

**True Humility Is In Christ**  
**1 Corinthians 15:1-10 & Luke 18:9-14**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

What does it mean to be truly humble? How many of you are humble? Kind of a catch-22 question, isn't it? There may be many humble people here today. But, if someone were to raise their hand to boast about their humility, that wouldn't be very humble, would it?

Today, each of you here was bold enough to enter this house of God. How many of you are worthy of being here in this, the house of God? How many of you today are unworthy of being here?

In Christ's parable, two men were bold enough to enter the temple for prayer. Are they both believers? Are both humble?

Dear friends in Christ, one is a humble believer, the other a blasphemer.

The Pharisee may have thought he had come to God in prayer, but his words were blasphemy. Not knowing God rightly, the Pharisee attributed to God vile and despicable attributes born of his own sinful heart and mind. Unlike King David, this Pharisee came before God without recognizing the least sin in his own life. Instead, this Pharisee brazenly thanks God that he is not like other men. But is he thankful to God for making him that way, or is he thankful that he has done stuff to make him different? Exactly!

He is a man whom his "god" dare not condemn. As evidence of his "righteous" standing this Pharisee cites his works of superiority, his good works above and beyond the demands required in the Law.

The Pharisee prominently stood before his "hard" "god" who, "reap(s) where he has not sown" (Mt. 25:24) and declares that he has put God in checkmate. Where the Law required fasting but one day a year (Lev. 16:29), the Pharisee boasts that he fasts twice a week. According to the Law, tithes were given only from certain fruits (Lev. 27, Deut. 14), but this Pharisee bragged that he tithed from all he possessed. In his prayer, he commends himself to God, for in his mind and by his own small heart, he believes that God is left with no other choice but to bless him.

My friends, the Pharisee knew only a "god" of wrath. He figured that by obedience to the law he was worthy to escape judgment. The Pharisee claims to be no extortioner and yet he is attempting to extort God for the blessings he demands. The Pharisee denies adultery and yet plays the harlot with a "god" of his own imagination. He claims to be just, but despises a fellow creature, the Publican, also intended for the image and likeness of God.

My friends, this Pharisee is anything but humble. In fact, this Pharisee is worse than an unbeliever for he has deluded himself into thinking he is a believer. He attempts to justify himself according to the law, something that no man can do. This Pharisee did not know God at all. His god was a god of law and punishment, a god that men could please on their own – or die trying. The Pharisee's god has no compassion or mercy. there is no room for humility in this Pharisee for he believes that *he must* justify himself before his god.

How many Pharisees came here today to pray? How many of you are the Pharisee? You know who you are. You look around at the people in our world and see how much better you are in comparison. Are you an extortioner? Of course not, but you will not forgive ole Hertha Herpolsheimer for what she said about you unless she comes crawling to you on hands and knees and begs for forgiveness. Have you cheated on your spouse? No! But your eyes sure love to wander. Are you unjust? Of course not, you only take what you deem is rightfully yours.

Yes, it is easy to be proud of your accomplishments, and to be sure that God must be too. You are not like the sinners out there, for you can look around and see sinfulness everywhere. You know for a fact that you are living your life so very much better than so many other people do.

How much of the sinful pride of the Pharisee is in you?

How often have you looked around this sanctuary at your family gathered here, your brothers and sisters in Christ, and thought better of yourself than some sitting in pews near you? Or better than the members who are not here every week? Maybe you felt someone was not dressed appropriately? Or they did not parent their children during the service as you thought? Or maybe they behaved in what you thought was an unbecoming manner for a church service? Or, you know that their life outside these four walls has some grievous faults? You thank God that you are not like them.

Yes, you and I are just like the Pharisee in Jesus' parable, full of the same sinful pride.

My dear friends in Christ, it is very easy in today's world to look around and become very prideful. It is easy to become a modern day Pharisee. And there are even pastors on TV and the radio that proclaim the falsehood that the better you are, the more God will bless you. They are liars and charlatans!

In our Gospel and in our Epistle, we have two examples of humility in Christ. The reason for their humility is because they have a different God than does the Pharisee.

In Jesus' parable, a tax collector, the worst kind of sinner in Jesus' day, was bold to come into God's house. He was bold to come into the presence of his God whom He knew demanded perfection of him. God's law said how to live: do not extort from others, do not commit adultery, be just to all men, fast, and tithe of your belongings. Tax collectors of that era, as a general rule, used their position to collect more than was commanded of the government, especially from the rich. Some even used their position to gain sexual favors. From the list the Pharisee spoke about, tax collectors were often guilty of sinning against all of them.

Yet, it was this tax collector who was bold enough to come into God's house with the proper posture, one of humility before his God. This tax collector knew a much different God than the Pharisee. The tax collector knew a God who is holy, just, and merciful (v. 13), "But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'".

In his holiness and mercifulness, God through Jesus Christ, has dealt with the curse of sin. That is the reality which Pharisees, old or modern, refuse to recognize as the problem between God and man. But God in Christ, does not ignore reality nor the cause of our separation from Him, which as we well know is sin. In Christ, **God** has confronted sin and defeated it.

Our tax collector was bold to come into God's house and bow before Him and beg for His mercy. This is humility in Christ, knowing full well that God's greatest gift is His merciful goodness. In humility, he understands how God so dearly wants to grant to him the very the forgiveness which God's own Christ would purchase. This man was humble enough to know that He could not stand in God's presence. But even more, he was emboldened by the Spirit to throw himself upon the mercy of his God. He fully expected God to answer His prayer, because He trusted God's Redeemer to mercifully free him from his sin.

Dearly beloved of God, this is where Christian humility and pride come together. Paul talks about what is the most important message that he is to delivered to the people of Corinth – and to us who read and hear that text today – that Christ died for our sins. He died for the sins of the Corinthians, for Paul's sins, for your sins and for mine. He died to free us from the sin of our Pharisaical pride.

What is more, Paul goes on to proclaim that although Christ died for our sins, he also rose again. Christ

humbled Himself unto death, even death upon the cross. He who had no sin, became sin for us, to put those sins to death in His death, and then He rose to give unto us life everlasting.

Paul was a man who knew of his own unworthiness. He had persecuted Christians. Paul had approvingly stood by while Stephen was stoned to death for believing in, and proclaiming Christ Jesus as Savior, Lord, and God. He was a man, who of his own, was not worthy to be anything in God's kingdom.

Yet, Paul also recognized that God had mercifully chosen him to be His messenger of the Gospel to Gentiles.

My friends, in humility stand before your God. Be bold to come into His presence. He has called you here today. He came to you in the waters of baptism and called you by name to be His own, not because of who you are, but because of His merciful goodness. Humble yourself to confess your sins and boldly expect and cling to the forgiveness of your sins – forgiveness for your times of Pharisaical pride.

In humility today, be bold to come to Christ's table. Come and receive His body and blood, shed for you, out of His mercy, for the forgiveness of all of your sin. Boldly expect that this meal will strengthen your faith, to life everlasting.

My dear Christian friends, you are here today, in God's house, because you have been emboldened by Christ to come into a place you are not, of your own, worthy to be. You are bold to be here because God's Spirit wrought faith brought you here. You are here for you know that in this place you receive God's gracious gifts to you in Christ. So dear friends, be proud! Proud of this fact, you are God's chosen ones! Therein find true humility, in Christ. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.