

PREPARING AT HOME

October 21-27, 2019

Focus reading: Luke 18:9–14 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=436425971>)

Other lectionary readings: Joel 2:23–32; Psalm 65; 2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18

Theme: Be Satisfied

In this week's reading, Jesus tell a story about prayer. Two people, one a Pharisee and one a tax collector, offer two very different prayers. Pharisees were Jews who were particularly concerned with keeping God's laws, as they interpreted those laws. Prayer was important to them; but unlike the Pharisee's prayer in Jesus' story, prayers were offered to praise God, not themselves. This Pharisee, however, sings his own praises while at the same time condemning someone else. He seems to have no need of God, since he can clearly present a case for justifying himself. On the other hand, the tax collector humbly recognizes how far he falls short of God's desires for his life. He is vulnerable and open to God's transforming presence. The tax collector was despised by Jesus' audience; yet, here he is justified by God. Is the life of faith about keeping the rules, or is it about living in relationship with a God who is present among us? When the tax collector stood in that relationship, he was overwhelmed by a sense of his need for God and yet his own unworthiness. None of us is worthy. God's faithful presence is dependent upon who God is rather than what we do.

LEARNING THROUGH PARABLES

Jesus taught by telling stories that we call parables. What does this story teach you about God? What does this story teach you about yourself? What does this story teach you about others?

ACTION!

Parables, such as the ones we have heard the last several weeks, are often fun to act out. What was the posture of the two men? Why was the tax collector expressing grief?

IS IT FAIR TO COMPARE?

Children often compare themselves to others. As a result, they can view themselves as being "better than" others or a failure who can't do things that others can. Talk about the dangers of comparing ourselves to others. Give thanks for the uniqueness of each person.

PRAYER

Loving God,
We do not always please you
in the things we do and say.
Forgive us and help us to do better.
Help us to treat one another with respect,
remembering that you made each person
and love all persons.
Amen.

Prospect Presbyterian Church, Maplewood, NJ, www.prospectchurch.org

Rita Boyer, rita@prospectchurch.org