Worship@Home 26th October 2025
Bible Sunday
Prepared by Revd David Speirs

Opening Prayer:

Gracious God, we focus on your presence thankful for all that you share with us. Open our hearts and minds as we worship you, that we may hear your voice speaking through holy scripture, challenging, comforting, and renewing us. Help us to come before you with honesty and humility, trusting not in our own righteousness, but in your boundless mercy and love. Speak, Lord, your servants are listening. In Jesus' name we pray, **Amen.**

StF 161 – Speak O Lord as we come to you

https://youtu.be/kJhmgCSx27Q?si=WOxuNDoXkHQnsWkL

Speak, O Lord, as we come to you
to receive the food of your holy word.
Take your truth, plant it deep in us;
shape and fashion us in your likeness,
that the light of Christ might be seen today
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us all your
purposes, for your glory.

Teach us, Lord, full obedience,
holy reverence, true humility.
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
in the radiance of your purity.
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see
your majestic love and authority.
Words of power that can never fail;
let their truth prevail over unbelief.

Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;
help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
that will echo down through eternity.
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,
and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.
Speak, O Lord, till your Church is built
and the earth is filled with your glory.

Keith Getty (b. 1974) and Stuart Townend (b. 1963)
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CCLI Song Number: 4615235

Please read:

Luke 18: 9-14

https://bible.oremus.org/?ql=246952919

Time to Reflect

Today's lectionary reading is taken from Luke 18:9-14, the parable of the pharisee and the tax collector, and is an example of how scripture can help point us towards humility, thankfulness, and openness to God.

Jesus shares this parable in order to challenge those who are too convinced in their own self-righteousness before God and in so doing consider themselves to be superior to others. Whilst the pharisee in this parable may initially appear to be a model of religious devotion his words betray a wrongful attitude. He stands in the temple and prays, thanking God that he is not like "other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector". He fasts twice a week and gives a tenth of all he receives. Whilst from a religious standpoint he may appear to be ticking all the right boxes, there is a serious problem. The pharisee is doing and saying all of these things in order to give the outward appearance of respectability and confirm his own self-righteousness. In so doing he puts down others in order to establish his own superiority in relation to them. In so doing the pharisee fails to recognise and resists God's grace towards him. Rather than orientating his heart and mind towards God, and acknowledging his need for God's grace and forgiveness, the pharisee instead seeks to elevate himself over and above others by his own perceived merits.

In stark contrast, the tax collector, someone who would have been seen as being corrupt and as a collaborator with the Roman oppressors, stands at a distance. He is not even able to lift his eyes to heaven due to the heavy burden of sin that he feels lies upon himself. He beats his chest, a sign of deep sorrow, and simply prays: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Here the tax collector approaches God in humility, acknowledging his sin, and in a genuine desire to receive God's grace, forgiveness, and renewal. Jesus then goes onto explain that it is the tax collector, and not the Pharisee, who returns home justified by God.

This parable is an important reminder that faith is not about how good and respectable

we might appear to others, or how on the achievements we deem to have made, but rather about how open we are to God's transforming grace. God is not concerned with outward displays of respectability. Instead, God is concerned with the orientation of our hearts and minds, that open us up to the means of grace and God's transforming power within us.

On Bible Sunday, we are encouraged to reflect not only on the content of holy scripture but on how we approach God through the bible. Do we come to the text like this pharisee in the parable, expecting confirmation of our righteousness, using scripture to put down others whilst being slow to examine ourselves? Or do we come like the tax collector; open to being challenged, changed, and humbled by God who speaks to us and shapes us through the Word? The Pharisee uses scripture and religious practice to separate himself from others. Yet holy scripture is not about exclusion but rather invitation. It is the story of God who reaches out to the lost and the broken to offer healing and reconciliation. It is a call to love God with all our heart and all our minds and to love our neighbour as ourselves. It is a reminder that God gives himself over to us, most evidently, in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, so that we might find new life in him.

There is always a risk that we might begin to slip into this pharisees way of thinking without fully realising it; becoming self-righteous, too quick to condemn and knock others down. We can begin to rely on our own perceived sense of self-righteousness rather than God's grace working in our lives. We can become so familiar with scripture that we forget its power to disturb and disrupt our comfort and shape us.

The parable that we have this Sunday calls us back to our relationship with God in Christ. This is a relationship that is built not on what we have achieved by our own merits but God has done for us in Christ and through the Holy Spirit. The parable reminds us that we are to approach God with humility, thankfulness, and openness.

On this Bible Sunday, I invite you to spend some further time focusing on the passage. How can I, through the reading of scripture and through prayer, be opened to God's life transforming grace and be shaped by his loving presence?

Prayer of Intercession

You are invited to pray silently for:
The needs of the world…
The Church and its calling…
Loved ones going through difficult times…
For peace, justice, and reconciliation…
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven…

StF 520 – Give to me Lord a thankful heart

https://youtu.be/2HSCDvagm0s?si=syD-dQ9p0wVvxyFC

Give to me, Lord, a thankful heart
and a discerning mind;
give, as I play the Christian's part,
the strength to finish what I start
and act on what I find.

hen, in the rush of days, my will
is habit-bound and slow,
help me to keep in vision still
what love and power and peace can fill
a life that trusts in you.

My your divine and urgent claim,
and by your human face,
kindle our sinking hearts to flame,
and as you teach the world your name
let it become your place.

Jesus, with all your Church I long
to see your kingdom come:
show me your way of righting wrong
and turning sorrow into song
until you bring me home.

Thomas Caryl Micklem (1925–2003)

Closing Prayer

Eternal God, giver of love and peace, you call your children to live together as one family. Give us the grace to learn your ways and to do your will, that we may bring justice and peace to all people, in the name of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Collect for the Sunday between 23rd and 29th October. © 1999 Methodist Worship Book at p.557.