

Crying Out to the God of Justice

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Preacher: Bill Story

[0:00] To get your Bibles with me, please, and turn to the Gospel of Luke. Luke is the third gospel in the New Testament. So if you open your Bibles to the middle, keep going to the right a little ways, and you'll find Matthew, then Mark, and then Luke. Gospel of Luke, the 18th chapter.

We as a church have been walking through this gospel for a few weeks now. I think the outline says this is our 68th week in Luke, and we're moving quickly. You're thinking 68 weeks isn't moving quickly, boy. Actually, we slow down when Jesus speaks. We want to pay particular attention to his words. For me, we're moving quickly. So we believe in this book. We have some sign or banners around our chapel here that hold to the great themes that we believe in. Sola gratia, I'm saved by grace alone. All of God's grace. Through faith alone, sola fide, through faith alone. That is our part. We receive salvation by faith. In Christ alone.

Sola, solus Christus. In Christ alone. Christ only is our Savior. Grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Soli Deo Glorious, to the glory of God alone. All to Him. Nothing we can boast in. And sola scriptura, according to the scriptures alone. We stand with Luther on that fateful day that he stood before the Catholic Inquisition, where he said, I trust neither councils nor creeds because they contradict each other. But I stand on scripture alone. And he had been commissioned by the Catholic Church to translate the scriptures from the Greek instead of the Latin. And when he did so, because all English translations were based on the Latin back then, when he did so, there were some changes. Like instead of penance, the word was repentance. Big difference.

No purgatory in there. And kinds of different things. But no, we're not here to... There's many things that we stand in agreement with Catholics about. But one difference is grace alone.

[3:07] We don't add any works to our salvation. It's all of God. We do good works out of gratitude. Do good works because we're changed beings.

All that to say, for our visitor's sake, we're looking at the scriptures. And we take that seriously. We go verse by verse and we want to know what it says. And so we dig in.

And we're taking 14 verses. So for me, that's kind of... I could take one verse, you know, and dig in. But I'm trying not to spend... Anyway. If you have your Bibles, we want... What we do first is we read the scripture. And then we ask the Lord to help us as we look at it. And then we dig into it. So if you're able, please stand with me in honor of the word of God as I read from Luke chapter 18. We're looking at 14 verses. Verses 1 to 14.

Luke recording Jesus. So Luke 18 says, he told them. He's speaking of Jesus. He told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.

[4:28] He said, In a certain city, there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected man. And there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, Give me justice against my adversary.

For a while he refused. But afterward, he said to himself, Though I neither fear God nor respect man, Yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will give her justice.

So that she will not keep beating me down by her continual coming. The Lord said, Hear what the unrighteous judge says.

He also told them this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated 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 prayed thus, God, I thank you that I'm not like other men.

[6:03] Extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even particularly like this tax collector. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I get.

But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying, God, be merciful to me, the sinner.

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted. So reads the word.

Let us pray. Father, guide us in this hour, guide us in these moments as we open your word. Help us to hear not only what Jesus said, but why he said it.

[7:11] Help us as we just think for a few moments about these stories, these parables, that we might learn about prayer, we might learn about relationship to you, we might learn about how you endure when we're tempted to lose heart.

Encourage us today. We pray in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. Amen. Today is Easter. Easter is when we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Why was he raised?

Why was he raised? We know why he died. Why was he raised? He's raised.

Because the father accepted his sacrifice as satisfactory. The father accepted his death as a substitutionary sacrifice for sinners.

[8:38] Now he's raised because he's also the son. He is the eternal son. He cannot die. He took on human flesh, right?

To be like us, to go through what we've gone through, to humble himself. But as the eternal son of God, he cannot die. But as man, he dies in our place.

So the father who loves the world, John 3, 16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only son, right?

He sent his son. He loved the world that was full of sinners so much that he gave his son to ultimately die in our place and then be raised.

And his death does what? He saves sinners by what? This cross. Oh, it's all decorated today. Look at that. Good Friday was bare.

[9:50] Someone decorated it. I wonder who that was. And now we've changed it from red to white, purity, and gold, glory.

But he died as a substitute to take our place to cancel our debt. As Paul says in Colossians, our debt, our certificate of debt, our sins were nailed to the cross as he was nailed to a cross.

He became sin on our behalf. It's a legal thing. Justification. And so all who believe upon him and what he has done are forgiven.

Their debt is canceled. So the resurrection shows the glory of the son and all that he did. It shows the glory of the father's love.

The lamb of God, as John the Baptist said, here is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And opens a way. See, there's much more that God wants besides that.

[10:58] He wants not just to forgive us and cleanse us and wash us. But why does he do that? So that we might have a relationship with him.

And we might know him. So sin is removed. So now we have access to him. So Luke 18, we have two parables.

Jesus tells two parables that I think picture for us how we relate to God. What is this relationship with God?

So on the big picture, there's two parables here. Both have a contrast in them. Both pertain to prayer. In verses one to eight, the first parable, there's a contrast between an unrighteous judge and then Jesus says, but God, who's the righteous judge.

All right? So contrast between the unrighteous judge and the righteous God. The purpose in verse one, we're told right off the bat. He told the parable to the effect that we ought to always pray and not lose heart.

[12:07] So there's a purpose to that parable. And then note that the theme that keeps recurring in those first eight verses is the word justice. The woman is asking for justice.

And then Jesus, in his application of the parable, says, will not God give justice to his elect who cried him night and day? Okay, so that's the first parable.

The second parable, big picture, verses nine to 14, is also a contrast, but it's a contrast between two different prayers. A contrast between the Pharisees' prayer and the tax collector's prayer.

Vastly different ways of praying. Vastly different ways of approaching God. And we're told again in verse nine, before Jesus tells the parable, Luke tells us that he told this parable to those who trusted in themselves that they're righteous.

So that's interesting. So he's telling this picture. So one's to encourage us to pray, and the other parable's to discourage us from being like this person who trusts in himself.

[13:16] And then at the end, as Jesus interprets that parable in verse 14, note that the prayer is receiving justification.

As Jesus said, this one went home justified rather than the other one. The other one who thought he's justified, righteous, isn't.

And the one who thought, I'm not at all justified, is justified because of his humility. So very interesting. So let's dig in just a little bit to each of these.

These are prayers. So backing up, I'm thinking this is about relationship. They're both about prayer. Prayer is about relationship. Prayer is not just about asking for things.

I got a checklist that I want God to do for me. The word prayer in the Scripture means to talk to God. There are other words for the things we ask for.

[14:14] A request. Or a supplication. We ask for supply. But prayer can be praise.

It can be just talking to God. It's about relationship. That's what God wants. And so how are these, how do these show us relationship?

Well, I think they show us relationship from two viewpoints. The first parable is about the act of seeking God. Right? The persistent prayer. And the second one, verses 9 to 14, is about the attitude in prayer.

The attitude. How do I even approach God? How do I think about God? What's my mindset when I talk to God? Okay, so let's look at this. First parable shows us that persistence in prayer is motivated by who God is.

What keeps us praying? Do I persist in prayer to get what I want? Is that what that parable is teaching?

[15:25] The woman who keeps bothering the judge, right? And Jesus is applying that. Is Jesus teaching that you have to just keep pestering God to get what you want? If you pester Him and annoy Him enough, if you bother Him, He'll finally give in and give you what you want.

Is that what that parable teaches? I think not. Rather, the way Jesus applies it in verse 6, 7, and 8 is it's not about what we do.

It's about who God is. Because Jesus asks the question, will not God give justice? In contrast to the unrighteous judge, God is righteous.

So what motivates me to keep coming is who God is. What motivates me to keep coming is not what I get as a thing. It's what I have in relationship to Him.

That's what keeps me coming because of who He is. He's not unjust. He's not bothered. He's not annoyed and finally giving in. Right?

[16:33] Who God... See, your view of God will either motivate you or turn you away from who God is, from seeking God. If your view of God is negative, if you grow up in a bad situation where you've got this horrible view of Christianity and who God is, that will turn you away from who God is.

But if you know God as He's revealed and as Jesus reveals it, you'll just keep seeking Him. Not because of what you get, but because of who He is.

So, let's break this down. Notice, He gives a purpose in verse 1. This parable, He told this parable, verse 1, to the effect that they ought always pray and not lose heart.

So, it shows that we need to pray. We need to always pray. It's indispensable. It's essential to our walk. But He recognizes, right, to always pray and not lose heart.

So, He recognizes that we have a tendency because we are weak to lose heart. We have a tendency to wear out.

[17:46] We have a tendency to want to give up. Do we not? Am I alone in this walk in Christianity? I get discouraged.

And I'm a feeler. Those of you that know me know that. I get discouraged easy. I get depressed. And so, I find I'm vulnerable to those feelings.

And it's very easy to just, well, God's not hearing. God's not going to, you know, I don't see anything encouraging. I don't see answers to what I'm asking. Right? Although the answer might be no. Or the answer often is wait. Right? I mean, there's only three answers to prayer. It's yes, no, wait. So, so how do we continue in constant prayer? We need that, He says. He tells us so that we might always pray.

[18:53] And how do I overcome the temptation to lose heart? So then we see the picture, the parable. Verse 2. He says, there's a judge.

Certainly there's a judge. And who's this judge? Interesting, he's described as, he doesn't fear God and he doesn't respect man. I mean, this guy. This is the worst of all judges.

He doesn't fear God. So in other words, he doesn't care about what's right and wrong, what's fair, what's just, his job. Judges are representatives of God.

Just as governments are representatives of God, as long as he allows them to be. But if a government or a judge doesn't respect God, doesn't fear God, they're not going to do what's right. And then he doesn't care about people. He doesn't care. What kind of judge? What is this guy doing? Maybe he's one of those judges that just takes the bribe to get whatever they want.

[20:02] Right? Because he doesn't care. He doesn't care about justice, doesn't care about people, has no concern. He's not moved by people. This woman's sob story, he doesn't care. Yet, we find in this story, verses 3, so the widow who keeps coming, right, and she's asking for justice.

We don't know what about. A widow in the first century would be someone without rights. If her husband dies, she doesn't have rights to the property or any of that.

She is absolutely at the mercy of anyone else. Hopefully a relative that will help. Remember the story of Ruth, right? Naomi was just so vulnerable.

Not only her husband dies, but then her children die. What will she do? You know, and up comes this Boaz guy. Not guy. He's cool.

And he's a little bit attracted to Ruth. Anyway, that's a different story. But understand, for a widow, I mean, what recourse does she have? Not like our society where you have, you know, this society, she has no legal rights.

[21:14] So she's appealing to a judge. This is her only hope. Apparently relatives aren't going to help. Maybe relative is her adversary that she's asking for justice, right? That he might give her what she ought to have.

We don't know. She's appealing for justice. Do what's right. So he's unwilling. Verse 4, for a while he refused, but afterwards he said to himself, though I neither fear God nor respect men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me.

Literally, keeps making me work. Keeps making me do what I'm supposed to do. You know, actually think about the case and pay attention to what she said.

I will give her justice so that she will not beat me down. Yeah, it's, the word Jesus uses is a blow to the face.

It's like she's just, she's just beating him up verbally. So he gives in. So we see the persistence wins out.

[22:22] So that's where I said at the beginning, is that what this parable is about? Thank goodness Jesus interprets it for us instead of us because we'd go all kinds of places with this parable because we'd think, oh, this parable teaches that we need to wear God down because we're obviously the ones in the widow's place and God's obviously the one in the, in the unjust judge's place.

So we think that's what it's about. I got to just keep coming. I just got to keep coming. Keep coming. Well, what about if you, if you need to keep coming? See, how does that help somebody who's depressive? How does that help somebody who's already worn out?

How does that help somebody that's still struggling who has no energy to go and keep persisting? What help is that?

None. So it's great for all the type A's. Great for all the people that have energy to seek God and can do that. You know, the one in the next parable, the one who, who, who tithes and who, you know, is a real achiever.

So, Jesus tells us, okay, there's a couple of points here. Verse six, Jesus says, first of all, hear what the unrighteous judge says.

[23:49] So there is a point about the woman's persistence that is to be taken, her persistence. There's something about this woman, what this judge says in verse five about this woman, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I'll give her justice so that she will not beat me down by her continual coming.

She is persistent. She is, she has resolve. She is, she perseveres. She, she, she is probably motivated by desperation.

Okay. This is her last hope. She reminds me of the story, remember, in Matthew 15 when Jesus takes a retreat and he and his disciples are trying to get away from the crowds and then this woman follows them.

Remember this woman? She's called the, the, the Syrophenician. She's a foreign woman, right? And she's crying out to Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, have mercy on me.

My daughter's demonized. And, and at first, Jesus doesn't say anything. It's like he ignores her. And then she keeps crying out and then the disciples, they're a big help.

[25:03] They're like, send her away. She's annoying us. Real compassionate group of guys there, huh? That's the church. A little too close to home, isn't it?

And then Jesus says to her, he says, oh, I, you know, it's not right to give the children's bread to the dogs. Remember that? Whew. He's calling her a dog.

First he ignores her, then he, then, you know, it's kind of like, is this Jesus? This doesn't sound like Jesus. And then the woman, it's like, as soon as he says to the dogs, she's like, but the dog, the little doggies to get the crumbs under the table and that's good enough for me.

And Jesus, remember what Jesus says then about her? Hey guys, that's what great faith looks like. Because she keeps coming. She keeps coming.

She keeps coming. Is, is that story to glorify that she's so persistent? No, I think she's just, is desperate for her, she's a mom.

[26:11] Her daughter's demonized. She wants her daughter healed. She's desperate. But why does she keep coming? Because Jesus calls it faith because she knew something about Jesus. Doesn't matter what the disciples said.

Doesn't matter that he doesn't hear me at first or doesn't, that he seems to be ignoring me. Prayer like that? Prayer like that? You're praying for something and it seems like God's not hearing, seems like God's not doing anything with it.

Then you go and then people at church say, well, maybe you should stop praying about that.

Maybe God said no. You know, they're kind of discouraging you. But you know something about God and so you keep going, you keep going, you keep going.

And sometimes God does that with us in prayer. He, come on, show me how much you love me.

Come on. I often tease about Jesus sitting in heaven looking down at us and he's sitting with Peter and John and Bartholomew and all those guys and he'll be like nudging Peter going, watch what I'm going to do to Bill.

Watch, watch this. It's going to hurt. Bill will appreciate it. And Peter will be like, yeah, I remember when you did that to me.

[27:34] Not that I'm a Peter, but I think sometimes Jesus looks like that. So, resolve, perseverance.

But then I think Jesus' real point is in verse seven. Will not God give justice to his elect who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them?

I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. The contrast. This parable is about a contrast between the unrighteous judge who's not movable until you annoy him, but he's not moved by justice, he's not moved by compassion, he's not moved by what matters, he's only moved by expediency.

Get her out. The contrast is God will not God give justice. God is a God of justice. God knows all about, he can't do anything but what's just.

That's why Jesus had to die on the cross because he had to do what was right. And what was right was that sin must be paid for.

[29:04] And only one could pay it. Well, we could pay for our own, but we could never pay for our own because it piles up, doesn't it?

So we have a God who is just, we have a God who does care, we have a God who does want to hear us, a God who will answer us.

That's the contrast. And then Jesus asks the question at the end there, verse 8, when the Son of Man comes, when Jesus returns, will he find faith on earth?

Will he find faith that keeps pursuing God because of who he is? See, persistence in prayer is motivated by who God is.

That's it. Persistence in prayer is not motivated in Jesus' teaching by that's how you get answers.

[30:08] Persistence in prayer is motivated biblically by who God is. Because I pursue God not for the answer, I pursue God for God. I persist in talking to God because talking to God is good.

And often, it's enough. It's enough. Will he give me justice?

There will be a day he will give me justice. My king is on his throne. This is my father's world.

Though the wrong seems strong, right?

He is the owner yet. Paul repeatedly calls us to persistence in prayer. Romans 12, 12.

Rejoice in hope. Be patient in tribulation. Be constant in prayer. Ephesians 6, 18. Keep praying.

Praying at all times. Why? Ephesians 6 talks about putting on the armor of God.

[31:18] How do we put on the armor of God? By praying at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication. That's how we put on the armor. That's how we stand firm. Why do we need to pray at all times?

Because we're in a battle. Somebody brought that up. I forget who brought that up. We're in a battle. Yeah. We're in a battle. So we're praying at all times.

We're putting on, right? We're putting on the breastplate. We're putting on the belt. We're putting on the helmet. We're putting on the, taking up the shield, taking up the sword, et cetera, so that we might stand firm.

Philippians 4. Why do we keep praying? There's a promise of peace that comes by the prayer of faith. Philippians 4.6 says, do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer, that's talking to God, and supplication, asking for things, with thanksgiving, that's the attitude, let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God.

When you do that, the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Colossians 4.2, again, it's about relationship.

[32:28] Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. 1 Thessalonians 5.16-18, rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything, give thanks.

That's kind of an all, all, all, isn't it? Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God for you. If that's not about relationship, I don't know what is. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, pray without ceasing, I don't have that many things to ask for. Well, it's not about asking, it's about communication, relationship.

It's not this, this formal thing, it's just through the day, I'm thinking of the Lord, I'm asking, okay, help me, oh, here comes Joe, oh, you know, whatever, it's, it's an attitude of prayer and thanksgiving.

So how do we keep praying when we're weary? How do we give, how do we keep praying, how do we persist when we're losing heart?

[33:39] Remember, it's, it's not about the work, it's about the who. Persistence is motivated by who God is, not what I do. Second parable's about humility, you look at verses nine through 14, Jesus tells another parable, right?

And this one, I think, is about humility. It's about the attitude of prayer. Humility in prayer is the mark of those God justifies. Humility in prayer is the mark of those God justifies.

Again, verse nine, he tells what, he, Luke tells us why Jesus told this parable. He told the parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt.

He's talking to those, think about this, who trusted in themselves that they're righteous. Know anybody like that? Maybe you're like that. Why are you laughing?

That's not funny. If you trust in yourselves, if you think you're okay, you think you do all the right things, you think you check all the boxes, you think you're okay before God.

[34:51] You think that you have the ability to do what's right before God. That's what Jesus is talking to. This person is a self-righteous person.

They're self-reliant. Well, isn't that what our culture tells us? The culture tells us we should believe in ourselves. Trust your heart. Well, if I trust my heart, what does Scripture say about my heart? My heart is wicked and exceedingly deceitful. Oh, he has a good heart. I know what that means. I know, you know, there's a sincerity. But deep down, what God says is, no, you can't trust your heart. That's what gets us into trouble.

They're self-dependent. They're self-reliant. They're self-confident. And they actually believe they're better than others. Observe here in this parable two attitudes.

[35:58] We see the Pharisee, right? Verses 11 and 12. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus, God, I thank you that I'm not like other men. What a thing to thank God for.

He doesn't thank God for God. He thanks God that he's not like other people. What kind of a thanksgiving is that? He's compared.

So he's a comparer, right? He's a comparer. He's a divider. He's a, he's a computer. He compares himself to others and he makes himself superior. And then he, then he talks about how good he, you know, I fast twice a week and I, and I give tithes all that I get.

Here's the thing. Note about the Pharisee. he, it's interesting, the two things that he lists that he does, I fast twice a week and I give tithes of all I get. Neither of those are required in the Old Testament. Now, the Israelites are told to fast once a year on the day of atonement, okay? Not twice a week. And they're told to tithe, but not tithe of everything that they acquire. They're told to tithe everything that they receive.

Right? They're fruits, right? They're flocks, they're herds, they're income. Not what they go by.

[37:53] So in other words, he's going beyond the law in both places. But that's the Pharisee. The Pharisee wants to go beyond the law, thinking that if I go beyond the law, then I'm really righteous. That's why they added all the rules to the Sabbath, right? Keep the Sabbath. There's one law about the Sabbath. Keep the Sabbath. Right? Remember the Sabbath. Honor the Lord and the Son. Just set that day aside. What does the Pharisee do? He adds all these, well, you can't, you can only walk this far. You know, you can't do this. You can't, you can't, you know, stir anything because that's considered work. You know, you can't pick, like Jesus picked grain as you go through the field. And Jesus set out to break all those Pharisee rules. You know that, right? He just was just, he pushed their button on that. So, so here's that mentality that Jesus is speaking against in this parable. Those who trusted in themselves that they're righteous. See, if

I can, if I can check enough boxes, I'm righteous. Well, what does the average person do? Well, I'll do more. I'll get up every day and I'll read my Bible first. Check. Then I'll pray. Check. Then I'll read the Bible some more at noon. Ooh, double check. I get extra credit. Then I'll go witness to somebody. Check, check, check. They've made a list that makes them feel good. They've made a list that they can go like this. That's the person who trusts in themselves. Is it wrong to make lists? No, I'm, I'm compulsive about that too, but I like to feel like I get things done, but, but to make me feel good before God, I could never. So there's that person. And then in contrast, verse 13, you have the publican. You have the tax collector standing far off, would not even lift his eyes to heaven, beat his breast saying, God be merciful to me. The sinner. Contrast him. He stands far off. He feels his unworthiness. He beats his breasts. What does that tell you about him? He hates his sin. He feels the shame of his sin. He feels his sin. And then what he says is, is actually remarkable. Our translations say, be merciful, but actually the word that he uses is, and it's probably why they didn't use it because it's a little more removed from us. Be propitious.

You ever heard the word propitiation? You've heard of it if you've read Romans, because it's in there. It's one of those words Paul likes, Paul likes to pile up with justification or redemption and propitiation. It means to make an atonement. And the Old Testament has the picture of cover my sin.

So he's not just, so he is asking for mercy, but he's asking for more than that. He's asking God to deal with his sin. He's asking God to, to, to satisfy his justice about his sin. I mean, I mean, it's a, it's a kind of a heavy prayer. It's like, whoa, this guy's a deep thinker. He's not just saying, oh, forgive me.

He's saying, deal with it. Deal with it. This is how God did propitiation. This is how God made atonement for sin. This is how God took all our sins away. This is how God covered up all our sins and threw them into the ocean far, far, far away, far as the east is from the west, et cetera.

[42:03] That's what he's asking for. Interesting. So, and that's it. That's it. He, he doesn't talk about himself in verse 13. The tax code doesn't, I mean, most of it's action and most of it's just, he can't even lift up his eyes. He's, he's just, and, and then he doesn't, our translation says, be merciful to me, a sinner. What he said literally was be propitious to me, the sinner.

I'm the sinner. I'm the worst of all. And if you stand before a holy God, that's how you feel. You're not comparing yourself to anybody else. You feel like, I mean, that's what Paul said of himself. I'm the foremost of sinners. Didn't he? Didn't he keep the law? Yeah. But he persecuted Christ's church. And for that, he felt shame. Foremost of sinners. So Jesus says, what, what happens? Verse 14. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. And the one who humbles himself will be exalted.

This one is justified. This one, that word justified means to be declared righteous. It's a legal term. It's not something you feel. When Christ has died for your sins, you are justified.

You are declared righteous. That's why Paul called people in his churches saints, holy ones. How many saints are here? None? Do you have faith or do you have feeling? So you're responding by feeling, right? Feeling, no, I don't feel like a saint. If you have faith, you say, yeah, I'm a saint.

[43:58] I'm a saint because God said I'm a saint, period. It's not about how I act. It's about who he declared me to be. Does that make sense? Okay. Yeah. We don't want to say, oh, I'm a saint because it's like, oh, holy. I get it. I get it. You're showing your humility and that's great.

He's justified. He's declared righteous, which means he's right with God. He's accepted to God. And that's a gift. Why? Jesus explains this again, this old proverb, whoever exalts himself will be humbled. Whoever humbles himself will be exalted. The one humbling himself, how does he humble himself?

Well, he recognizes his true condition before God as he can't lift up his eyes, as he's beating his breast. These are just expressions of how he recognizes who he is before God. He doesn't come walking before God demanding. He comes walking before God humble and totally at the mercy of God to show him mercy. That's the attitude. Humility in prayer is the mark of those God justifies. His condition says the opposite of what the Pharisees said. He's not okay before God. He can't be right.

He doesn't trust in himself. He absolutely does not trust in himself. And he's not comparing himself to anybody. So how can undeserving sinners be justified by a holy God? Paul gives us the explanation in Romans three. He says, we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law.

[46:02] It's the purpose of the law so that every mouth may be stopped. That's the purpose of the law to shut our mouths. That the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law, no human being will be justified in his sight. Nobody can be right before God. Period. That sounds like trouble, doesn't it?

That sounds like bad news. Since through the law comes knowledge of sin. That's the purpose of the law is to show us our sin, to reveal that we're sinners. The law is holy, righteous, and just. It shows us what the path is. The problem is, as we try to walk on the path, what happens? We go off the path real quick.

That's the law. The law says, you're off, Bill. Or you're way off, Bill. That's what the law does. It just shows what's right. And by that, as I stand before the law, I'm not right.

But now, Paul says, but now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law.

Although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God, which is through faith in Christ Jesus for all who believe. There is no distinction. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. That's all, that's our condition together. We've all sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified, how? By his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forth as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith alone.

See why we put these up here? Grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone. And we're about to come to this one. This was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance, he had passed over former sins. That's why the whole world wasn't constantly wiped out. It was to show his righteousness at the present time so that he might be just and justifier. See, how's God do that? How does a holy, just God forgive sinners? Because in his holiness and his justice, he can't do that unless he stops becoming holy and just. Why can't he set aside sin? Because it has justly, it has justly been taken care of.

[48:52] That's why. So God's love and God's justice can come together in the cross. Isn't that amazing? I mean, it's just amazing. People talk about who God is. Oh, I don't believe in a God of, of, of, you know, wrath. What do you believe in? I mean, you don't like to believe in wrath. That's fine. I get it.

My God's just a God of love. Well, if he's a God or the God, sorry, then he must be holy and just and righteous as well as merciful and compassionate and loving. See, all of that's in this. All of that is in that. That's not just love. That is justice. That is holiness.

That's why there's a white. It's holy. Jesus was holy. So that he might be just and justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. Then what becomes of our boasting? It's excluded. By what kind of law? By law of works? No.

Well, but by the law of faith. Because the only way we receive salvation is by his grace through faith alone. There's nothing I bring, but I trust, I accept, I receive because I believe absolutely everything that he did. And when I receive it, God gets all the glory.

And how do I find out about that? What a blessing that we have this. How can a sinner be justified before God? By grace alone, through faith alone, and Christ alone.

[51:04] Nothing can I bring to make me okay. It is the humble who is lifted up, the one who sees himself as he really is. And it's not just, again, it's not just the death of Jesus Christ that saves. If Jesus had not been raised from the dead, there would be no salvation. Remember how Paul talks about it? If there's no resurrection, we have no hope. If there's no resurrection, we have no promise.

Let's eat, drink, and be merry because tomorrow we die. If there's no resurrection, what are we doing? Why would we sacrifice anything? Why are we hoping for something that's not real? If Jesus did not raised from the dead, today we're talking about resurrection. And his resurrection glorifies that what he did right here was fully accepted, was propitious, was just, was atonement, was salvation, was redemption.

Humility and prayer is the mark of those God justifies. Because he lives, I live. Because he lives, amen. Father, thank you for our time. Take these words of Jesus and apply them to our hearts individually wherever we need that. For those, Lord, today who are weary, who have lost heart, who have struggled in the way, who have been beaten down by life, are going through difficult things and are discouraged.

Oh, Father, show them who you are. Show them who you are. Remind them who you are. That you are a loving Father. You're accepting Father. You want them. You desire them.

Show them the value of just knowing you. Just talking to you. And expose, Father, any self-righteousness in us. And purify us to be like this tax collector who really saw who he was. And he's the one that you justified.

[53:50] This we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.