

## The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 2, 382, 315, 435

The INTROIT

(Ps.68:1,5,6,35)

*P: God is in His holy habitation; He is God who setteth the solitary in families.*

**C: The God of Israel is He that giveth strength and power unto His people.**

*P: Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered;*

**C: let them also that hate Him flee before Him.**

The COLLECT

Almighty and everlasting God, who is always more ready to hear than we to pray and are wont to give more than either we desire or deserve, pour down upon us the abundance of Thy mercy, forgiving us those things whereof our conscience is afraid, and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask but through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

**2 Samuel 22:21-29 (NKJV)**

The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, And have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His judgments were before me; And as for His statutes, I did not depart from them. I was also blameless before Him, And I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness, According to my cleanness in His eyes. With the merciful You will show Yourself merciful; With a blameless man You will show Yourself blameless; With the pure You will show Yourself pure; And with the devious You will show Yourself shrewd. You will save the humble people; But Your eyes are on the haughty, that You may bring them down.

For You are my lamp, O LORD; The LORD shall enlighten my darkness.

THE GRADUAL

(Ps.28:1-2,7; 90:1)

*P: My heart trusteth in God, and I am helped:*

**C: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise Him.**

*P: Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord, my Rock:*

**C: be not silent to me; hear the voice of my supplications. Hallelujah! Hallelujah!**

*P: Lord, Thou hast been our Dwelling Place in all generations.*

**C: Hallelujah!**

The EPISTLE

**1 Corinthians 15:1-10 (NKJV)**

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you; unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.

For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(Ps. 119:124)

*P: Hallelujah! O Lord, deal with Thy servant according unto Thy mercy and teach me Thy statutes. I am Thy servant, give me understanding:*

**C: that I may know Thy testimonies. Hallelujah!**

**The HOLY GOSPEL**

**St. Luke 18:9-14 (NKJV)**

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, ‘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!’

“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.”

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Luke 18:9-14 — “Toward Some Who Continued Being Persuaded Concerning Themselves That They Were Righteous”

INTRODUCTION

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Luke 18:9-14 — “Toward Some Who Continued Being Persuaded Concerning Themselves That They Were Righteous”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

The sermon text is the Gospel reading appointed for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity,  
Luke 18:9-14:

**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, ‘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!’**

**“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.”**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### INTRODUCTION

**“He spoke then also a parable to them toward the necessity always to pray and not to be weary.”** These are the opening words of this chapter of St. Luke’s account of the Gospel. The Lord Jesus made certain to declare the necessity that we pray always and not to be weary. In order for us to understand this, we must understand the purpose of prayer. Otherwise we will most certainly grow weary of praying and weary in our souls. The Lord Jesus told a parable for all the people to direct their hearts away from what they thought that prayer was and toward the true power of prayer. The power of prayer is not found in the one who prays, nor in the sincerity of the prayer, nor even in the manner in which the prayer is offered. Rather, the power of prayer is found in the one to whom the prayer is prayed. Having demonstrated this, the Lord Jesus then told the parable of our text. This parable, however, was not directed toward everyone, but specifically toward certain ones. It is meant for us all, but it was told toward those who continued being persuaded concerning themselves that they were righteous.

#### I. TOWARD SOME WHO CONTINUED BEING PERSUADED CONCERNING THEMSELVES

**He spoke then also toward some who continued being persuaded concerning themselves that they were righteous and contemned the rest this parable.**

The first parable recorded in this chapter was spoken toward everyone who was present so as to teach the purpose of prayer and the one on whom prayer depends so that no one would become weary. This parable, however, is directed specifically toward certain people who were

present. Who were these people whom Jesus singled out as needing to be told a special message from heaven? They were the people who had become persuaded and remained persuaded that they were righteous, and because of this delusion, they also contemned the rest.

Contempt is the opposite of compassion. Contempt eliminates any possibility of charity and mercy. Contempt presses down and suppresses any sense of true pity that may spring forth in a person's heart.

Contempt arises from the notion that a person is superior to others, and not merely superior, but exceedingly and exceptionally superior. Contempt is a very rascally deception, for it often parades itself as caring and loving. More than that, it often pretends to be open toward those who are deemed to be lesser. Contempt is a presumptuous assumption of being better than and more holy and more loving than others.

Contempt often deceives not only the fools who arrogantly exalt themselves in their own hearts and minds, but it also tends to deceive those who honestly recognize their own weaknesses and faults. For those who parade themselves as righteous often have very well developed acting ability. After all, they have lied to themselves so effectively that they actually believe their own lies. Such pretense can fool many who observe the pretense, especially if these are already worn down and weary from their own attempts to make themselves better and more holy.

All attempts at self-sanctification work in these two ways. All attempts at self-sanctification are based upon the same self-deception that holiness and goodness and righteousness are things toward which the individual must strive. Such striving after righteousness always leads either toward the weariness of striving for that which one cannot attain for oneself, or toward lying to oneself so as to pretend that such self-righteousness has been attained.

Both ways are destructive and erect a wall between the individual and the Truth. The God toward whom either of the self-deceived individuals prays is not the God who sacrificed the Lamb from the foundations of the earth. The God who created us also saved us by His own sacrifice and comes to us through the means of grace to apply the benefits of His sacrifice to our weary souls so that we may be encouraged always to pray and never to lose heart. For our hope is not in our prayers. Rather our hope is the reason for our prayers. Our prayers are nothing more than the hope that God has brought to life in us in action. Our prayers are nothing more than living in the hope that dwells in us by the power of God's grace. Our prayers are the manifestation of the sanctification that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Baptism has worked for us. Our prayers are the result of knowing and believing that the LORD is our righteousness.

## II. TWO MEN WENT UP INTO THE TEMPLE TO PRAY

So the Lord Jesus tells the parable in today's text. He tells it specifically toward those who have become persuaded that they are righteous, but He tells it for all who would be deceived by their pretense. He tells it to show the true source of righteousness so that all may be turned in their hearts toward this true righteousness of God in Christ and not to grow weary through their own efforts. As Jesus says elsewhere, His yoke to which He binds us is easy and His burden is light, for it is His yoke by which He carries us along and He takes our burden and makes it His own and carries it for us. (Matthew 11:30)

**Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee and the other a tax farmer.**

The tax collectors were more than mere agents of the Roman revenue service. They were actual farmers of taxes. They entered into this vocation from the same motives as casino operators bribe the government to allow them to establish their collection houses. Casino operators are really nothing more than tax collectors who first skim the lion's share for themselves. This is what the publicans were doing at that time also. Thus they were despised for two reasons. First they were despised for working for the Romans, who were the conquering enemy. Secondly, they were despised for their dishonesty and over-taxation by which they became wealthy. They truly were despicable and merciless in their dealings with others.

Yet some of these men were being drawn to Jesus and were hearing the Gospel and were being converted through the repentance that the Holy Spirit was working. In fact, in the very next chapter Luke tells us about Zacchaeus and the conversion that the LORD worked in this despised little extortionist. Some of these wicked men were hearing the Gospel and were being converted so as to repent of their wickedness and to trust in the salvation proclaimed in the Gospel.

This was something that those who had deceived themselves into thinking themselves righteous could not understand. How could Jesus welcome these men? How could Jesus receive them into Himself and show them mercy?

The parable begins with the Pharisee's prayer. Now this man knows how to pray an impressive prayer. He begins as all prayers should, by acknowledging God. Next he gives thanks to God. After all, is this not what should be the basis of a good prayer. He give thanks to God for what God has done for him.

**I thank You God, that You caused me to born of good parents who taught me the right way. I thank You God that You have kept me in the true faith so that I have not chosen for myself the wrong paths. I thank You God that I have the true worship of the temple and of the Jewish religion. I thank You God that I am not like those other people who do not know You and live in such blindness to Your ways. Thank You for giving me a truly thankful heart and a faithful spirit so that I obey You completely so that rather than stealing from others in the many ways that other people steal from the public and from the poor and from their wives, I come to Your temple and offer the tithe that You have commanded Your saints to offer for the sake of the preaching of Your Word and to keep myself from going astray I also fast not only once a week but twice a week. Thank You God for giving me such a heart toward You so that I live in righteousness and stand as an example and witness to others of Your love and righteousness.**

The Pharisee was certainly right about the publican. This miserable tax collector certainly would not impress anyone who overheard him as he prayed.

**Oh hell, God! I'm a God-damned sinner! I dare not even look up to You by my own strength. Who am I to come before You to ask for anything good? What is in me of any value that I should even give thanks? Yet You promised long ago that You would send Christ to redeem me. You have commanded that I come to You and trust in Your mercy that has no end. Oh God, be merciful to me, a sinner.**

### III. I TELL YOU-ALL, WENT DOWN THIS ONE HAVING BEEN DECLARED RIGHTEOUS

#### **I tell you-all, went down this one having been declared righteous.**

Jesus says that two men went up into the temple to pray. Two men went up. They went up Mount Zion to the place where the name of the LORD had been placed by God. They went up the steps into the temple where God had promised to hear. They went up from their daily lives and all that is in the world, up into the place where heaven contacts earth. Two men went up into the temple to pray.

One man went down. Both men stood before God up in the holy temple. But in his heart, one man, though still standing, went down. He stood with his heart having fallen to the ground before God. In his heart he had descended to the depths of hell. In his heart he had dropped to his knees and had fallen upon his face up in the presence of God in His temple. This man went down.

The Pharisee stood tall and declared his righteousness before God. He received his declaration of righteousness from his own lips. He received his righteousness in front of everyone. He stood justified by his own declaration.

The other man, the despised one, the one who openly confessed his unrighteousness before God, heard the declaration of righteousness not from his own lips, but from the lips of the LORD his God. God himself declared this man righteous. This man did not proclaim his own righteousness, but the righteousness of God. And from God he received the proclamation of God's righteousness that is in Christ Jesus. This man went down justified, declared to be righteous by God for righteousness' sake. For that is God's great and holy will, that we should confess the truth in order that we might hear from Him His mercy toward us sinners. After all, as the Lord Jesus also declared, what do the righteous need with God's salvation? What do the healthy need with a physician?

No, God does not want us to choose to be righteous. God does not want us convert ourselves from sinners to saints. He wants us to confess our sins so that we stop striving to be holy and learn that He is our holiness. He wants us to acknowledge our damned condition so that we may trust in His forgiveness. He wants us to stand before Him in the fullness of our sinfulness so that He may take our sinfulness and exchange it for His righteousness. Then, having been absolved by His own decree, like the publican, we will go down having been declared righteous.

#### CONCLUSION

It is for this reason that God has ordained the means of grace as the only way to enter into His kingdom of righteousness. We cannot obtain this righteousness for ourselves. It has to be imparted to us through faith. This faith we cannot conjure up for ourselves. It must be born in us through the preaching of the Gospel. This Gospel must be proclaimed to us from someone who has already received it, someone in whom it already has taken root and is growing. By this the LORD has eliminated any possible deception that this is something that we do or choose for ourselves. Someone born of God must choose to give it to us by the means of their lips, lips that have already been sanctified by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, lips that have already partaken of the body of the unity of the true faith and have already had the blood of forgiveness and life pass over them.

This is why the Lord Jesus told Nicodemus that no one can perceive the kingdom of God unless he has first been regenerated and then went on to say that no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he be regenerated by water and the Spirit. Baptism is something that is entirely external. No one can baptize himself. It must be done by one who has already received the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. It cannot be chosen for oneself. Having heard the Gospel and having received the Word of life a person can come to one who has the authority to make new disciples by means of baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, but the decision is made by someone who is already in Christ and not by the individual who receives the baptism. By means of water and the Spirit God gives what we cannot obtain for ourselves, not even by believing. By means of physical application of the Gospel from the outside of us God demonstrates that this is His action and His alone. Therefore He teaches us that salvation is of God and not of ourselves. Thereby we are taught that the power of our salvation is an almighty power that does not depend upon anything that is in us, and therefore it cannot fail. Therefore, we do not grow weary but continue to come to God in prayer.

In the Holy Communion God again uses physical elements by which His grace is received from outside of us, by which He gives Himself to us physically as well as spiritually, so that we may know that even our sinful flesh has been fully redeemed and sanctified through the blood of Christ. His blood is actually given to us through this blessed sacramental union of wine and the Word, which is of course, Jesus Himself. Thus we are shown again that our faithfulness is not dependent upon our choices and our reason and our strength, but solely upon the grace of God that is given and poured out for us through these means. As we gather into the name of Jesus and hold fast to His words, what He has promised to do for us is done for us and we receive the strengthening of our faith and the renewal of our life in His body. This promise is for all who have been baptized into Christ Jesus and who continue in the unity of the confession of the true faith.

All who stand outside see what God has declared. All who hear the Word are invited to come and receive the washing by which one is converted into a disciple who may partake of the blessed Communion of God with His saints. All who go up together go down again having been declared righteous. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.