

08.31.22 – A Weekly Word for Covenant Church

Title: “ Justification Has Been Served ”

Scripture Reading: [Luke 18:9-14](#)

Reflection: Pastor Evan Heerema

Jesus concludes this teaching to “some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else” with the words, “I tell you that this man (tax collector), rather than the other, went home justified before God.” Wow, gracious words, and also tough words. Tough words for all who might harbor the thought that their standing with God has anything to do with who they are and what they have done to please God.

The Pharisees were seeking to make and keep obedience to God the standard of being righteous, or just, before God. They had their reasons for that attitude. ([Isaiah 40: 3-5](#))³ “A voice of one calling: ‘In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴ Every valley shall be raised up, . . .⁵ And the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all people will see it together. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.’” A straight path, a holy way, a righteous people will set the stage for the coming of God’s anointed Messiah. Whatever they could do to make the “way straight” they were going to do, doing it themselves, and bringing others into the straightway as well. An honorable goal, except that they made it a matter of their actions instead of allowing God to make it a matter of their heart.

The image of the scales of justice might help portray the situation.



If I can put enough of my acts of righteousness on one side of the scale, then the other side will come up, and soon enough my “righteousness scale” will be in balance. Since God desires and accepts balanced people, people who are true to themselves, I will have earned life in abundance.

The tax collector realized that his scale was a bottom scraper. He was in trouble, and society and the religious

establishment told him that there was nothing he could do, in his present condition, to right the scales. He was in big trouble with God. He stood at a great distance from the Temple building itself and the altar on which lambs were daily offered as a sacrifice for sin. He didn't deserve to be close nor would he have been welcomed there. But heaven opened its gates to him. He graciously came to know who he was, and he knew the One to whom he had to go to with his need. For him, confession of sin led to seeking mercy. And in that condition, God dumped the atonement of Jesus (at this point, still to come) on the other side of the scale, and justification was received as a free gift. The scales balanced, and he received life in abundance; he was set free, not by the display of his acts before God, but by the sacrifice of the lamb of God, Jesus. And by faith, filled with God's mercy, he, a sinner, went home justified.

Both men are portrayed in the parable, as sinners, as Pastor Doug emphasized in his message. We stand with each one. Sadly, we claim our spiritual position, elect, and saved by grace and can easily and oftentimes unconsciously look down on others (in a variety of ways). And we proudly stand with the tax collector and other sinners revealing our standard of humility.

Graciously, God is always here to receive us as his own. He is merciful to repentant sinners, those in flowing robes with extra-long tassels, and those with tattered robes and strapless sandals. Discern your inner self and give the Spirit of God time and room to do what you need to do to be a place for God to dwell. Enjoy the position God gives you, with Jesus tabernacling within your heart. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14).

Prayer:

Merciful Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we praise your Name for your love and grace. You offer to sinners your gift, free to us, but costly to Jesus. We are redeemed. How I love to proclaim it! Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb! We are redeemed through His infinite mercy; His child and forever I am. And for that, I forever will give you praise. AMEN

Songs for today:

[Redeemed](#)