

Mission: The mission of Fig Tree Ministries is to help people deepen their understanding of the biblical text.

Class Learning Objectives: Gain more in-depth insights into the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector.

1. **Our Capacity for Self-Righteousness** – All of us can put up a “wall” of self-righteousness relative to the people around us. The ease and speed at which this can happen are astounding. When we erect a wall of self-righteousness, we run the risk of diminishing our neighbor's humanity – us not seeing the fulness of their humanity in all its messiness. Jesus wants us to be aware of our capacity toward judgment and to avoid it at all costs (Matt. 7:1-6).

Jesus uses this parable, as well as others, to express the challenges of human interaction.

2. **Luke 18:9-14**¹²³:

9 - To **some** who were **confident of their own righteousness** and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable:

“Prayer” we call “Worship.” Prayer time is at 3 PM (Acts 3:1).

10 - “Two men went up to the **temple to pray**, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

There are (2) daily sacrifices (Ex. 29:38-41). This is called *Tamid*. The *Tamid* sacrifice can qualify for minor or unintentional sins.

11- The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, **I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector.**

The Hebrew word we translate “sacrifice” is *korban*. *Korban* is a Hebrew word that means – “**to come near.**” How do we “come near” to God? Through a sacrifice – Jesus.

12 - I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

13 - “But the tax collector **stood at a distance**. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, **have mercy (Gr: *hilaskomai*)** on me, a sinner.’

This Greek word means “Atonement.” The normal word for “mercy” is *eleeson* – see Luke 18:38. Luke knows the difference and wants to emphasize the desire for atonement and forgiveness.

14 - “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

¹ Timothy A. Friedrichsen. “The Temple, a Pharisee, a Tax Collector, and the Kingdom of God: Rereading a Jesus Parable (Luke 18:10-14A).” *Journal of Biblical literature* 124, no. 1 (April 1, 2005): 89–119.

² Dennis Hamm. “The Tamid Service in Luke-Acts: The Cultic Background Behind Luke’s Theology of Worship (Luke 1:5-25; 18:9-14; 24:50-53; Acts 3:1; 10:3, 30).” *The Catholic Biblical quarterly* 65, no. 2 (April 1, 2003): 215–231.

³ Bailey, Kenneth E. *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels*. Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2008.

3. “Prayer” Time:

- 3 PM at the Temple daily
- Acts 3:1, Acts 10:3
- Attendees go into the Temple for the daily sacrifice and to pray/worship God.

4. Daily Sacrifice - *Tamid*

- Exodus 29: 38-41 – God’s commandment for the daily sacrifice.
- Luke/Acts is built around the daily sacrifice:

Luke is the author of both the **Gospel of Luke** and the **Book of Acts**. There are prominent themes that occur throughout both documents. One of those themes is the prayer time that goes along with the daily 3 PM sacrifice.

The Gospel of Luke opens with a priest - Zechariah (John the Baptists father) - serving in the temple at the 3 PM prayer and sacrifice time.

In Acts 3:1, Peter and John go to the temple to pray – at 3 PM.

Finally, Jesus breaths his last breath at exactly the time of the daily sacrifice – 3 PM. See Luke 23:44, Matt. 27:45, or Mark 15:33.

5. The Hebrew word for “sacrifice” is *korban*

- *Korban* – means “to come near.”
- It is through a sacrifice that we come near to a Holy God.
- The sacrifice represents the penalty that should have been paid by the offending individual.
- Individuals must have a repentant heart. An offering to God without a repentant heart is like an empty vessel.

Notes:

6. Mercy or Atonement?

- v. 13, “God, have *mercy* on me, a sinner.” Is mercy the intended idea?
- The Greek word that Luke uses is (*hilaskomai*) a word that is generally used for “Atonement” – (see Heb. 2:17)
- Atonement = ‘to make at one’ or ‘at-one-ment.’
 - The concept of atonement is tied to words such as forgiveness and reconciliation.
- A paraphrase of v. 13 might be – “God, **let the sacrifice be for me**, a sinner.”
- By using the Greek word for atonement rather than the common word for mercy (*eleeson*), the parable's focus turns toward the atoning sacrifice.

7. What is the point?

- Secondary meaning has to do with Temple, Sacrifice, and Atonement.
- Those details are in the parable, but the disciples did not need a **parable** to emphasize that you must have a repentant heart.
- The **primary** meaning is on Self-Righteousness –
 - The Pharisee says, “I’m glad I’m not like that guy.”
 - You/we say _____
- We all have the capacity to effortlessly and without awareness, erect a wall of self-righteousness.
- Re-read verse 9. Who are the “some”? All of us.
- Forgiveness is the antidote to judging others. We must practice forgiveness and forgiving those we differ from so that we do not fall into judgment and reduce their humanity.

Notes:

Faith Principle: All of us have the capacity for self-righteousness. Our ability to compare ourselves to others and quickly come to a judgement about them is a sin that divides humanity. Putting up a wall of self-righteousness can happen in an instant and without us being consciously aware that it is happening.

Jesus always wants us to examine our own hearts. This Parable causes us to say, “I’m glad I’m not like that guy (the Pharisee),” which exposes our capacity for self-righteousness and judgment towards others.

Faith Principle: Forgiveness is of primary importance. The antidote for judgement towards other is to forgive them.

When we regularly practice forgiveness, we release ourselves from the responsibility of making judgments about others and allow God – the perfect judge – to handle each individual as he is capable of doing.

Practicing forgiveness includes forgiving ourselves of our own limitations and the complexity of our humanity. The more we forgive ourselves the easier it is to forgive others.

The more we forgive others the easier it is to see the fulness of their humanity. Losing sight of another person’s humanity – dehumanizing them – is one of the root causes of all wars and genocides throughout history.

Faith Principle: Jesus dies on the cross at 3PM – the exact time of the daily *tamid* sacrifice.

His sacrificial death becomes the eternal *tamid* sacrifice. If you confess your sins, repent in your heart, and accept Jesus as your atoning sacrifice, then God is faithful to forgive you and restore the relationship with him that had been marred by sin.

Notes:
