

***SonBurned: Fun in The Son***  
**Message for June 17, 2018/Father's Day**  
**North East United Methodist Church**  
**Rev. Dr. Drew M. Christian**

Luke 18:9-14 – The Tax Collector & The Pharisee.

*Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: "Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: 'I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don't cheat, I don't sin, and I don't commit adultery. I'm certainly not like that tax collector! I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.'*

*"But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.' I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."*

**PRAYER**

\*\*\*\*\*

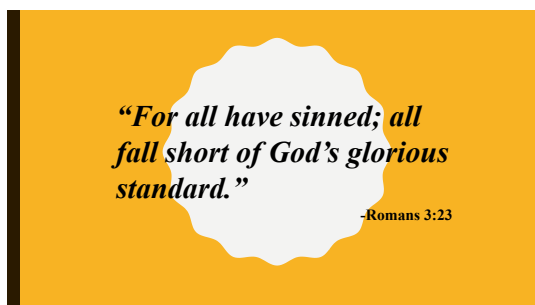
I love how John Ortberg describes the Bible in his book, Everybody's Normal Til' You Get To Know Them. Ortberg writes,

*"One of the most ironic remarks about the Bible I hear from time to time is when someone says that it's a book about pious, stained-glass characters who do not reflect the real world. I always know that means they haven't read it. Have you ever noticed how many messed-up families there are in Genesis? Here's a quick summary: Cain is jealous of Abel and kills him. Lamech introduces polygamy to the world. Noah – the most righteous man of his generation – gets drunk and curses his own grandson. Lot, when his home is surrounded by residents of Sodom who want to violate his visitors, offers instead that they can have sex with his daughters. Later on, his daughters get him drunk and are impregnated by him – and Lot is the most righteous man in Sodom! Abraham plays favorites between his sons Isaac and Ishmael; they're estranged. Isaac plays favorites between his sons Jacob and Esau; they're bitter enemies for twenty years. Jacob plays favorites between Joseph and his other eleven sons; the brothers want to kill Joseph and end up selling him into slavery. Their marriages are disasters: Abraham has sex with his wife's servant, then sends her and their son off to the wilderness at his wife's request. Isaac and Rebekah fight over which boy gets the blessing. Jacob marries two wives and ends up with both their maids as concubines as well when they get into a fertility contest. Jacob's firstborn son, Reuben, sleeps with his father's concubine. Another son, Judah, sleeps with his daughter-in-law when she*

*disguises herself as a prostitute. She does this because she is childless since her first two husbands – both sons of Judah – were so wicked that God killed them both; and Judah reneged on his obligations to her. These people need a therapist. These are not the Waltons. They need Dr. Phil, Dr. Laura, Dr. Ruth, Dr. Spock, Dr. Seuss – they need somebody. (Feel any better about your family?)*

Ortberg goes on to write, “*Why does the writer of Genesis include all this stuff? There’s a very important reason. The writer of Scripture is trying to establish a deep theological truth: Everybody’s weird.*”

Paul puts it this way...



Ortberg writes, “*When you deal with human beings, you have come to the “as-is” corner of the universe. Think for a moment about someone in your life. Maybe the person you know best, love most. That person is slightly irregular. That person comes with a little tag: There’s a flaw here. A streak of deception, a cruel tongue, a passive spirit, an out-of-control temper...*”

Human beings come “AS IS” ...”*For all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious standard.*”



Unfortunately,

**We often fail to see  
our own  
“AS IS” tag.**

Read Matthew 7:1-5:

*“Stop judging others, and you will not be judged. For others will treat you as you treat them. Whatever measure you use in judging others, it will be used to measure how you are judged. And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own?”*

*How can you think of saying, ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log from your own eye; then perhaps you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.”*

~Matthew 7:1-5

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “Anybody who has once been horrified by the dreadfulness of his own sin that nailed Jesus to the cross will no longer be horrified by even the rankest sins of his brother.”

The problem is that many of us do not even realize we have fallen into judgment and pride. Don’t we see this in the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee.



Two men, a Publican, or tax collector, and a Pharisee, a religious leader, priest, come into the church. Now it is important to note the similarities in these two men. Both believe in God, both pray, both go to church...but Jesus said, only one *“returned home justified before God.”* The difference was the heart.

The Pharisee comes in, walks up to the altar, stands before God, and says,

***“I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don’t cheat, I don’t sin, and I don’t commit adultery. I’m certainly not like that tax collector! I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.”***

-Luke 18:11-12

Such judgment passed on others...such pride...such self-righteousness.

But the Publican, the tax collector,

***“But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’”***

-Luke 18:13

But let’s look, not only at the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee, but also another familiar parable, as well as a profound moment from Jesus’ ministry.

\*\*\*\*\*

Two other stories...

The first story we spoke of last week...



Luke 15: 20-24 – The Prodigal Son & The Older Brother.

*“So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’”*

-Luke 15:20-21

*“But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.”*

-Luke 15:22-24

And then we read in Luke 15: 28-30:

*“The older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in. His father came out and begged him, but he replied, ‘All these years I’ve slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to...’*

*...And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!”*

-Luke 15:28-30

The second story...



Luke 7: 36-39 – The Sinful Woman Who Anointed Jesus’ Feet.

*“One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat. When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping...*

*...Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, ‘If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She’s a sinner!’”*

-Luke 7:36-39

\*\*\*\*\*

Christian thinkers have divided sin into two categories:



These three stories show individuals in these two categories.

In each story the people guilty of the Sins of the Flesh knew they were in big trouble. Sins of the flesh involve appetites that get out of control such as lust, greed, gluttony, drunkenness, laziness, etc...



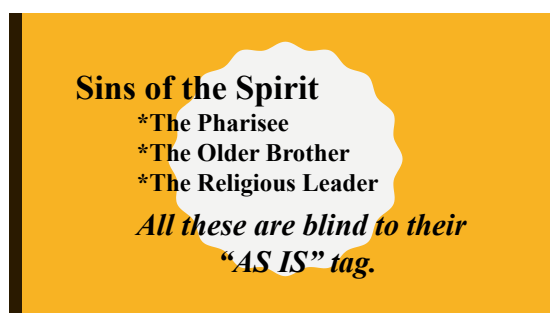
In all three of these stories we see the one who sinned...the tax collector who cheated the people in taxes, the younger son who left home and squandered his inheritance on wild living, the sinful woman who gave into her lust...we see these individuals Recognize their "AS IS" tag...we see them repent, fall to their knees, and cry out to God...we see them forgiven and welcomed home.

They recognize, as the prophet Isaiah voiced,



Furthermore, in each story we see those guilty of the Sins of the Spirit.

These “*sins of the spirit*” are much more difficult to see; they include things such as pride, arrogance, self-righteousness, and being judgmental.



In each story, there is an individual Blind to their own “AS IS” tag...the Pharisee who notes that he is doing all the right and religious actions...the older brother who is angry for he has stayed home and been the “good” son... the religious leader who is quick to call out the woman’s sin...They are all blind...focused on the other person in the story...judging them...refusing to look in the mirror...These individuals actually see themselves as “giants in the faith;” they don’t have a clue that they are guilty of self-righteousness, arrogance, and pride.

Pope John Paul VI – “*Most serious sin is one of thought, the sin of pride.*”

A danger exists...the danger of seeing ourselves as “normal,” righteous individuals because our battle may not be with the “*sins of the flesh*,” those sins that are easily visible out in the world, but instead our battle may be more with the “*sins of the spirit*,” those sins that we may not even realize we are guilty of...judgmental thoughts, a superior attitude, impatient words, bitter resentments, unforgiveness, pride, arrogance, little room for love, a contempt for the weak.

We fail to see these “*sins of the spirit*” because we are basking in our spiritual maturity, having avoided the “*sins of the flesh*” which we see visible in those around us. We catch ourselves comparing ourselves to others, saying, “I read my Bible, am part of a small group, pray each night...I’m on track...Heck...I’m much further along they he is...You’ll never catch me doing what she did...Adultery, not on your life...neglected his children, not me...”

Our scarlet letter is easily hidden...many times even from ourselves.

Often we are quick to point out another's mistakes, another's faults... Yet, so slow to look in the mirror...



**Yet, so slow to look in the mirror...**

People want the world to change around them, but they don't want to change themselves... Often one is quick to offer criticisms but slow to offer suggestions and the hands & feet to put those suggestions into action.

The reason many are so slow to look in the mirror... and so quick to point out another's mistakes is because we are afraid... we are afraid of what God will show us if we look too closely... Once we begin to look in the mirror, take our eyes off our neighbor's sins, look to God, God begins to show us ourselves in God's light... and all our blemishes and warts begin to show... the darkness can no longer hide them...

And we get burned. We get Sonburned.

2 Corinthians 3:16-18 (The Message)

*"And so we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like him."*

-2 Corinthians 3:16-18 (MSG)

Michelangelo, the artist, never created... he discovered... uncovered his art, bringing out what God had created... He would often stand in front of an unfinished piece and yell in frustration, "Come out."

It hurts as God shows us and then begins to chip away, begins to burn away, those attitudes and behaviors that are not Christ-like. God's grace is like a wire-brush moving across our being, scraping away anything that is not, as Paul writes, in Philippians 4:8...

***“...true, and honorable, and right,  
and pure, and lovely, and  
admirable...things that are excellent  
and worthy of praise.”***

**-Philippians 4:8**

Max Lucado writes...

***“God loves you just the way  
you are but refuses to leave  
you that way; He wants you to  
be just like Jesus.”***

**-Max Lucado**

William Barclay puts it this way... *“True prayer comes from setting our lives beside the life of God. No doubt all that the Pharisee said was true. He did fast; he did meticulously give tithes; he was not like other people; still less was he like that tax-collector. But the question is not, ‘Am I as good as my neighbor?’ The question is, ‘Am I as good as God?’”*

Barclay continues with a story. *“Once I made a journey by train to England. As we passed through the Yorkshire moors I saw a little whitewashed cottage and it seemed to shine with an almost radiant whiteness. Some days later I made the journey back to Scotland. The snow had fallen and was lying deep all around. We came again to the little white cottage, but this time its whiteness seemed drab and soiled and almost grey in comparison with the pure whiteness of the driven snow. It all depends what we compare ourselves with. And when we set our lives beside the life of Jesus and beside the holiness of God, all that is left to say is, ‘God be merciful to me – the sinner.’”*

Let’s take a moment to look in the mirror...

Are you the younger son?



...repentant and returning home to your Heavenly Father or are you the older brother, seeing yourself as the “good” son, worthy of reward and respect?

Are you the woman?



...falling to her knees, anointing Jesus’ feet...or are you the religious leader, seeing yourself as a very spiritual person, sitting on the sidelines in judgment?

Are you the publican, the tax collector?



...coming to the altar and beating upon your breast, “*O God, be merciful to me for I am a sinner*” or are you the Pharisee...rating yourself highly in comparison to others, feeling no need to throw yourself upon God’s mercy?

Do you recognize your “AS IS” tag or are you blind to the “*log in your own eye*”?

Will you look in the mirror...stare deep into your own life, attitudes, and actions?

Will you trust God, through His Son, Jesus Christ, to begin to change you...transform you?

Will you fight against the pride and self-righteousness, the sins of the spirit, which so easily sneak their way into our hearts?

Will you show grace to others because you recognize the grace God has shown to you?

Knowing your Heavenly Father loves you and is merciful, will you allow yourself to be  
**SonBurned?**