

# TRINITY 11

**August 27 2017**

Old Test: Genesis 4:1-15

Epistle: I Corinthians 15:1-10

Gospel: Luke 18:9-14

## ***Standing...***

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

The basis for today's sermon is our Gospel lesson—  
that of two well-known sinners,  
two well-known men—  
or does it point us to a third man?

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts be  
acceptable in your sight, O Lord—our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

## ***Sitting...***

How many times have you heard this parable?  
Seriously—every year at this same time, it comes up in the readings.  
It's as constant as Christmas,  
as reliable as Easter.

Yet, how many times throughout the year do we—even we baptized children of God—  
deceive ourselves into thinking that salvation is based upon what we do...  
rather than what Christ has done for us?

Keep in mind whom Jesus was speaking...  
Those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.  
Which means that if any of you wish to bring in your goodness,  
your decency,  
your works,  
your ego or your piety—and hold them up before God as reasons  
for Him to accept you, forgive you, and offer you salvation,  
then pay attention—for that's a fatal mistake.

Our Lord tells the account of two men who go to the Temple to pray.

For one, it was a part of his weekly routine.

You could set your watch by him.

Always on time, twice a week.

And gang, you just couldn't get any better than this man.

You want someone to count on? You call him.

He's faithful to his wife.

He's patient with his children.

He's steadfast with his friends.

He takes nothing he hasn't earned.

Moreover, he tithes all he makes.

He's nothing at all like the other guy—

(Aggh) The other guy... (spitting)

This "tax-collector" was a sell-out.

He sold his soul a long time ago to the Roman occupiers—

collecting from his fellow Jews all he could bleed out of them.

All he has to do is pay his authorities an agreed upon flat fee,  
and anything above and beyond that, is money in the bank.

This man is human debris.

Despicable.

But there's something different about him...

though he can't hold a candle to the Pharisee regarding good works,

he recognizes that sin has pumped its poison through his veins and there was no  
breast to beat but his own.

God's holy law has done it's holy work,

and now he knows what comes out of his heart

does not justify him—

nor would it ever.

What comes out of his heart defiles him and now he stands

terrified,

afflicted and ashamed.

Just like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses, David and all the other  
Prophets, who acknowledged their sin before God, humbling themselves  
and looking to Him, not for praise, but for mercy.

Gratefully, God proclaims Himself to be a God who delights in  
mercy, the God who proclaimed through the prophet Isaiah: **On**

**this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit,  
And who trembles at My word.**

That was the tax-collector, and thus he goes home justified.

Whereas the Pharisee, He goes home damned.

Just a couple of thoughts—the first of which I alluded to at the outset. I said there might be another man here because St. Paul was both. At different times in his life he was each kind of sinner.

He started out a Pharisee,  
denying his sinfulness,  
claiming to be righteous before God,  
and looking down on other people as the “real sinners.”

But then God showed him how great a sinner he actually was.

The law shut up Paul’s justifications and he was flayed.

God took pity on him,  
humbled him,  
and brought him to repentance and faith in Christ Jesus.  
See, Paul went from being a Pharisee-kind-of sinner who stood  
condemned before God to being the other kind of sinner,  
a penitent, humbled sinner  
justified by faith in Christ.

Second thought: the Liturgy. Do you realize how important the Liturgy is to us?

My guess is you don’t.

Church, the Liturgy keeps us from acting like the Pharisee.

When we come here for a Divine Service,

we don’t get tennis elbow patting ourselves on the back  
by how good we are. We can’t.

The Liturgy won’t let us.

The Liturgy starts each one of us as a lost cause—  
a poor miserable sinner.

But then the Liturgy leads you to redemption—  
where you hear,

“I forgive you all of your sins.”

The Liturgy leads you to confess,

“God be merciful to me, a sinner.”

And what you hear is, “Peace be with you.”

The Liturgy leads you to confess,

“Lamb of God,

you take away the sins of the world.”  
 And then you hear,  
 “This is My Body and Blood  
 for your forgiveness.”

Repeatedly, the Liturgy leads you to the most important gift of all—forgiveness of your sins, turning away from being like this Pharisee and into being like the tax collector, where you readily acknowledge you cannot justify yourself before God.

And then, of course, you’re pushed out into the world to do some good...  
 for your neighbor.

Final thought:

When did these two men (the Pharisee and the tax-collector)  
 gather at the Temple? What time was it?  
 Just any ‘ole time? No—it was at the time of the evening sacrifice—  
 which was 3 o’clock in the afternoon.  
 Have you ever heard, “May prayers rise before as incense,  
 the lifting up of my hands at the evening sacrifice.”  
 It’s 3 o’clock.  
 And at this evening sacrifice (just like the morning sacrifice)  
 a lamb was offered,  
 along with oil, grain and wine.  
 Huh—grain and wine—  
 that points to the Lord’s Supper.  
 And what the Lord promised to do there  
 was meet with His people.

So again, these two men go to the Temple—at this precise time—  
 the evening sacrifice.

The tax collector knows God is there—He’s promised He’ll be there.  
 and he can’t even look up.

He says, “God have mercy on me...”

Yet instead of employing the typical term for mercy, *eleison*,  
 he uses a term fitting to the location.

Remember, he’s within the Temple precinct.

The smoke of the sacrifice can be seen.

The tax collector prays,

“God, provide atonement for me, a sinner.”

The tax-collector is referring to the sacrifice.

He knows an innocent animal is losing its life in place  
of guilty sinners, guilty sinners just like him, so that  
God might turn His wrath away,  
and show mercy instead.

The Pharisee is there at the same time.

And who does he pray about? Himself!

What's the Pharisee's sacrifice? His good works.

See, the Pharisee points to his works.

The tax collector points to his sins.

The Pharisee points to himself.

The tax collector points outside of himself, to the sacrifice.

And just like Cain, in our OT lesson,

the Pharisee and his sacrifice are rejected.

Do you remember when Jesus cried out, "It is finished?"

It was 3 o'clock. Jesus hung on the cross from 9 until 3.

Meaning He died when?

"...at the evening sacrifice."

Beloved, our Lord has heard you confess, "I am by nature sinful and unclean..."

And because of what He has done,

dying during the evening, or the twilight sacrifice,  
you can leave here today just like the tax-collector,

justified,

not made perfect,

not without a memory of the past,

not yet free from temptation—

but justified,

declared righteous for Christ's sake,

accepted and loved by God.

In the Name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.

### ***Standing...***

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and  
minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.