

The Humbled & The Exalted

Psalm 65 & Luke 18:9-14 (ESV)

Read Psalm 65

Luke 18:9-14:

⁹ He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: ¹⁰ “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ ¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

INTRODUCTION:

Psalm 65 is a song of praise that celebrates God's grace, power, and goodness. He hears prayer, forgives sin, and blesses the earth with abundance. Luke 18:9–14 presents a parable where Jesus contrasts a self-righteous Pharisee with a humble tax collector. The one who acknowledged his sin and cried for mercy was justified before God.

Together, these passages reveal that **entry into the kingdom of God is not based on status or performance, but on being in the right relationship with God.** Jesus invites us to examine our hearts, not just our actions, and reminds us that even in ministry, pride can creep in. It is the humbled who are exalted, and the honest who are justified.

DISCUSS:

1. Right Relationship, Not Self-Righteousness

Jesus' parable in Luke 18 reminds us that entrance into God's kingdom is not earned by religious performance or status, but granted to those who are in the right relationship with Him. The tax collector, though despised, was justified because he humbled himself and sought mercy.

How can we cultivate a posture of humility that seeks God's mercy rather than relying on our own righteousness?

2. The Justified Heart

The Pharisee's prayer was full of self-congratulation, while the tax collector simply cried out for mercy. Jesus makes it clear: the one who acknowledged his need was the one who went home justified. This challenges us to examine our hearts, even in ministry, lest pride take root.

What does this teach us about the kind of heart God honours in prayer and worship?

3. Responding to God's Grace, Power, and Goodness

Psalms 65 celebrates God's grace in forgiving sin, His power in sustaining creation, and His goodness in blessing the earth. These attributes invite us to respond not with entitlement, but with reverence and gratitude.

How can we respond to God's character with lives that reflect gratitude, trust, and reverence?

Pray:

1. Pray for a heart that seeks the right relationship with God, not self-righteousness or comparison. Ask God to help us approach Him with humility and honesty, trusting in His mercy rather than our merit. May we be quick to repent and slow to judge.
2. Pray for discernment and self-awareness, that we may examine our hearts honestly, even in ministry. Invite the Holy Spirit to reveal any pride or hidden motives. Pray that our service flows from love and surrender, not performance or recognition.
3. Pray for a life that reflects God's grace, power, and goodness in all we do. Thank God for His abundant blessings and ask for strength to live generously, serve faithfully, and worship wholeheartedly.