





When You Pray

Matthew 6:5-13
Luke 18:9-14

Parables of Jesus

Begin the lesson by looking at the passage in Luke. Jesus is telling this parable specifically to certain people who “trusted in themselves.” They believed they were righteous, but they despised others.

Discuss: How does God feel about those who “trust in themselves?”
Proverbs 28:26 says that he who trusts in his own heart is a fool.
Jeremiah 17:5 says that the man who trusts in man is cursed...and his heart departs from the Lord.
But...Psalm 40:4 says that blessed is the one who makes the Lord his trust.

Jesus is speaking to people that think that they are righteous; they think they are holy but they are only trusting in themselves. It tells us that these people despise other people. They are proud.

What does “despise” mean? It means to feel contempt. It is to look down on someone as beneath you so that you believe they are completely worthless and have no value.

Jesus begins his story. **Two men went to the temple to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector.**

The tax collectors were hated by the Jewish people. The Roman Empire ruled Israel at that time, and they hired Jews to collect taxes for Rome. These Jewish tax collectors were seen as traitors by the other Jews. The tax collectors would take money above the amount of the taxes and keep the difference. Most tax collectors had become rich from being corrupt.

The Pharisee stood in the temple and prayed with himself. Notice: he prayed with himself. Is he speaking to God?

He may have very well prayed out loud so that the tax collector and others could hear him. He prayed, “God, I thank you that I am not like other men are. I thank you that I’m not a cheater, sinner, or adulterer - or like this tax collector.”

The Pharisee continued, “I fast twice a week and give tithes of everything I have.”

This is a very proud prayer. His whole prayer is a conversation telling God all the good things that he has done. Do you think he needs to tell God what he did? Does God know he fasts and tithes?

Of course God knows about his fasting and tithing. But God also knows his heart. The Pharisee is proud, and wants to make sure that everyone knows how good he is and that he follows all the rules. But just because someone follows all the rules doesn’t mean they did it for the right reasons.

Then the tax-collector prays. He prays standing far away; he is not trying to be heard by everyone. He realizes he is a sinner, and is ashamed to even lift his eyes toward heaven.

He prays asking God to be merciful to him because he is a sinner.

Which of these prayers do you think God will give attention to?

God hates pride. He distances himself from proud people and opposes them.

(Psalm 138:6; Proverbs 6:16-17; 8:13; 16:5; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5)





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Jesus gives his commentary on these men and their different approaches to God. He tells us that the tax-collector, not the Pharisee, went home justified before God. Everyone that exalts himself will be humbled, or put down. But the person who humbles himself will be exalted, or honored.

The tax-collector knew he was a sinner and humbled himself asking for God's mercy. The irony is that the Pharisee believed he was fully justified by his own actions. We are not able to be justified by our own actions.

We are justified by our faith in Christ, in the blood of Jesus, and by his grace. No one can ever be made right with God by obeying the law. (Acts 13:39; Romans 3:24, 28; 5:1, 9; Galatians 2:16)

Transition over to Matthew 6.

Jesus speaks of the Pharisees who pray just as this Pharisee in the parable.

They love to pray. They stand in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets where everyone can see them praying. They want people to see them and think that they are righteous and holy. Jesus tells us that this IS their reward: the honor that men give them.

Jesus contradicts this by telling you where you should pray. Instead of praying to be seen, go into your closet and close the door. **Pray where God is the only one who can see; He will see what you do in secret and reward you openly.**

Jesus also says not to pray using a lot of meaningless words. Some people think that God will hear them if they use more words and pray longer; Jesus says this what the unbelievers do. He says not to be like them because our Father knows what we need before we even ask.

Then Jesus tells them how to pray.

We call this "The Lord's Prayer." It is often recited from memory. Stop to think about what it is actually saying.

Our Father in heaven...

What is this saying?

Who is God? He is our Father. A good Father loves his children and cares for them.

Where is God? He is in the heavens. He is above us; we are beneath Him.

May Your name be kept holy.

What does this mean?

It means that He is to be honored. He is worthy of our praise and honor.

All of these things in this phrase bring us to the acknowledgement that God is above us in every sense. We are his children, we appeal to him as a Father. He is holy and we are to honor Him and His name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

We want your kingdom to come to this earth: we want you to reign here.

We want your will to be done on the earth, *just as it is* in heaven.

Would God's will always be accomplished in the heavenly realm?

Yes, and that is what we are saying we want to happen here on earth.





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Give us this day our daily bread.

Give us today the food we need. God the Father wants us to come to Him on a daily basis. He wants to walk with us each day and provide everything we need for that day. He wants to be our source.

This doesn't necessarily just mean food. This means, give us what we need to get through this day.

Meet our needs TODAY.

We want you to be present in our lives, walking with us, and providing us everything we need for life.

Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.

We are asking for forgiveness, but this prayer is setting a condition. Forgive us AS we have forgiven others.

Wow. We don't always realize how important it is to forgive others. But we are asking him to forgive us in the same way we have forgiven those who sin against us. (Matthew 6:14-15)

Do not let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

This is a plea for help. We know we have an enemy who is always trying to tempt us to fail; to tempt us to sin. We are pleading for mercy for our Father to rescue us from this evil enemy.

For Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. (This is only in some translations.)

This simply acknowledges who God is. Everything is His. This is His kingdom. He is the ultimate power, and glory only belongs to Him. This puts everything in its proper perspective and us in our proper place.

Jesus in the Story



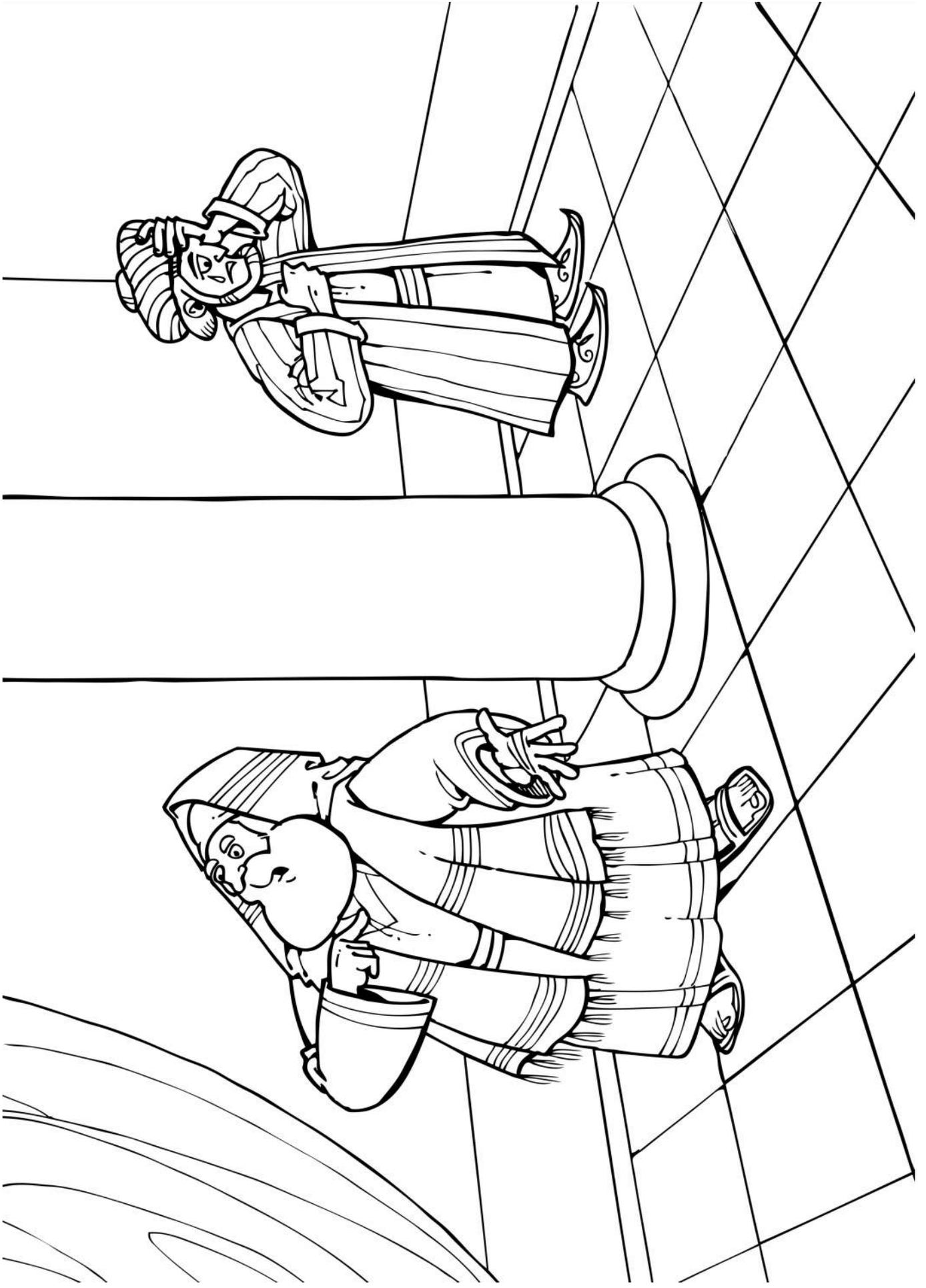
Prayer is not about you. It is not about what other people think about you, or what you've done, or how good you look when you pray.

Jesus is telling the people that all God wants is a relationship with his people. Prayer is simply a relationship between you and God. It is acknowledging that you are completely at His mercy. You accept what He has done for you, and are thankful for it. You know this is not about you, it is about his goodness and all that He has done. When you exalt and honor yourself, the only direction to go is down. But if you humble yourself and put yourself in your proper place, He now has the opportunity to exalt and honor you.

Luke began by telling the reader who Jesus is speaking to: certain people who "trusted in themselves." They believed they were righteous, but they despised others. But anyone who is truly righteous would understand that to be in right relationship with God would never result in looking at another person in contempt.

They would understand that the righteousness they received was a gift, and there is no room for condemnation in it.





Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

25. City On A Hill

1. In Matthew 5:13, to what did Jesus compare his followers?
2. What did he compare them to in verse 14?
3. In Matthew 5:15, what does he say that people do with a candle and why?
4. What will people do when they see our good works?

Philippians 2:14-15

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

26. When You Pray

Read Matthew 6:9-13

1. We are supposed to ask God for what to be done on earth and in heaven?
2. What does God want us to ask him for every day?
3. We are supposed to ask for forgiveness in the same way that we do what?

1 Timothy 2:8

I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

27. Into the Ditch

1. What do people try to pull out of other's eyes?
2. What does the scripture say is in our eye?
3. How can we see to take something out of someone else's eye?
4. Explain what you think this means.

Matthew 7:1-2

Judge not, that you not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

28. How Much More?

1. If we ask, what will happen?
2. What happens for everyone that asks?
3. What happens for everyone that seeks?
4. What happens when we knock?

James 1:17

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

