

Parables of Jesus - 06 Spiritual Pride

by Zac Poonen

Zac Poonen's sermon explores the dangers of spiritual pride through Jesus' parables, emphasizing humility and the importance of serving without expectation of reward.

Duration: 50:45

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 20:1-16, Luke 14:7-11, Luke 18:14, John 13:3-17

Topics: "Parables"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the parable of the laborers in the vineyard from Matthew's Gospel chapter 20. The parable tells the story of a man who hires workers at different times of the day, but pays them all the same wage. The preacher emphasizes the importance of the contract made between the owner and the workers, highlighting the fairness and integrity of the owner. The sermon also draws a parallel between this parable and the Christian service, emphasizing the need for humility and the equal opportunity for all believers to be great in the eyes of the Lord.

Transcript

So today we are going to study the subject of spiritual pride in the parables that Jesus spoke on that subject. And we're going to turn first of all to Luke's gospel chapter 14. This is parable number 25 in our study and verses 7 to 11.

He was speaking a parable here to the invited guests when he noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table and said to them, when you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, don't take the place of honor lest someone more distinguished than you may be invited by him. And he who invited you shall come and say, give place to this man and in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. But when you're invited, go and recline at the last place so that when the one who's invited you comes, he may say to your friend, move up higher.

Then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you. And for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled. And he who humbles himself shall be exalted.

That is a truth, that last verse that comes many times in scripture. And the greatest example was Jesus himself. Jesus never preached anything that he did not exemplify in his own life.

We must never preach anything which we don't exemplify in our own life. The only man who can preach on humility is a man who is seeking with all his heart to follow Jesus in the way of humility that Jesus has demonstrated for us. The bible says, let this mind be in you which is in Christ Jesus, who though he was God, humbled himself, became a man and became a slave and became obedient to the death of the cross.

You know in the old testament there's not much emphasis on humility because the old testament was dealing with the external life, not with the motives and the inner life. Jesus came and placed the emphasis on the inside of the cup. He said don't just clean the outside, clean the inside.

And so Jesus placed a lot more emphasis on inward sins than outward sins. So if you cleanse yourself from outward sins in your life, you're actually an old testament christian. That's a funny statement but that's what it is.

If you want to be a new covenant christian, listen, you must be more concerned about inner sins than outer sins. You must be more concerned about the inside of the cup than the outside of the cup. And by that little test all of us know whether we are still living under the old covenant or the new covenant.

Supposing I were to ask you to make a list of sins in order of seriousness, what would you put as one, two, three, four, five? I mean there are many many sins which would be top in your list. If you had gone to some old testament person and asked him to make a list, he'd have put things like adultery, murder, adultery, theft. And if you go to a worldly person, he'll also put murder, adultery and things like that on top.

Would you also put those sins on top? Are those the most serious sins? Well the only way to find out is by asking ourselves which are the sins that Jesus spoke against the most. I mean if you read through the gospels five or six times, you'll get an idea about the sins that Jesus spoke against the most. Whom did he condemn by his words the most? How many times do you find Jesus speaking about murder and adultery? A few times.

I'm talking about external murder and adultery. How many times do you find Jesus condemning murderers and adulteresses and thieves? I can't even find one example. Not that these were not sins.

They were, but they were a little lower down in his list. Right at the top of his list were sins like hypocrisy, which the world doesn't even consider a sin. Pride, which also the world doesn't consider to be a sin.

Selfishness, the world doesn't consider that to be a sin. Inner wrong attitudes, lack of consideration for the needs of others. The world doesn't consider these things as sins and yet Jesus spoke about these things much more.

Spiritual pride was one of the major things he spoke against. And there were a number of parables that he spoke in this connection. And the reason was because the first sin that was ever committed in this universe long before Adam was created was when an angel whom we know as Lucifer, that's only a name which means shining one, became proud.

The Bible says his heart was lifted up in Ezekiel 28 because of his beauty. So when we realize that you go way back to the beginning of creation and you discover that sin originated in pride. So that's the root.

From that root came so many other sins. So because sin originated in pride, salvation had to originate in humility. That's why Jesus humbled himself.

An angel wanted to go up, Jesus came down. So this is so important for us to understand that if you and I have any amount of pride in us concerning anything, concerning our looks or our knowledge or any type of pride, we are got a little bit of that poison of the devil. And the more we have of humility in us, the more we have of Jesus Christ.

So here we find Jesus was telling people to always seek the lowly place. That is the point of this parable. Like Jesus himself.

You know in the world when a Christian worker starts his Christian service, maybe when he's 19 or 20 years old, okay he has he takes a lowly place. You know he's a servant and does all types of lowly jobs. But you see in a Christian organization as time goes on and the man becomes more and more senior and senior and senior, he gets a title and a position and a salary and everything else just like a worldly person.

You know you join a company as a ordinary worker and one day you may rise up to become the vice president. There's not much difference between that and a lot of Christian organizations and churches. But what was Jesus on the last day of his earthly life? I mean you can't get a greater leader than Jesus Christ.

What was he? Was he a director or a chairman or superintendent or he was just a son of man. He said I'm an ordinary man. What was he doing on the last day? Was washing the feet of his disciples.

My dear brothers and sisters, take the lowly place all your life. All your life. Never mind the way other Christians go.

Don't make them your example. If you make them your example, I guarantee you'll go astray. Make Jesus your example.

Take these parables he spoke of. He said take the last seat. Humble yourself.

Let God exalt you if he wants to. But you go for the last place always. Because it says here in verse 11 this is a law of God.

He who humbles himself will be exalted. He who exalts himself will be humbled. And this is the way that Jesus chose throughout his life.

You know you and I did not decide where we are going to be born. You know that. You were just born.

Maybe in a hospital, maybe in a house, maybe in a room. There was only one person who came to this earth who planned before he came to this earth where I'm going to be born. And that was Jesus Christ.

And he had all eternity to plan it. It wasn't just a few days. He planned from years and years and years and years to be born in a cow shed with cows and donkeys.

Why? We say there was no room in the hotel there. Is that the reason? You mean an almighty God who runs this universe, all the stars and planets could not find one room for his son when he came to the earth? He couldn't plan even that much? No, that was deliberate. I believe God made that donkey on which Mary was going slow down a little so that by the time she reached Bethlehem there would be no rooms because God wanted his son to be born in a stable.

Right from day one Jesus practiced what he was going to preach. He would take the last place. I have never in my life met a human being who was born in a cow shed.

Even the poorest of people are born in a place better than a cow shed. Jesus came underneath everybody because only such a person can lift up everybody. If you try to be over everybody, you can't lift them up.

You can just preach to them. So take the lowest place and that is the way God wants us to go. I want to say one more thing before I move on.

The Bible says that Jesus is today at the right hand of the Father. He's been given a name which is above every name. Now my question is why did he get that place? Now if you ask me why did he have that place in eternity past, that's because he was the second person of the triune God equal with the Father.

But after he became a man 2,000 years ago, now why is he at the right hand of the Father? The answer to that is given in Philippians 2 verses 5 to 8 where it says, because he humbled himself, therefore God has exalted him to the highest place. So there's a reason why he has been given the highest place and that is he humbled himself. Never forget that.

Not because he was a son of God, but because he humbled himself he got the highest place. So when we understand that principle, he who humbles himself will be exalted, it applied even to Jesus. So then we get the answer to that question which James and John asked you know and James and John's mother as well.

We want to sit on your right hand and your left hand in glory and Jesus said I'm sorry I can't give you those places because those places are reserved. So who is going to sit on Jesus right hand and left hand in glory? Shall I tell you? It's going to be those who humble themselves the most in their earthly life next to Jesus. I mean nobody humbled themselves as much as Jesus.

He was maximum. He was born in a cow shed, he died on a cross and he always served and he was always taking the low place. He never had a title, never had anything that exalted him above other people, washed people's feet.

He was the absolute lowest. He obeyed God 100%, humbled himself every single moment of those 33 and a half years. So he deserves the highest place.

Next to him, second and third, whoever God saw in all these years who humbled themselves the most in their earthly life consistently, those are the people who are going to sit on the left hand and right hand of Jesus. It may not be some great preacher, it may be some unknown widow from some unheard of country who humbled herself. You know there's equal opportunity for all of us.

All of us may not have the gift to be great preachers but all of us have an opportunity to be great in the eyes of the Lord if we humble ourselves. Okay let's go to the next parable number 26 and that is in Matthew's gospel chapter 20. Matthew's gospel in chapter 20, we read about the laborers in the vineyard.

Here it speaks, you know the story about a man who went out at six o'clock in the morning, verses 1 to 16. See this also concludes with a statement at the end in verse 16, the last shall be first and the first last. You remember the statement Jesus made at the end of the last parable, he who humbles himself will be exalted, he who exalts himself will be humbled.

Here's something similar, the last will be first and the first will be last. And so here's this owner who went at six o'clock in the morning to collect workers for his field, to work in his vineyard. And those days they used to work for 12 hours, not eight hours like today.

So they'd start work at six o'clock in the morning and finish at six o'clock in the evening. So he, now the thing I want you to notice here in verse two is he made a contract with those workers. That's a very important thing I want you to notice.

I mean today we would say it's like a written contract where both parties sign. He made a contract with those people, you work 12 hours and I'll give you one denarius. One denarius was the wage for one day.

I mean if a laborer today gets 60 rupees a day, well that's it, I'll give you 60 rupees. One day's wage for ordinary labor. And they went and worked.

At nine o'clock, verse three, he went out and saw some more people and he told them he also made a contract with them. The contract is whatever is right, I will give you. In other words, I'm not asking you to work without any pay.

I'm going to pay you. Come and work. They came to work.

Then at 12 o'clock, verse five, and three o'clock in the afternoon, he again went and did the same thing. Did the same thing means he made a contract again. Contract, how many hours will you work? Till six o'clock in the evening.

Okay, I'll give you so much. Fine. Then at five o'clock in the evening, when there's only one hour left for work, it says in verse six, he went and looked at some other people.

He said, why have you been standing here idle so long? 11 hours, you haven't done any work. He said, well nobody hired us. And now notice a difference.

Notice a very big difference. Go where seven and work in my vineyard, no contract. That was the difference between this group and all the other groups before.

The six o'clock, nine o'clock, twelve o'clock, three o'clock all had contracts. This group had no contract. He didn't tell them that he'd give them anything.

So why did they go? They may have said, at least we get some exercise for one hour. We don't get any pay. It doesn't matter if we don't get paid.

We'll just go and do some work. There are two types of workers in God's vineyard. Those who work on the basis of a contract and those who work without a contract.

Those who work because they get a salary. That's the first groups. And those who say, well Lord, I love you.

When Jesus called his disciples, did he make a contract with them? In the Old Testament, yes. When he called the Levites, he promised the Levites, God, the law promised the Levites, you Levites are going to get 10% from all the tribes of Israel. They will take care of you.

So all the other tribes gave 10% to the Levites. That was a contract. But when Jesus called his 12 disciples, there was no contract.

You love me? Go out and serve me. No contract. Jesus was distinguishing here between old covenant and new covenant.

Those who serve the Lord on the basis of a contract. That means Lord, if you do this, I'll do this for you. You know, there are people who you read testimonies in magazines where or somebody gives a testimony in a meeting.

I gave my tithe to God and God gave me a scooter. Isn't that good? It's a good way of doing business with God, but it's a contract. And when you are doing making a contract with God like that, you're under the old covenant.

In the new covenant, you don't make a contract with God. You don't say, well, Lord, if I give you my tithe, will you bless me? Will you give me a better house? Rubbish. I'll get nothing.

See, Jesus didn't say, come and I'll give you this and I'll give you that. And the other thing, if you pay your tithes and that's all old covenant. You know, that's only up to Malachi.

In Malachi, you may read about tithes. But once you come to Matthew, it's not there. From Matthew, when Jesus instituted the new covenant, he told the Pharisees, OK, you fellas can go and pay your tithes.

But he never told his disciples that. He told his disciples, you love me and give everything to me. And what will you get? You'll get a lot of persecution.

You'll get a lot of suffering. And but you'll have the kingdom of God. You want it? They said, sure.

We must not forget what the Lord is offering us. Don't get wrong ideas in our mind concerning what Christianity is all about, because we hear a lot of this type of teaching today and we see the difference here. Finally, when the rewards were given, it says here that the evening came, verse eight, and he called the four men and said, call the fellows who came at five o'clock in the evening and give them a reward first.

Why did they get a reward first? Because they came without a contract. Those who are last will be first. Those who come to serve the Lord without a contract are going to get the greatest rewards in heaven because they did not serve the Lord on the basis of a business contract.

They say, Lord, I love you. I'll give my life for you. If you give me food to eat, praise the Lord.

If I don't get food to eat, I'll still serve you. If you give me a house to live in, praise the Lord. If you don't give me a house to live in, I'll sleep in the railway station and serve you.

That's what I said when I quit my job. I said, if I don't have a house to live in, I'll go and sleep in the railway station and serve the Lord. But my service for the Lord has got nothing to do with salary.

It's got nothing to do with money. It's got nothing to do with whether I get a house or food or anything. I'm not under the old covenant.

The old covenant is abolished. And if you serve the Lord like that at the end of your life, you'll be a happy man. Otherwise, you'll always have some complaint and some grumbling.

Somebody else got more than you. And somebody got a position or a title or a salary or something or a house better than you. And you'll be a miserable person.

And I've seen a lot of miserable Christians and miserable missionaries in my life. They were all people who worked for a contract. And you find these people were like that.

You see, when these people came along afterwards, they thought, hey, we're going to get more. If this fellow got a denarius who worked only for one hour, we worked for 12 hours, we should get 12. But when they came, they also got one denarius.

And they began to grumble. When a Christian worker begins to grumble, you know he's made a contract. He's an old covenant worker.

He's not a new covenant worker. New covenant workers never grumble. Because they say, Lord, I don't have any contract with you.

You gave your life for me. You gave your blood. I'm not writing any contract.

So that's the way we are to serve the Lord. That's first thing we learned. That if you try to do a business agreement with God, you'll always be a miserable, unhappy, complaining, grumbling type of person like all these people here.

And their complaint was, how can you make these fellows equal to us? You know, a Christian worker who feels others cannot be equal to him, he's in the old covenant. What do you mean somebody can't be equal to you? Do you know that in, I believe this, that in my acceptance before God, I may have been a believer 43 years, but someone who was converted yesterday is equal to me. I believe that.

I believe that he can come before the Father just like me. He's a brother. I'm a brother.

He's a sister. I'm a brother. We are equal in our acceptance before God.

I may have a little more experience. I may have some gift, but when it comes before God, we are equal. When a father has children, they're all equal.

It's very important. And when a person feels in any Christian church or organization, how can that fellow be equal to me? He's got a little bit of the devil in him, because the devil doesn't like anybody to be equal with him. No demon can dare to be equal with Satan.

Oh boy, they'll push him down to the lowest level. But Jesus, he took the lowest place. Learn a lesson from this, and I believe that'll save you from a lot of problems in your Christian life.

And one more thing I want to say is that, you know, there's a message of hope here for those who have come to the Lord late in life. That means if you came to the Lord after wasting 90 percent of your life, 11 hours out of 12, means more than 90 percent of your life. A person can say, I will be so discouraged.

Lord, what have I done? I wasted 50, 60 years of my life. Well, thank God you're not dead yet. God can still use that little bit of life that's left if you don't make a contract with him.

If you say, Lord, I want to totally serve you in your vineyard. I want to live for you totally. You may discover that some of these people who have served the Lord only for a short time, one hour out of 12, get a far bigger reward than some others who served for a long time.

Because it's not a question of how long you served like seniority, but how you served. Did you serve with joy or did you serve with grumbling? And the Lord says here, one hour happily is much better than 12 hours with grumbling. So there's no question of seniority in God's eyes.

It's a question of humility. It's a question of joy, serving the Lord with joy. Many who are first will be last.

Remember this, our acceptance before God is based on the merit of Jesus Christ. If I come to the Lord and say, well, Lord, I've been a believer 43 years. Can't you answer this prayer for me? God will say, no, sorry.

But if you say, Lord, I'm a sinner, but Jesus died for me. In Jesus name I come. Can't you answer this prayer for me? The Lord will say, yeah, sure.

There's a great danger when we are senior to begin to think that God will listen to us because we are senior. And then God listens to the prayer of that junior person because he's got no merit. He's got no experience.

He's got no seniority. He just comes in the name of Jesus. He gets an answer.

And the senior fellow is still struggling. He gets no answer because he's not coming in the name of Jesus. He's coming.

He may say in the name of Jesus in his prayer, but he imagines his own merit. Okay, now parable number three, number 27, Luke chapter 17 and verse 7 to 10, where we read about, Jesus said about a servant, a slave who is working in the field, speaking of a picture again of a Christian worker who is working in the field and plowing is a picture of serving the Lord, tending sheep, picture of serving the Lord. And when he's coming from the field, now listen to this.

I mean, we have seen servants work in the fields here in India. And when they come into the field, what does the master say? Does the master lay the table and say, sir, please come and sit down. Let me serve you.

No, that's what Jesus is saying. And does he say, okay, you eat and drink. And then afterwards, no, the master says, okay, you worked hard today for 12 hours.

Right. Fine. Serve my dinner.

Take care of me first before you go and take care of yourself. And he doesn't even thank the slave, verse 9, because he did all the things that he commanded. Verse 10.

So also, listen, this is a wonderful verse. When you have done everything that was commanded, say, we are unworthy slaves. We have done only that which we have ought to have done.

You know, we have a tendency to become proud because we have done something for the Lord. We feel we have done something for the Lord. And people who have done something for the Lord feel I have plowed the field.

I've tended the sheep. I've done something. What are you? You are not yet an unworthy slave.

When do you become an unworthy slave? You know, unworthy slave is a degree. A lot of us like to get degrees. How many of you would like to get this degree? Unworthy slave.

You know when you get it? When you have obeyed every single thing that Jesus has commanded. How many of you can say you have obeyed every single thing that Jesus commanded? None of us can say that. Even if you do, that's where you got to begin.

Even if you do come to the place where you obey every single command that Jesus gave in the gospels, every single one of them, at the end of it, what can you say? I get the degree. Unworthy slave. Do you understand that? Oh, I wish you brothers and sisters would understand that.

Because it will revolutionize your whole attitude when you realize that after you have done everything, you're an unworthy slave. How can there be pride in any Christian worker? Even if he served the Lord for 60 years, 70 years, has he obeyed everything? He hasn't yet got his degree. Unworthy slave.

And the other thing I want you to notice here is, he's not, when we serve the Lord, it says here, verse 9, he does not even thank the slave. Do you wait for somebody to appreciate you and to thank you for what you've done? See, a lot of Christians have problems because they're looking for all these things. I don't want anybody to thank me.

I just want to serve the Lord. It's a joyful thing. I don't go around looking for people to express their gratitude to me and say, thank you very much.

It doesn't bother me. If they say it well and good, if they don't say equally good, it doesn't make any difference. A lot of people are looking around for appreciation and they're waiting for God to appreciate them.

My brothers and sisters, take the place that Jesus said. You know, we sometimes can think that we've done so much and we're so important. That sense of importance comes very easily to those who serve the Lord, particularly if you're very gifted.

You may be a gifted preacher. You may be a gifted singer. You may be a gifted administrator, gifted teacher, gifted something.

And you can begin to think, boy, isn't this church lucky that they've got a fellow like me to preach or sing or, you know, it's very easy. You don't say that, but it's there in your head. And I tell you, it stinks in God's nostrils.

You can't smell it, but God smells pride very quickly. And a lot of believers stink before God because there's such a lot of pride in them. They don't cleanse themselves.

They keep on thinking how important they are. Do you know that God's work was done in this world long before you and I were born? Long before these great preachers and great singers and great administrators came along, God was doing His work. And long after we are gone, God's work will still continue.

You and I just come for a small period of time just to do a little bit. I don't believe God's work is so dependent on me. His work carried on for 2,000 years before I came to the world.

And if the Lord tarries, it'll continue long after I'm gone. But for a short period, you and I are here on the earth. Let's do what we can for the Lord with humility, brokenness, recognizing we are not better than any other brother or sister, always taking the last place and saying, I'm an unworthy slave, recognizing in my mind, I'm an unworthy slave, never thinking I'm indispensable.

You're not indispensable. Many years ago, I read a little poem, which I never forget. It's talking about the indispensable man, the man who thinks he's indispensable.

He says, if ever you think you're indispensable, this poem said, take a bucket of water, fill it up. Listen carefully. Put your hand right inside and then pull it out.

You see the hole there? That's how much you'll be missed when you're gone. The size of that hole in the bucket. There's no hole in the bucket.

You're there serving the Lord for 20, 30 years, and then you're gone. Where's the hole? There's no hole. You're not indispensable, brother, sister.

Something will come and fill it up when you pull out your hands. Do that next time you think you're indispensable. So, let's take the low place.

There's one other thing I want to point out in this parable, and that is worship. This slave, you know, it's a picture of serving God, and then we come into the master's presence. What do we do? We can't say, no, Lord, serve me.

No. Now we have to serve the master, and that means worship. We serve, and we come back and worship.

That's how our service becomes effective. A lot of Christians don't know how to worship, and by worship I don't mean just singing choruses here in the meeting. I'm talking about worshipping God, adoring Him all by ourselves.

How many of you worship God when you are alone? I have some wonderful times of worship at three o'clock in the morning when everybody's asleep. In fact, some of my best times of worship are in the middle of the night when everybody's asleep. All by myself, just me and God.

I want to encourage you to be a worshiper. I don't care if I don't serve. I want to be a worshiper.

I'm going to worship God in all eternity. Seek to be a worshiper. Jesus said, you shall worship and you shall serve.

Don't seek to serve without worshipping. You read Ezekiel 44 sometime. Take time to read it sometime.

The Lord speaks there about two types of workers, the Levites who serve the people and the sons of Zadok who worship me, who serve me, and the Lord said the sons of Zadok are superior. So all of our work must be a service for the Lord. You know, I can stand here and serve you or I can stand here and serve the Lord.

I want to serve the Lord. I want even my preaching to be an act of worship offered to God. And when I do that, then I won't be seeking to please you.

I won't be waiting to get thanks from you. Lord, even this is an offering for you. That's the way you must serve.

When you preach in the open air, the streets, I remember when I was a young man, I was preaching all the streets in Ernakulam. I think I covered every street in two years there. Standing there, it was an offering to God.

I worship God. I was serving God and I learned in those days to offer everything to God. I wasn't bothered what people thought about me.

I wasn't doing it because somebody told me to go. I went on my own. I was worshipping God.

Let all your service be like that. The slave works and comes and serves the master. And finally, not finally, another parable, number 28, Luke chapter 18, is the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector.

And again, we find here Jesus concluding this parable by saying in Luke 18 verse 14, he who exalts himself will be humble and he who humbles himself will be exalted. So here in this story of the Pharisee and the tax collector, Jesus said this parable is meant for certain type of people. Which people are they? The people, verse 9, who trust in themselves that they are righteous and look down on other people with contempt.

In other words, whenever you feel that you are a little superior to other people, better preacher, holier man, better singer, better musician, better organizer, bigger church, 101 stupid things believers are proud of, better knowledge of the Bible or anything, you feel that you are a little superior and then you look down on somebody else who doesn't know as much as you. This parable is for such people. And he says about this Pharisee who went into the temple and he doesn't say he opened his mouth.

Notice that. He did not open his mouth. You know, proud people don't necessarily open their mouth because when you say these things openly, it looks so crude.

We won't say, oh God, I thank you that I'm not like other men. How many people will stand up here and pray, oh God, I thank you I'm not like other men. Nobody will pray like that.

We've got more sense because nobody will respect us. We keep all our pride inside, otherwise we lose our respect. That's how this Pharisee was.

It says he prayed with himself. That means it was only in his mind, verse 11. What was he thinking in his mind? God, I thank you.

I'm not like other people. It's not a prayer. It's do you feel that way? I'm not like other people.

Lord, I thank you. I'm a humble man. I thank you.

I'm not like all these people in those dead denominations who don't know you. I thank you. I've got better understanding, better doctrine, better this, better that, better Bible knowledge, better this, so many things.

There's so many things we can be proud of. Lord, I thank you. I'm a holy man.

Maybe I thank you that I fast twice a week. I pray. I give my tithes.

I do all these things and certainly I'm not like this wretched tax collector over there. We can despise people because of their community. Oh, you know that those type of people are always like that, but we are sort of a superior community.

That's the Pharisee. So much of that in the world. And Jesus said the other fellow who's in the corner, he humbled himself.

He wouldn't even lift up his eyes to heaven. Verse 13. He said, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

I'm just a rotten old sinner. Please be merciful to me, oh God. And Jesus said, that man, verse 14, went to his house justified.

God said, that's the one who's declared righteous because he said, I am, the real translation is the sinner. Do you know the difference between the sinner and a sinner? When I say this is the pulpit, it means there is no other pulpit in this room. If I say this is a pulpit, that means there are many others.

When this man said, I am the sinner, he was saying, God, I feel so wretched. I feel that everybody in the world is better than me. And you know, that's how a man feels when he comes into the presence of God.

When a man comes into God's presence, he feels, God, I'm the greatest sinner of all. That's how Isaiah felt when he saw God. That's how Abraham felt when he saw God.

That's how Job felt when he met God. That's how the Apostle John felt even at the end of his life. He felt like a dead man.

God, you're so holy. Who are the people who feel that I'm okay? The people who are at least 1 million miles away from God. At least 1 million.

When you get closer to God, you feel you're a rotten sinner. And I believe that at least once in your life, at least once in your life, if you have never felt that you are the greatest sinner on the face of the earth, I would even seriously doubt whether you're saved. I believe if you live in God's presence, you'll feel like that not just once, but many, many times.

God, I am the sinner. I'm not here to compare myself with anybody. You are so holy.

I'm such a rotten sinner. He who humbles himself will be exalted. He who exalts himself will be humbled.

And you know, it's so subtle, this thing, that we can be proud of our humility. That's the danger in all this. You know, pride is like an onion.

You think you've peeled off that layer and there's another layer underneath. And you peel off that layer and you find another layer of pride underneath. You know, have you heard that story of the Sunday school teacher who was telling this story to the children? Children, this is how the Pharisee did.

And the Pharisee said, I thank you. I'm not like the Republican. And finally finished the story.

And then the teacher said, thank God we are not like the Pharisee. You see the pride there and the humility? And we laugh at that because we say, thank God we are not like the Sunday school teacher. It never ends.

It never ends, this onion, I'll tell you that. It's there. You peel off one layer and there's another layer underneath.

And that's the thing we've got to watch. Pride in our humility. When Moses' face shone.

You know, he didn't know it. Have you read that, Exodus? He went before God and he came and his face was shining and everybody knew it except him. And I believe that's the mark of a humble man.

He doesn't know himself, but he's a humble man. Other people see it, but he sees, Lord, I see some pride there. I want to humble myself.

I'm not yet like Jesus. God have mercy on me. That's the person who's justified.

There are only two spirits operating in the world. One going up, one going down. Lucifer and Jesus.

Spirit of Christ, Spirit of Lucifer. Let's seek to go down. Then the last parable, Luke chapter 7, verse 31 to 35.

That's parable number 29 where Jesus spoke about, what shall I compare this generation with? They're like children in the marketplace, verse 32, who say, we played the flute and you didn't dance, verse 32. We sang a dirge, which is a funeral song, and you didn't weep for the funeral. You know children, sometimes they're playing wedding, sometimes they're playing funeral, and they say, hey, we're playing wedding now.

You fellas are not dancing. Oh, now we're playing funeral and you fellas are not weeping. He says, that's how this generation is.

That means a proud person will always criticize God's people, no matter what they do. That's the point, because he doesn't fit in with what they think you should be like. And then he gives an example.

He said, John the Baptist, he came with very simple dress, you know, animal skin dress, and he was eating the locusts and living in the forest. And he said, that's crazy. It's not the normal way for anybody to live.

He's got a demon, verse 33. And then Jesus came. He came eating and drinking and drinking wine and eating meat and fish and everything.

Oh, they said, what a gluttonous man he is, verse 34. He's a drunkard and a gluttonous man. So the Lord was saying, for you Pharisees, nobody's right.

John the Baptist is wrong because he's too ascetic. And Jesus is wrong because he's eating too much or drinking too much. And that's the mark of a Pharisee.

He will find fault with everybody. If he's this side, he's wrong. If he's this side, he's wrong.

That's the mark of a proud man. Are you like that? Always finding fault with this person, the other person. What's wrong with this person, this thing? What's wrong with that person, this thing? Experts in finding fault.

You know who's the greatest expert in the world? The devil. He's called the accuser of the brethren. If you were to go to the devil and ask him about any believer, Satan, what do you think about this? He'll say,

here, these are all the things wrong with him.

What about the other fellow Satan? Yeah, these all these things. Don't be like that. Don't be like that.

Don't hold hands with the accuser of the brethren. Finding fault with everything that you, with every person you see. Something or the other is wrong.

Isn't it good to humble ourselves and say, Lord, show me what's wrong with me? Instead of finding what's wrong with everybody else. I heard a story once of a teacher who put a white sheet on the board with a small black dot in the corner. And he told all his 50 students in the class, please write on a piece of paper what you see in one sentence.

And all the 50 students with sharp eyes, they wrote, we all, we see a black dot in the corner. They collected all the answer papers, all the same. He said, none of you wrote, we see a white sheet.

You all wrote, we see a black dot. See, that's our nature. We see one little fault in a person and we don't see all the good there is in that person.

It's just that one little thing. Whether it's John the Baptist or Jesus, you can be the holiest person on earth like Jesus. And they found fault with him.

He's eating too much. And imagine these Pharisees, they were sitting watching whether Jesus is taking a second helping or not. A critical, you know, some people's eyes are like that.

They're always watching. Even if they invite you to their home, they'll watch how much you eat. These are Pharisees.

They've criticized Jesus himself. It may be anything, but this critical eye. Now you're supposed to dance.

Now you're supposed to play a funeral. Who said, can't we leave other people to be themselves? Why should they dance to our tune? You know, these are all marks of pride. And Jesus was highlighting different aspects of pride by which we can destroy ourselves.

It's good for us to take heed to these parables, to humble ourselves, to be worshipers of Jesus and the Father that saves us from all this pride. God gives grace to the humble. Let's pray.

While I head about in prayer, I want you to respond again to the word of God that you've heard this evening. God doesn't speak to us merely to educate us or to inform us or to entertain us. He speaks to us to challenge us so that we see the way that Jesus went and go that way ourselves.

So let's humble ourselves and say, Lord, that's the way I want to go. The way you went all the days of your life helped me to go that way also. Thank you, Father, that you sent Jesus to be our example, that we don't have theories, but an example to follow.

Help us to follow in Jesus' footsteps, we pray, each of us in Jesus' name. Amen. God bless you all.

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