

Be Truly Grateful

Luke 18:9–14

A. Introduction

1. Thanksgiving is one of the healthiest attitudes a Christian can possess. (Psa. 92:1)
2. A thankful heart drives away bitterness, envy, anxiety, and pride.
3. Gratitude is not merely good manners—it is good medicine for the soul.
4. A.W. Tozer wisely observed: *"Thanksgiving has great curative powers."*
5. Yet there is a kind of thanksgiving that God rejects.
6. Jesus tells a parable about a man who thanked God, then went home condemned.
7. Luke tells us exactly why Jesus spoke this parable: (Luke 18:9)
8. This is not simply a story about two men praying. It is a story about two hearts.
9. It asks a searching question: Are you filled with gratitude or pride?

B. The Proud Thanksgiving (vv. 9-12)

1. At first glance, the Pharisee appears to be giving thanks. It sounds admirable.
2. In a few sentences, he refers to himself repeatedly. His prayer is full of "I's."
3. His prayer contains no confession. No brokenness. No plea for mercy.
4. *"It was a very prayerless prayer. He said a prayer but he didn't pray any."*
5. Religion without humility becomes spiritual pride.
6. Pride compares itself with others, not by God's holiness.
7. Comparison is dangerous, & it is one of Satan's favourite tools.
8. Good works are wonderful servants but terrible saviours.
9. Whenever people truly encounter God, they become aware of their own need.
10. The greatest need of the Pharisee was not better behaviour. It was a new heart.
11. He needed the salvation that only God could give.
12. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith...not of works."* (Ephesians 2:8–9)
13. Religion can polish the outside. Only Christ can transform the inside.
14. Many people today resemble this Pharisee. Trusting in their own efforts.
15. But they have never trusted Christ alone. That is superficial thanksgiving.

C. The Pharisee Was Unconcerned about the Tax Collector (v. 11)

1. The Pharisee did not care for him, or try to help him. He simply despised him.
2. Pride always produces distance. Grace produces compassion.
3. The Pharisee saw another man's sin - The Tax Collector saw his own.
4. Genuine thankfulness produces generosity
5. True thanksgiving always overflows to others. It never stops with ourselves.
6. Pride destroys thanksgiving. True thanksgiving produces thankful living.

D. The Humble Prayer (v.13)

1. Spiritually, Jesus says we need to admit our needs.
2. Notice four marks of genuine humility.
3. **He stood at a distance**
4. **He would not lift his eyes**

5. He beat his breast

6. He cried for mercy

7. He faced his sins, & sought forgiveness. Nothing superficial, just repentance.
8. Only one man went home justified. It was not the respected religious leader.
9. The Pharisee went to the right place, for the right purpose, & did the right thing.
10. Yet he went home exactly the same. Nothing changed. How tragic.
11. Sadly, that still happens. Millions attend church & go home unchanged.
12. True worship never leaves us unchanged, as it produces transformation.

E. God's Amazing Verdict (v.14)

1. Jesus now shocks His listeners.
2. *"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God."*
3. The Pharisee expected applause. Instead he receives condemnation.
4. The tax collector expected rejection. Instead he receives acceptance.
5. Justification means declared righteous, forgiven, accepted, & welcomed by God.
6. Justification is not God making us righteous over time.
7. It is God's legal declaration that the believing sinner is righteous because Christ's righteousness has been credited to them.
8. Not because he deserved it. Because God showed mercy. This is the gospel.
9. We are saved by grace, through faith, because of Christ (Eph 2:8-9)
10. God's Kingdom works upside down
11. Jesus concludes: *"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*
12. The path upward begins by going downward before God.

F. Gratitude That Pleases God

1. There are two kinds of thanksgiving.
2. **False thanksgiving:** "I thank You that I am better than...."
3. This kind of gratitude produces pride, criticism, & self-confidence
4. It sounds religious - But God rejects it.
5. **True thanksgiving:** "I thank You that You have shown mercy to me."
6. This gratitude produces humility, worship, compassion, & generosity

G. Conclusion

1. Two men entered the Temple. Both prayed. Both were religious.
2. Only one went home right with God.
3. One thanked God while admiring himself. The other begged God & confessed.
4. One was full of pride. One was full of gratitude.
5. The question is not "Which man do you admire?" It is, "Which man are you?"
6. Every one of us stands in the Temple today.
7. One prayer says, "God, look at me." The other says, "God, have mercy on me."
8. Only one leaves justified. Which prayer will be yours?