

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

CONVERSATION

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

Prayer (Luke 18: 9-14)

As Jesus continues to draw closer to Jerusalem, Luke presents teaching about the last days and hope for the future. This teaching includes two parables about prayer that appear only in Luke's Gospel. The second parable is about the Pharisee and the tax-collector and portrays two very different understandings of prayer. Jesus commended the approach of the tax-collector, not of the Pharisee. No one can stand in the presence of the holy God and feel justified by style of life or probity. The parable challenges us to reflect on our understanding and practice of prayer. While there are many different models of prayer, one helpful model is to see prayer as two-way conversations with God.

The image to stimulate reflection on Luke's teaching about prayer is *conversation*.

Core extract from the Gospel (Luke 18: 10-13; for reflection throughout the week)

Jesus said, '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!"'

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you listen to the prayers of your people.
Teach us to pray
with humility and faith,
that we may grow into your likeness,
and listen carefully to your voice;
we make our prayer in your name.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

Luke 18: 9-14

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax-Collector

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.'

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (Luke 18: 9-14)

Begin to explore Luke's teaching about prayer in the parable of the Pharisee and tax-collector by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What do you make of the attitude of the Pharisee?
- What do you make of the attitude of the tax-collector?
- What do you make of Jesus' response to these two people?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

Explore themes common to Luke's insertions in Mark's Gospel.

- Luke 1: 46-53
- Luke 14: 11
- Luke 16: 14-15
- Luke 23: 39-43

Explore God's attitude toward the proud.

- Proverbs 30: 12
- Isaiah 65: 5

Explore God's attitude toward the humble.

- Proverbs 16: 18-19
- Proverbs 29: 23
- Isaiah 57: 15

LAST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY (YEAR C) Sunday 26 October 2025

Exploring online

Widen your exploration of Luke's teaching about prayer in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Pharisee and tax-collector
- Images of Pharisee and tax-collector
- Prayer as conversation

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on Luke's teaching about prayer in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector is *conversation*. Draw on your own experience of conversation. For example:

- What are your experiences of fruitful conversations?
- What enables conversations to be deep and meaningful?
- How have you experienced prayer as conversation?

What have you learned about conversation?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by Luke's teaching about prayer in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector or by the image of conversation.

- Make a poster about the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector.
- Make a collage of conversations with pictures of people talking.
- Make a collage on 'Prayer as conversation with God'.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the theme of Luke's teaching about prayer in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector or the image of conversation.



EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales.



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