

Humble hearts and minds

Luke 18.9-14

Jesus tells this parable of two men praying. The Pharisee thanks God that he is not like people such as thieves or tax collectors. The tax collector cannot even look up; but he prays for God's mercy.

Now read **Luke 18.9-14** see p.2 for text.

A note on the passage

Jesus tells this parable of two very different people; a Pharisee who is confident that everything is right with his world and between him and God, contrasted with a despised tax collector, an outcast who cannot even look up as he prays. But the parable turns our expectations upside down because the tax collector is the one who is right with God through his honest and humble prayer.



A spider's web – an image of strength? Vulnerability? Both? How do we recognise and affirm the worth of others?



Play a game of 'Who am I?' Everyone writes the name of a well-known person (living or dead, fictional or real) on a sticky note and gives it to another person to stick on their forehead – without looking at it! Then each person takes it in turns to ask a question about who they are – e.g. 'Am I a musician?' 'Do I play football?' – until they know who they are. Play it again but instead of the names, use descriptions of people who are often overlooked in society – e.g. a homeless person.

LOOK



Look at this image by Charlie Mackesy, author and illustrator of *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*. <https://shop.charliemackesy.com/item/enough-as-i-am/print> What do you think about it? What is your best discovery about yourself? What might this say to you about your relationship with God? Do any words of scripture or songs come to your mind? If they do, read those words from your Bible or listen to the songs. In a group, share your thoughts, words and songs with each other.



LISTEN

Search online for songs or versions of 'Mary's song' (also known as Magnificat; the words are from Luke 1.46-55) – you should be able to find some that very ancient and some that are contemporary. Pick one or two you like and listen to them. In a group, you could each play your favourite to the rest of the group. What phrases or ideas stand out for you from Mary's song? Think about how those phrases and ideas are relevant to everyday life today.

Learn

In the Bible story, the proud man needed to learn from the humble man. Can you learn something from someone else this week? Get everyone in the household to think of one thing they could teach to the others – e.g. how to make or bake something; a song or how to play a tune on an instrument; a game or skill; a poem; a magic trick. How does it feel to learn from one another?



Who is overlooked in your community? Who may be treated as an outcast? Is there a charity that supports such people that you could find out more about? Could you raise awareness of this charity among your family, friends and church? Could you offer practical help in some way?

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

Jesus told this story to a group of people who thought they were better than others and looked down on everyone.

‘Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee. One was a tax collector.

‘The Pharisee stood alone and prayed loudly, “Thank you, God, that I am not like others, not a thief, or a cheat. And I am definitely not like that tax collector praying over there. I give away one tenth of all my money, and every week I fast – twice.”

‘The tax collector stood a long way from the Pharisee. He would not even look up to heaven. He hung his head in shame, beat his hands on his chest and mumbled, “God, I am a sinner. I have done wrong. Have mercy on me.”’

Then Jesus turned to those who were listening to him. ‘Do you know which of those men went home right with God? It was the second man, the tax collector, that God looked on kindly. Not the Pharisee.’

Jesus continued talking to the group, saying, ‘Everyone who makes themselves great and important will be humbled. But all those who humble themselves will be great.’

Luke 18.9-14



Did you know?

- Pharisees were religious people keen on sticking to the rules. Tax collectors often cheated people out of money.
- Being humble means not showing off or thinking you're better than others. This is what God wants from us.

Luke 18.9-14 (NRSV)

Jesus told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: ‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax-collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, “God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax-collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.”

But the tax-collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.’