

**☞ TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER  
 PENTECOST ☞  
 Reformation Sunday  
 October 27, 2019, Year C, Revised Common  
 Lectionary**

**Joel 2:23-32** O children of Zion, be glad and rejoice in the LORD your God; for he has given the early rain for your vindication, he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the later rain, as before. The threshing floors shall be full of grain, the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. I will repay you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent against you. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I, the LORD, am your God and there is no other. And my people shall never again be put to shame. Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit. I will show portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. Then everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

**Psalm 65**

- 1 Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion;  
and to you shall vows be performed,
- 2 O you who answer prayer! To you all flesh shall come.
- 3 When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us, you forgive our transgressions.
- 4 Happy are those whom you choose and bring near to live in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple.
- 5 By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.
- 6 By your strength you established the mountains; you are girded with might.
- 7 You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples.
- 8 Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs; you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.
- 9 You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it.
- 10 You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges,

- softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.
- 11 You crown the year with your bounty;  
your wagon tracks overflow with richness.
  - 12 The pastures of the wilderness overflow,  
the hills gird themselves with joy,
  - 13 the meadows clothe themselves with flocks,  
the valleys deck themselves with grain,  
they shout and sing together for joy.

**2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18** As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing. At my first defense no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them! But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.



“HUMILITY,” Edward Burne-Jones, stained glass window, Morton Abbey, Manchester, England, 1891

**Luke 18:9-14** He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

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JESUS MAFA. The Pharisee and the Publican, from **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.

## Reflections & Questions

Reflecting on this African artist's illustration of the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in **Luke 18:9-14**, Christian educator, Carolyn Brown, directs our attention to the Pharisee's (in white) hands: "One hand says, 'Look at me. See how fine I am.' The other says, 'Look at him. I am *soooo* much better than he is.' His hands explain the look on his face. This man thinks that he is always right, that his ways are the best ways, and that very few people are as fine as he is. Jesus says that God is not impressed with this attitude. Even though the man does some fine things on God's behalf, God is not impressed."

Jesus has just finished telling his disciples the parable of the unjust judge and the persistent widow, a parable "about their need to pray always and not to lose heart." (18:1) Now he goes on to tell another parable having to do with prayer "to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt." (18:9) While both characters in this story come to the temple to pray, their prayers are very different!

- When do you most identify with the tax collector? the Pharisee?
- The tax collector's prayer sounds contrite and humble. He can't even bring himself to look up. When have you prayed a prayer like the tax collector? Did you experience God's mercy as a result?
- By all outward appearances, the Pharisee leads a blameless life according to Jewish law. His prayer of thanks is anything but humble! If you are being completely honest, who do you think yourself better than? When and why have you judged others? How can you refrain from such judgement?
- When do we share our deepest needs and concerns with God? Do we share them with others?
- How is our weekly, corporate prayer of confession akin to the tax collector's prayer in this parable? How is it different? In our tradition, where is the space for personal, specific confession and subsequent absolution?
- When have you been upheld, supported or helped when you had nothing? When have you done so for others?
- What does God's righteousness mean to you?
- Jesus says the tax collector went home "justified" rather than the Pharisee. What connections can you make with the Reformed tenet of "justification by grace through faith"? Look at the words to the hymn insert, *By Grace, We Have Been Saved Through Faith*.

*But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ....For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast. (Eph. 2:4, 8-9)*