in WRONG Way

LOST 2 Sons who did not HONOR God as Holy – Came like THEY Wanted

FOOLISH to DARE Come to God on YOUR Terms > God in PIERCING LIGHT

MERCY > God has PROVIDED Way to Come – And be WELCOMED by Him

MERCY – God does NOT give us what we do deserve.

GRACE – God does give us what we do NOT deserve.

Justified - LEGAL TERM – Every CITIZEN in ROMAN EMPIRE –

Luke’s Audience would KNOW WELL – RIGHT STANDING, PARDONED

NOT GUILTY of ACCUSATIONS and CHARGES > ACQUITED!

Only ONE way of JUSTIFICATION > NO GUILT > FULLY ABSOLVED

GOSPELS >> Entire NT >>> Written under SHADOW of CROSS

Angels to Shepherds: "...good news of great joy that will be for all the people...a Savior has been born to you" Luke 2.10,11

HOW did LUKE Learn this??? > From his MENTOR > APOSTLE PAUL!!

Romans 3:21-26 now a righteousness from God...has been made known...This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe... and are justified by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice...he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

c. Jesus - Kingdom is where the King is > Kingdom HERE, JESUS is Here

POSITIVELY vs. 16 the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

NEGATIVELY v. 17 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

the kingdom of God is within you / in your midst. Luke 17.21

And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom Luke 22:29

Luke quotes APOSTLE PETER

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved." Acts 4.12

How to Come to God? Look Away from Yourself > Look to Jesus ALONE

1. Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. 2. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. 3. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' 4. "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, 5. yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"

6. And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8. I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

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."