

A Really Good Lost Man

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[0 : 00] Well, our text for this morning is in the Gospel of Luke, and you probably knew that.

As we work our way through this gospel, this wonderful gospel, the largest of the gospels, in fact the largest book of the New Testament. And we are in chapter 18, and so you can find our text, which is verses 9 through 14.

So Luke chapter 18, verses 9 through 14, and let me go ahead and read that. Also, he spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others.

Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, or to himself, God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I possess. And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

[1 : 36] I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

Now, very familiar. I think all of us would agree that this is one of those well-known parables. And we have heard this a number of times, probably heard a number of sermons out of this text.

And if not, out of this particular text, certainly many times preachers will allude to this passage when they're talking about the Pharisees and so forth. And so it's very familiar.

In fact, it's too familiar. May I tell you that? It's too familiar for our own good. Okay. And I mean this. I want you to do something this morning that may be impossible. I want you to forget everything you know about the Pharisees.

[2 : 42] Just forget everything you know about them. I say it may be impossible. In fact, it probably is impossible. But try, okay? Forget everything you know about the Pharisees. Everything you've been taught.

And I would go a step further and say, try your very best to forget everything that you have been taught concerning this particular passage. And the parable contained in it.

It's going to be difficult. Because it's so familiar. But try to do that. I really mean it. In order for us to really get a hold of the truth that Jesus is teaching us here, we're going to have to try to forget what we know about the Pharisees.

And also forget what we know about publicans or tax collectors. Try not to be the biblically informed people that I know you are.

That was a compliment, by the way. And I mean it. I mean, most of you have been Christians a lot of years. Maybe even most of your life. And you have grown up with the teaching and preaching of the New Testament.

[3 : 54] You're well versed on that. And you know about the Pharisees, don't you? You know about them. Well, the very first people to hear this parable when Jesus told it, guess what?

They knew a whole lot about the Pharisees too. And I would say to you that what they thought about the Pharisees and what we think about the Pharisees, completely different.

Completely different. We need to be reminded of that. We need to know that in case you didn't know that. They were thinking differently than we think today. In fact, almost completely opposite of what we think and know about the Pharisees.

You see, for Jesus' original audience, the Pharisee in this parable, guess what? He's the good guy. Have you thought about that?

He's the good guy. And the publican, I kind of used the King James translation, the publican, the tax collector, well, he's the bad guy.

[5 : 12] I mean to a Jewish audience. Jesus' original audience. The Jews he was speaking to, not just his core disciples, but other disciples who were following him and not only other disciples, but we know because this is a carryover from the same kind of setting, the very same setting that we've had now for a lot of verses.

We know that the Pharisees are there and other Jews are there, non-believers, believers. But for the Jewish audience in Jesus' day, the Pharisee would be the good guy, the publican would be the bad guy.

And we need to understand that. And so two men go to the temple to pray. One, we could say, is a regular churchgoer. I mean very regular.

He would never miss church. He's a leader, a religious leader, a spiritual leader, who has devoted himself to the things of God. And who is that? That's the Pharisee.

The Pharisee. The other? The other guy? The tax collector? He's a selfish, dishonest, greedy man who has no qualms whatsoever about cheating his countrymen for his own gain.

[6 : 37] Who is that? The publican. The tax collector. Now, which of these two guys would you expect to get through to God in prayer?

The Pharisee or the publican? Which of these two guys would you expect to be declared justified by the Lord Jesus Christ?

The Pharisee or the publican? Again, remember, you're looking at this through the eyes of Jesus' original audience.

Through their mindset in regard to these two types of people. Pharisees, publicans. And I say that this is the amazing thing about this story.

Jesus starts out with a good guy and a bad guy. Alright? And the good guy is the Pharisee. That's how his audience would have viewed them. And the bad guy is the publican, the tax collector.

[7 : 34] That's how his audience would have viewed them. But by the time we get to the end of the story, the good guy has become the bad guy and the bad guy has become the good guy.

You get that, don't you? The ultimate reversal. A startling reversal. If not for us, certainly for Jesus' original audience.

A reversal. A reversal. It's startling. It's disturbing to them. And you know, that's something Jesus very much enjoyed doing in his parables, didn't he?

He did that a number of times. And it is that startling reversal that Jesus uses to drive home the truth that he's teaching here in this passage.

And what truth is that? Well, let me give it to you on the front end here. Just in a sentence. Rather a lengthy sentence, but a sentence nonetheless. Here's the truth that Jesus is driving, driving forward here through the use of this parable and this startling reversal of conditions, of outcomes.

[8 : 47] Here's the truth. Jesus told this shocking story to drive home the truth that, listen to this, God's mercy alone is the basis upon which we are forgiven, accepted, and justified.

God's mercy alone. That's the truth. Not on the basis of anything else.

But God's mercy. All right, so keep that in mind as we study together, this passage, Luke 18. And in order to discover that truth, that all-important truth, I want us to consider the three persons that are revealed to us in this parable.

You say, I thought there were just two. No, actually, there are three. There are three. And let me give those to you, if you're writing notes. First, the prideful saint.

Now, I use saint in the broadest sense of the term, okay? In a very gracious sense. All right, the prideful saint, the woeful sinner, and the merciful Savior.

[10 : 08] All three are in this parable. All right, so first, the prideful saint.

The prideful saint. Jesus introduces us to a certain Pharisee. Now, he's not a real person. I mean, he's a true-to-life kind of person. He's a Pharisee.

But Jesus is making this story up, okay? It's an illustration. It's a parable. All right, so he introduces us to this Pharisee. And he's one of two men who went up to the temple to pray.

That's what Jesus said. And I want you to look again at how this Pharisee is described. Verse 11, the Pharisee stood and prayed thus with or to himself.

And by the way, that just simply means that he was acting as though he's all alone and praying, but he knows that everybody's listening. Okay. He prays to himself, and this is what he prays.

[11 : 11] God, I thank you that I am not like other men. Extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week.

I give tithes of all that I possess. So that's his prayer. And that describes this man for us. And so if you can, try and think about this Pharisee just like Jesus' original audience would have thought about him.

See, the Pharisees were the good guys in Jesus' day. I know you don't get that from the New Testament. You certainly don't get that from what Jesus says about the Pharisees, and he's constantly confronting them.

But forget all about that right now. You're just a Jewish audience, and you're sitting there, and Jesus is telling this parable, and he mentions a Pharisee. And to you, the Pharisees are the good guys.

All right? And we could think of the Pharisee in this way. The Pharisees were the leaders of a, we could call it a back to God or back to the Bible movement.

[12:16] They've been going on for over 500 years among the Jews. That's the Pharisees. That sounds pretty good, doesn't it? I mean, to be ahead, be in charge, be the leaders, the movers of a back to God, back to the Word of God movement.

That's who the Pharisees were. They were thoroughly orthodox in their doctrine. I mean, they believed in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Word of God.

The Pharisees did. Anything wrong with that? No, that's great. That's good. The Pharisees believed in the actual, literal coming of Messiah to establish His kingdom.

The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees believed in the future punishment, eternal punishment of the wicked. And the Pharisees believed in the eternal, blessed state of the righteous.

And many other things that are very orthodox. This is decidedly, thoroughly orthodox in doctrine.

That's who the Pharisees were. And listen, if the Pharisees were living today, they would have their pockets stuffed with gospel tracts.

[13:38] They'd be giving them out to everybody. And they would be carrying large Bibles with them everywhere. You never catch them without a Bible. They probably have the biggest study Bible you ever saw.

You know, with wheels on it, little handles you could carry around. Some of the study Bibles, you need something like that, don't you? That's who they would be.

And they would, I know it's not very kosher today, but they would have bumper stickers on their cars. Like, Jesus saves. Or the ever popular, honk if you love Jesus.

And I tell you, the Pharisees would be at the forefront in the fight to have prayer back in the schools.

And have the Ten Commandments hanging in all public places. That's who the Pharisees were.

To the Jews of Jesus' day, the Pharisees were the most religious people in the world. Everybody knew that.

[14:43] Everybody knew. That's the Pharisees. And I think you have to understand this about the Pharisees and the parable in order to really let the truth that Jesus is teaching fully impact you.

He was the kind of guy you'd want living next door to you. You know, a lot of preachers have given the Pharisees pretty bad rap.

I think we've often gone beyond even what the Bible says about them. You wouldn't mind having them next door. A good, law-abiding citizen.

A good, religious kind of person. You wouldn't catch him home on Sunday. And if he were to join our church, we would probably love and admire him.

For one thing, because of his knowledge of the Word of God. He'd have most of it memorized.

Anybody here have most of the Bible memorized?

[15:55] And he would be faithful to the church. He would be loyal. He would give a lot of money to the church budget. That's why we would love him. I mean, he gives a tenth of everything he possesses.

Everything. That's what he said. We might even make him an elder in our church. You say, Pastor, I don't know.

Don't you know about the Pharisees? I'm telling you not to think about what you know about them.

What I'm describing and what this Pharisee describes in his own prayer describes someone as a good guy.

He's good. A really good guy. Maybe even better than many of us in the category of goodness.

All right. So let's just consider what his prayer reveals. In his prayer, what he reveals about himself. All right. In the first place, he is morally righteous.

[17:03] This Pharisee is morally righteous. What did he say? He said, I am not like other men. Meaning, I'm not like sinners. Those other sinners.

Those lost sinners. Those wicked sinners. I'm not like other men. He said, I am not a thief. That's what he means by an extortioner.

Or some translations have swindler. I'm not a thief. He said, I'm not an evildoer. That's what is meant by the word unjust. I'm not an evildoer.

He said, I am not an adulterer. I'm faithful to my wife. And he said, I'm not a traitor to my country like this tax collector over here. This is basically what he means.

But he really is lumping all of those things. Thief, evildoer, so forth. Lumping them all under tax collectors. I'm not like him. I'm loyal to my...

[18:01] Now, do you believe him? You're supposed to. I think Jesus intends for us to believe him.

I think that we are to assume that this Pharisee is genuinely moral. It's not a sham. It's not a front. He's genuinely moral. I think that's what we're supposed to believe from this parable. Now, forget everything else, okay, that you have read and what Jesus has said about the Pharisees, the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.

Forget all about that. We're talking about this time, Jesus telling the parable and what the people understood. And this guy, we're to assume that everything the man says about himself is true.

He is a good man. He's an honest man. He's a moral man. He's a faithful man, faithful to the Word of God. He is an honorable man, loyal to his country.

[19:12] We're to believe all these things. And then he says something else about himself. Not only morally righteous, but he is also devoutly religious. Devoutly religious.

He said in verse 12, I fast twice a week. Now think about that. Fast twice a week.

By the way, that's going way beyond the requirement of the law because the law required that you fast only one time a year and that was on the Day of Atonement. But this Pharisee, he fasts twice a week.

Twice a week. And never misses it. He's rigid. He's committed. He fasts twice a week. When's the last time you fasted? What else?

He said, I give tithes of all that I possess. Now that's something. Now just to remind you, the word tithe means tenth.

[20:21] That mean something to you? Means tenth. Doesn't mean offering. It means tenth. He gave one tenth.

He gave 10% to his church. I mean, church, I know it wasn't a church, but he gave 10% of everything he possessed.

Every single thing. Not just his money, but everything. In fact, according to Matthew 23, 23, and also a passage in Luke 11, 42, the Pharisees even tithed on their seeds.

Get that. Gave a tenth of their seeds to the Lord. And their spices, and their herbs that they use for medicines.

All these dinky little, minute little things. The Bible says, mint, and dill, and cumin, and rue, and all manner of herbs. He tithed.

[21:18] It's just a testimony to, they tithed all the way down to the minuteness, most insignificant things that they possessed. That's this Pharisee.

This guy didn't just tip God once in a while in the offering plate on Sunday morning like a lot of Christians do today. Ouch. He gave a full 10% of everything he owned.

Here's a really good man. There's no denying it. And, excuse me, I have a drink of water.

You forgot to tell me. Okay. He's a good man. And Jesus intends for his readers to think that about him.

To understand. In fact, he knew they would think that about him. That he's a good man. And we can assume that he was as committed to the other major kind of tenants of the Pharisees.

[22:32] They prayed three times every day. And they strictly observed all of the ceremonies required in the law. They meticulously observed the Sabbath day laws to a fault.

We know that, don't we? I mean, you're never ever going to find this Pharisee skipping out on church because he has family coming in from out of town. Or it's Super Bowl Sunday.

Well, I'm just really ugly today. Or you got to mow the yard and it's your only day off, you know, or go fishing because it's your only, whatever.

You're never going to find this guy skipping out on church. And I think Jesus wants us to take this man at his word. Now, I'm driving this home.

This is so important. We're not to be sitting there thinking, oh, this is a big sham. He's lying. He's, you know, we're to take him at his word.

[23 : 37] That's what Jesus intends. We're to see this guy as a good guy. Now, he may be self-promoting. I mean, he does stand in the temple and everyone is watching and listening.

We know that about the Pharisees. Though, by the way, there's nothing in the parable that says that, that he's self-promoting. That, again, is kind of our understanding, our bias about the Pharisees entering into our interpretation of the text.

But we just need to take what Jesus is saying here. He is certainly not self-deluded. He's not self-deceived. You could make a case that he's self-righteous and rightfully so.

But he's not self-deceived. Everything he prayed about himself is dead on true. He did all of these things religiously.

So he is morally righteous. He is devoutly religious. And guess what? And this is something I did not see until this week I was studying this passage.

[24 : 47] Guess what? He gives God the credit for both. He really does. Verse 11, God, I thank you that I'm not like other men.

I'm, I thank you, God, that I'm not a sinner. A lost sinner. A pagan. I thank you, God. He gives God the credit.

He does. It's right there. Credit. He gives God the credit for his righteous works. I mean, this guy's kind of shaping up to be a really good guy and you're beginning to think, well, you know, maybe I've just been wrong about these Pharisees.

Don't miss this. This is a fictitious story, right? Parable. I mean, Jesus is crafting the story.

Jesus is making up all the details. Jesus is putting all the words in this man's mouth and he wants us to pay attention to this particular detail.

[25 : 56] The Pharisee thanked God for his righteous life, his righteous living. He thanks God for it. And this is important.

And I say to miss this is to miss the whole point. This man is not really saying, though you may conclude that he's saying this and read between the lines, but he's not really saying, God, you saved me because I'm good.

He's not really saying that. He's actually saying the reason why I am good, the reason why I am morally righteous and devoutly religious.

The reason is because of you, God. The sovereignty of God, the grace of God, that's the reason. And so, the good works that he mentions in his prayer are good works which God has wrought in him, has produced in him.

that's what we're to understand. And, and this is the kicker, he trusts in those good works even though those good works were produced in him by God.

[27 : 19] he said, well, maybe that's not so bad. He's trusting in those good works and they're his works.

Now, this is very important that we get this. He is trusting and I'm going to, so important I'm going to say it half a dozen times in different ways, okay?

he is trusting in works that he himself has done even though he gives God the credit for those works, the origin of those works and even the power to do them.

God may have worked these works in him but they are nevertheless his works and he's trusting in them.

And if you trust in your good works even if you credit God with those works if you trust in them then your assurance of salvation guess what it's based on?

[28 : 34] Your good works. Even though they're good works that God has brought in you. See how diabolical Satan is.

If you think that good works has anything to do with your right standing before God then you are seriously mistaken. You're seriously mistaken.

We think we know that but I'm not sure that we do always. You're seriously mistaken. If you think your good works is the basis for your right standing with God even though those good works you

thank God for.

You even give him credit for. If you think that's the basis of your assurance of salvation you're mistaken. You're wrong. Just like this Pharisee.

And it may even be worse than that for some. You may be like this lost Pharisee. He may have given God the credit for his good works but he was not trusting God for his right standing.

[29 : 45] He was trusting his works. And that's why Jesus told this parable. He said in verse 9 he spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.

And this Pharisee prayed in that regard. He's really saying I thank you Lord that you made me this way. A really good person doing good things.

A really religious person. I'm thankful God that you made me this way. The credit goes to you. But the works are mine. And I am trusting in them for my right relationship my right standing with you. That's what he believes. And by the way that is why there are two glaring holes in this man's prayer. Do you pick up on these?

For one thing there is no sense of sin or need whatsoever in this man's prayer. None whatsoever. And for another thing there is a kind of I mean really a colossal egotism in this prayer.

[30 : 57] I mean he mentions God just one time. And he mentions I five times. God says the prideful saint. Now we're going to move on from him even though we're not through with him.

We'll get back to him. But I want us to consider the second character or person in the parable and that is the woeful sinner. The woeful sinner. This is the tax collector.

A tax collector. Now I keep saying publican and some of you have grown up with the King James. In fact you might even have one open in your lap there. And the King James uses the word publican and I just want you to know that that is a word borrowed from the Latin.

The King James translators back in the early 1600s they were very very at least the Christians were very connected to the Latin. That was the only Bible they had at the time and now we have the first English translation and they borrowed the word from the Latin the word that means tax collector and it's publicanus.

[32 : 03] So that's why we have publican. So I'm going to continue to use the word publican sometimes because it starts with a P just like Pharisees and you know how I like alliteration.

Alright now as I said Jesus knew that his original audience would naturally think that this man was the bad guy. The publican. To them when Jesus said the words tax collector right off immediately in their minds and they're thinking they're thinking dirty rotten no good tax collector.

They would expand that quite a bit. That's what he was to them. I mean they were the scum of the earth. Their job you know was the collecting of taxes for the Roman Empire.

the occupying force. They were not Romans though they were Jews and their method of tax collection was entirely up to their own discretion. Their own power and even their kind of standard or regulations for tax collection was completely up to them.

They could collect any amount they wanted. So long as Rome got her cut you know her required tax. And so tax collectors then we know because we know about tax collectors.

[33 : 17] they were notoriously dishonest. And they were certainly traitorous. And because they were serving the occupying empire the Romans they were hated and despised by the Jews probably hated even more than the Romans if possible.

And so to the Jews all the tax collectors were sinners. It could not even be conceivable in the mind of a Jew that a tax collector could be righteous in the eyes of God. it would not be in their mind not possible for a tax collector to be saved.

I'm sure they had a big problem with Matthew one of the apostles. And so it would not have seemed strange to any of Jesus' audience to hear that this Pharisee said that he was morally superior to the tax collector.

Well of course he was. of course he was. Superior to the tax. This tax collector is a filthy, dirty, rotten, traitorous sinner.

And everyone there would have agreed with that assessment. In fact the assessment was given by the tax collector himself. He said I'm a sinner. Forgive me a sinner.

[34 : 35] Have mercy on me a sinner. And I'm not so sure that his prayer would have been very convincing to Jesus' original audience. Remember to them the Pharisee is the good guy and the publican is the bad guy and here he is standing afar off Jesus said and of course he is.

I mean he's no right to come anywhere near the temple. He's a publican. And then he says I am a sinner.

Well you bet he is. He's a dirty sinner. And so Jesus' audience is cheering for the Pharisee and they're booing the publican.

Right? That's what they would be doing. And this is what Jesus intended. Alright? But then Jesus turns the tables on them.

Verse 14 he said I tell you this man the tax collector this man went down to his house justified rather than the other the Pharisee the good moral righteous religious Pharisee the publican was justified saved the Pharisee went home a lost man unjustified and Jesus' audience they were thinking what? [36 : 13] How can this be? Now remember you're supposed to be forgetting everything you know about this parable and about Pharisees and so forth you're supposed to be thinking like Jesus' original audience was thinking so how can this be?

But now the answer is found in the actions of this tax collector and in his prayer and let me just mention four things here real quickly first of all notice his position tax collector's position he was standing far off alright he stood at a distance bear with me the temple you see represents the presence of God that's where in a sense God was residing and so they would come to offer sacrifice to him and to worship him and so forth and so the temple represented the presence of God and so in this parable Jesus positions this publican at a distance from God and that is where every sinner is initially at a distance from God separated from

God and the point is that this publican knows that that he is separated from God he would not even dare approach God he is separated at a distance from him because of his sin and then notice second his posture his posture he would not so much as lift or raise his eyes to heaven now the typical by the way the typical posture for prayer among the Jews was not like we would pray today in fact maybe the way we pray today is more from the example of the publican than from the example of the Pharisee but the typical posture was to stand with eyes lifted up to heaven and arms spread out and palms open wide and they would pray this way to God but this publican was so conscious of his sin and his unworthiness they could not even lift his head he could not even look up to heaven this is genuine humility so his position separated from God because of his sin his posture humble before God because of his unworthiness and then number three his passion his passion he beat his breast he was constantly beating his breast now what is all that about well I think we can understand that but in the Jewish culture this was kind of an outward sign of an inward pain in the soul you were expressing it outwardly it was almost a natural reflect so in pain so disgusted over his sin so distraught and burdened by the weight of his sin this this is utter brokenness before God it's quite different from the

Pharisee isn't it and then finally his plea his plea and notice how this differs from the Pharisee he prayed God be merciful to me a sinner that was his plea and by the way the King James and New King James they for some reason do not translate the definite article here rather than that they put the indefinite article they have a sinner when in reality in the Greek text it's the sinner that's significant he said have mercy or be merciful to me the sinner see the depth of his acknowledgement of his sinfulness before God it's like he's saying I am the chief of sinners I'm the worst of all sinners I'm the baddest of the bad before you God and of course Jesus' original audience are saying yeah that's right you are but this is his plea simple plea God be merciful to me that's all he can say that's all he can say he makes no comparison between himself and someone else like the Pharisee did because there is no one else for him he's all alone before God have mercy on me that's all he can say not have mercy not because I am good or can be good or want to be good or might be good someday I am not good I'm just the opposite I am bad have mercy on me because I am bad and a rotten sinner I'm the sinner the worst of sinners be merciful to me

[41 : 35] I think we might even interject his thought is be merciful to me because you are a merciful God and that's my only hope only hope and that's not just true of this publican that's true of every single one that's what David prayed in Psalm 51 you remember when Nathan the prophet came to David and exposed his sin with Bathsheba and confronted him with that and David repented he was broken and his prayer was the psalm that Johnny read earlier in the service Psalm 51 let me just read that again the first part of it have mercy upon me oh God same thing that this publican pray that's what David is praying he said have mercy on me oh God according to what according to the fact that I'm king the fact that I'm the apple of your eye have mercy upon me because you know I

deserve it look at all

I've done as king of Israel no he said have mercy on me oh God according to your loving kindness that is according to your grace it's God's grace that extends mercy do it according to your loving kindness according to the multitude of your tender mercies blot out my transgressions wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin all based upon the mercy of God and so that leads me to the third and final character in the parable word you say well I thought there were just two people in the parable Pharisee and the publican well there's actually a third and it's Jesus or we might say the merciful savior because that's what all this comes down to see Jesus had turned the tables on his audience he reveals this startling reversal and so the

Pharisee is the good guy but he's lost so he really is the bad guy the publican is the bad guy clearly but he's saved so he becomes the good guy he's saved he went home justified that's what it means he went home justified his standing before God was just no longer sinner but just before God he went home justified that's salvation and why because of the merciful savior and only because of his mercy and again I come back to the main point God's mercy is the only basis upon which one is forgiven and accepted by God and declared!

just not righteousness that we do not even the righteousness that we do because God has worked that righteousness in us but rather the righteousness that comes by God's mercy alone through the person and work of Christ received through faith in him and his finished work the mercy of God see the Pharisee he made a big mistake a mistake that I think a lot of people today are still making he confused the fruit of justification with the root of justification the fruit of salvation with the root of it what's the fruit of justification it's good works it's good works what's the root of justification the mercy of God the mercy of God just kind of make this real personal as you sit here this morning in this sanctuary and sing worship songs and hymns and pray and open your Bibles and listen to scripture read scripture and fellowship with God as you're doing all of that do you ever find yourself saying you know

God is pleased with me today I'm in right with him today ever kind of feel that way you know you just everything is good between me and God because of all this that I've been doing and we just kind of have a confidence about an assurance about our relationship with him because look at the things that I'm involved in and thank you God that I do these things and love these things yeah think about it you know thank you God for making me the way I am thank you for putting these good works in me and it's because of you that I'm not out there like pagans and doing what pagans do on Sundays because of you that I'm here and doing these things and loving these things and that's how I know [47 : 18] I'm saved doesn't that sound so good and so right this is how I have confidence that I'm one of your children because I'm here in church and I love to be here want to be here and because I am serving you and I'm worshiping you and because of these things I can rest in the hope that I am in right relationship with you doesn't that sound right but is that the basis of your confidence today your assurance is it you know the the good and moral and righteous and religious things that that God has just so led me to do and to be involved in is that the basis for your assurance if so may I tell you that you about this close to being just like the

Pharisee who went home unjustified that may be hard to swallow but it's true Paul said to the Galatians remember in Galatians 3 verse 3 are you so foolish are you so foolish having begun in the spirit are you now being made perfect through the flesh it is the works that you do the religious things that you do how foolish so what is the basis of your assurance of salvation it's not your good work even though those good works are wrought by God in you that's not the basis of your assurance of salvation it's not your Bible reading and you your faithful rising early in the morning and having a wonderful holy hour with God which is all very important good that's not the basis of your assurance it's not your church's attendance and service or any other good work it is solely the mercy of God it is his mercy and if you're a true true Christian here today renew your belief in that and if you're not a Christian today then plead your case on the basis of God's mercy that's the only thing you have his mercy oh God have mercy on me the sinner

Joseph Hart wrote a hymn back in the mid 1700s entitled Come Ye Sinners it's in our hymn book matter of fact not all the verses are there but I want to read some of those words listen to these come ye sinner poor and wretched weak and wounded sick and sore sounds like that public Jesus ready stands to save you full of pity and joined with power he is able he is able he is willing doubt no more come ye weary heavy laden bruised and broken by the fall if you tarry till you're better you will never come at all not the righteous not the righteous sinners

Jesus came to call let not conscience make you linger nor a fitness fondly dream all the fitness he requires is to feel your need of him this he gives you this he gives you tis the spirit rising being wow mercy God's mercy alone Thank you.