

Luke 18:9-14

9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable. 10 Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: "God, I thank you that I am not like other people - robbers, evil-doers, adulterers - or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get."

13 But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

14 I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Talking about us is not a particularly popular subject, there are many churches that won't talk about it and some that won't even ask for forgiveness within a service. Not acknowledging that we fail, that we do sin, that we are not perfect makes us arrogant and judgemental. Recognising that we need God is what keeps us humble and allows us to walk humble with our God. It's over this period of Lent, a lead up to Good Friday and Easter that it is particularly appropriate to think about our actions that have led to Jesus needing to go to the cross for our sakes. We talk about grace and that we are saved by Jesus and while grace is free to us, grace was costly to Jesus. Jesus gave up his life for us. Jesus gave up his life for me, for you. It is a rather humbling thought. As a little child I struggled with thanking Jesus for dying on the cross for me, it was just so huge, so immense that 'thank you' seemed insufficient and almost an insult.

And so other than saying 'thank you', we as Christians regularly come to God to say sorry. We would all like to be like Jesus and do nothing wrong but we all have weaknesses and we all fail to live lives that truly reflect God all the time. We lose our tempers, we are selfish, we are greedy, we are self-righteous and judgemental of others, we don't treat everyone with dignity and respect, we are biased and prejudiced, we look after ourselves first, we are lazy, we ignore God's call to help others, we are stingy with the blessings God gives us, with our time, our finances, our gifts, our talents. There are so many other ways that we fail to live up to Jesus' example. Coming before God, acknowledging where we have fallen short and confessing our sins before God helps to keep us humble before God and our fellow human beings.

Prayer

Lord God, it's so easy to become like the Pharisee, we look at the world around us and there is so much news of people who are doing terrible things and when we compare our lives to theirs we look so innocent and good. But we are not perfect.

Holy Spirit, help us to not compare our lives to others but rather to be like the tax collector and to humbly reflect on our own sins. We come before you now and confess where we have failed to reflect God in our lives.

(Time for individual confession)