
Zoom Meeting ID: **326 920 7504**

Call-in option: 1) Dial **646-568-7788** or **929-205-6099**, 2) Enter **326 920 7504 #** and 3) Press # for a participant's ID

Officiant When anyone is united to Christ, there is a new world; the old order has gone, and a new order has already begun. *2 Corinthians 5:17*

Confession of Sins

Officiant Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

All **We repent the wrongs we have done:**

We have wounded your love.

O God, heal us.

We stumble in the darkness.

Light of the world transfigure us.

We forget that we are your home.

Spirit of God, dwell in us.

Officiant Eternal Spirit, living God,
in whom we live and move and have our being,
all that we are, have been, and shall be is known to you,
to the very secret of our hearts
and all that rises to trouble us.
Living flame burn into us,
cleansing wind, blow through us,
fountain of water, well up within us,
that we may love and praise in deed and in truth. **Amen.**

The Invitatory and Psalter

Officiant Eternal Spirit, flow through our being and open our lips, *+(you may cross your lips with a right thumb)*

Celebrants **And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**

All **Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Officiant The mercy of the Lord is everlasting: Come let us adore him.

Life in the Spirit *based on Romans 8:2, 14–19*

All **In Christ the life-giving law of the Spirit:**

has set us free from the law of sin and death.

All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God:

it is the Spirit that enables us to cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit confirms that we are God's children:

and if children then we are heirs.

We are heirs of God, and fellow-heirs with Christ:

if we share his suffering now,

in order to share his splendor hereafter.

The sufferings we now endure:

bear no comparison with the splendor to be shown to us.

The created universe itself waits with eager longing:

for the children of God to be revealed.

Officiant The mercy of the Lord is everlasting: Come let us adore him.

The Lesson

Reader A Lesson from *Luke 18:9-14*

Jesus told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

Reader Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.
Celebrants **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 84:1-6 *Quam dilecta!*

All **1 How dear to me is your dwelling, O Lord of hosts! ***
My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

2 The sparrow has found her a house
and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; *
by the side of your altars, O Lord of hosts,
my King and my God.

3 Happy are they who dwell in your house! *
they will always be praising you.

4 Happy are the people whose strength is in you! *
whose hearts are set on the pilgrims' way.

5 Those who go through the desolate valley will find it a place of springs, *
for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.

6 They will climb from height to height, *
and the God of gods will reveal himself in Zion.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Hymn #686 *Come, thou fount of every blessing*

Tune: Nettleton
Source: Robert Robinson

Reflection

Paul Yoon

Jesus has contributed to the reputation that Christians have towards the Pharisees. It's not a positive one as they are often considered hypocritical religious authorities who teamed up with the Sadducees and the Roman government to crucify Jesus. In today's lesson, Jesus in his parable contrasts a Pharisee and a tax collector and looks into the contents of their prayers. While it is tempting and easy to pick on the Pharisees, let's be mindful of Jesus' good intention that he talks about them critically, hoping they would listen and change. Jesus gets on their nerves, yet he never ignores them. There's no indifference in his attitude to the Pharisees.

With this in mind, the Pharisee in the parable can be called righteous and even holy in his actions if he really does what he says he does in his prayer. He's certainly different from thieves, rogues, adulterers, and the tax collector standing next to him. He fasts twice a week and gives a tenth of all his income to the temple (or God). According to the list of things he says he does, he seriously keeps the commandments and precepts. No killing, no stealing, no lying, no committing adultery. These are the fundamental rules of life that any religion may share in common. He's also religiously observant that he fasts twice a week and tithes. There's no doubt that this Pharisee is morally and religiously superior to the tax collector.

In Jesus' eyes, however, the Pharisee is not "justified" but the tax collector who is morally and ethically unjust. This may have shocked his audience. These are people who "...trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt." (Luke 18:9) This also should surprise us because these people if they do what the Pharisee in the parable does, are indeed morally righteous and superior to the tax collector. What this means for us is that their righteousness is not enough for them to be justified in God's eyes. Jesus concludes, "...this man [the tax collector] went down to his home justified rather than the other [the Pharisee]; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted." He sounds as if any moral actions would matter at the end as long as one says "Sorry." This type of interpretation of Jesus' teaching this morning doesn't serve justice, and it is a problem.

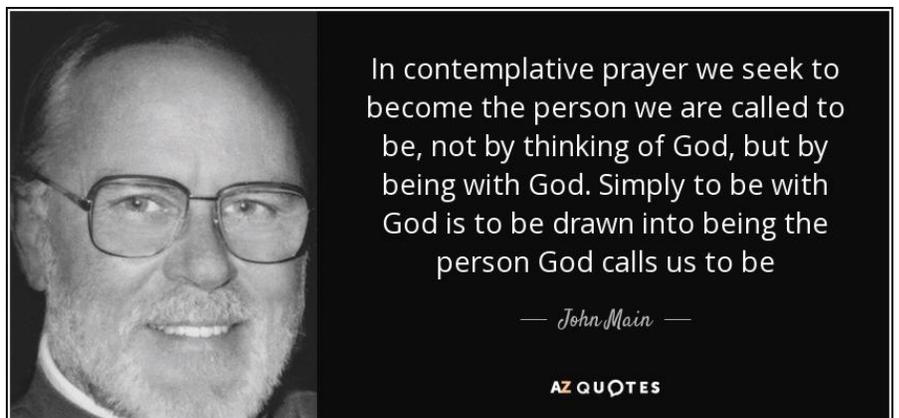
In order to get to the core of this teaching, I suggest that we pay attention to Jesus' expression of being "justified." What does it mean for one to be justified? In a spiritual sense, it simply means one is right with God. So, the tax collector gets right with God, not the Pharisee in the parable. This self-righteous Pharisee stands before God, trying to be someone worthy who deserves God's glory based on the fact that he keeps all the precepts. But he's not getting the true purpose of keeping them. It is not to be morally superior to someone. It is not to be accepted by God. These precepts create a spiritually healthy environment to deepen our encounter with God and our neighbors. These are the boundaries that keep us from harming others and ourselves. These are not the ends but the means to love and serve deeper.

The tax collector's approach, on the other hand, isn't just much about humility. Of course, there's a bit of humility in his attitude but this sense of humility is with people, not with God. We don't exercise humility before God. Rather, we're humbled and awed in God's presence. The tax collector hasn't kept the fundamental precepts the Pharisee has followed. He's very much aware of this as a fact. He has no masks to put on but is completely naked before God. There's literally not a thing to cover up. The only thing he needs is God's mercy just to stand in God's presence. So, he asks, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"

Now, does this mean that we have to follow the tax collector's approach to God? Not always. What this tells us is that we should always come to God with guilt as a sinner. This is more about being 100% candid before God. In the tax collector's case, he is sinful indeed. There's no virtue in how he earns profits. Yet, he is honest to God. Acknowledging his unskillful behavior of living is the very first step. The next step would be how he doesn't get stuck in his self-image as a sinner and moves on to live and earn more skillfully without harming others. Jesus is not telling us to play the sinner role always. Would you be happy if the person you love comes to you as a sinner?

Let's then imagine what the Pharisee would've done differently in his prayer. I think he had his chance if he stopped at "God, I thank you." Alas, he went much further, "...that I am not like other people..." His identity depends on those who he is not. His happiness depends on their unskillful actions. He can only feel good about himself in comparison to those who cannot keep the precepts. This unskillful behavior of the Pharisee is not something new to our contemporary human relationships. How often do we put down others to feel higher? How is our world so ready to criticize and push down to be better, higher, and greater? Yet, we remain in the same place without growth. In that instant moment of pushing down others, I might feel better about myself but that is a lie. It's an illusion.

In God's presence, we don't need to be someone. We don't need to pretend at all. We look at our unskillful behaviors without relating them to who we really are. Our Christian call to be selfless is to lessen our obsession with self. Instead, we focus on our actions that are skillful, beneficial, loving, and compassionate. So, we might start our prayer with the words of the tax collector, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" and end it with "God, I thank you." How we fill in between is whether we faithfully cultivate our act of love and compassion for our neighbors and ourselves.



The Apostles' Creed

All I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth;

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Prayers

Officiant The Lord be with you.
Celebrants **And also with you.**
Officiant Let us pray, singing

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Supplication *Pray responsively.*

Let us pray with confidence, anticipating peace on earth,

V. The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class,
R. God, forgive.

V. The covetous desires of humans and nations to possess that which is not their own,
R. God, forgive.

V. The greed which exploits human labor, and lays waste the earth,
R. God, forgive.

V. Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others,
R. God, forgive.

V. Our indifference to the plight of the homeless and the refugee,
R. God, forgive.

- V. The lust which uses for ignoble ends the bodies of men and women,
R. God, forgive.
- V. The pride which leads to trust in ourselves and not in God,
R. God, forgive.
- V. In the midst of hunger and war,
R. We celebrate the promise of plenty and peace.
- V. In the midst of oppression and tyranny,
R. We celebrate the promise of service and freedom.
- V. In the midst of doubt and despair,
R. We celebrate the promise of faith and hope.
- V. In the midst of fear and betrayal,
R. We celebrate the promise of joy and loyalty.
- V. In the midst of hatred and death,
R. We celebrate the promise of love and life.
- V. In the midst of sin and decay,
R. We celebrate the promise of salvation and renewal.
- V. In the midst of terrorism, injury, suffering and death,
R. We celebrate the promise of the living God with us.

The Collect for Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

All **Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.**

For those in the Armed Forces of our Country

Celebrant Almighty God, we commend to your gracious care and keeping all the men and women of our armed forces at home and abroad. Defend them day by day with your heavenly grace; strengthen them in their trials and temptations; give them courage to face the perils which beset them; and grant them a sense of your abiding presence wherever they may be; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

For the Conservation of Natural Resources

Celebrant Almighty God, in giving us dominion over things on earth, you made us fellow workers in your creation: Give us wisdom and reverence so to use the resources of nature, that no one may suffer from our abuse of them, and that generations yet to come may continue to praise you for your bounty; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

For the Victims of Addiction

Celebrant O blessed Lord, you ministered to all who came to you: Look with compassion upon all who through addiction have lost their health and freedom. Restore to them the assurance of your unfailing mercy; remove from them the fears that beset them; strengthen them in the work of their recovery; and to those who care for them, give patient understanding and persevering love. **Amen.**

For Vocation in Daily Work

Celebrant Almighty God our heavenly Father, who declarest thy glory and showest forth thy handiwork in the heavens and in the earth: Deliver us, we beseech thee, in our various occupations from the service of self alone, that we may do the work which thou givest us to do in truth and beauty and for the common good; for the sake of him who came among us as one that serveth, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

For the Sick

All Heavenly Father, giver of life and health: Comfort and relieve thy sick servants, and give thy power of healing to those who minister to their needs, that those (or N., or NN.) for whom our prayers are offered may be strengthened in their weakness and have confidence in thy loving care; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

For Quiet Confidence

Celebrant O God of peace, who hast taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of thy Spirit lift us, we pray thee, to thy presence, where we may be still and know that thou art God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A General Thanksgiving

All **Accept, O Lord, our thanks and praise for all that you have done for us.
We thank you for the splendor of the whole creation,
for the beauty of this world,
for the wonder of life, and for the mystery of love.**

**We thank you for the blessing of family and friends,
and for the loving care which surrounds us on every side.
We thank you for setting us at tasks which demand our best efforts,
and for leading us to accomplishments which satisfy and delight us.
We thank you also for those disappointments and failures
that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone.**

**Above all, we thank you for your Son Jesus Christ;
for the truth of his Word and the example of his life;
for his steadfast obedience, by which he overcame temptation;
for his dying, through which he overcame death;
and for his rising to life again,
in which we are raised to the life of your kingdom.**

**Grant us the gift of your Spirit,
that we may know Christ and make him known;
and through him,
at all times and in all places,
may give thanks to you in all things. Amen.**

Officiant The divine Spirit dwells in us.
Celebrants **Thanks be to God.**

Officiant May God give us the grace to never sell ourselves short;
grace to risk something big for something good;
grace to remember that the world is too dangerous now
for anything but truth and too small for something but love. **Amen.**



**Saint Agnes Church
65 Union Ave, Little Falls, NJ 07424**

*Serving people of Little Falls and surrounding communities since 1896,
Saint Agnes Church is a part of the Episcopal/Anglican branch
of the Jesus Movement in the Diocese of Newark, striving to be a contemplative community.*