

Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 10/21/18

Monday – Read Luke 18:11-12 and Deuteronomy 26:12-15. **Devotion to God.** The Pharisee stands in the Temple, lifts his face and hands to God, and prays. He recites all the ways he is devoted to God, and he thanks God for making him who he is. Apart from his aside about the tax collector, this is a good prayer. It is similar to the prescribed prayer in Deuteronomy 26:12-15. We are supposed to pray and rejoice to God all the things which bring us close to God. As you pray today, think on what good things your devotion to God has inspired you to do.

Tuesday – Read Luke 18:11-12 and Matthew 7:1-5. **Praying with a Sideward Glance.** As we explored yesterday, the Pharisee erred in his prayer when he derides the whole of the tax collector. It is one thing to thank God for who you are, but it is quite another to denigrate someone else. Jesus' words in Matthew 7:1-5 come to mind, where he says to remove the log in our own eye before calling out the speck in someone else's. When our focus moves from honest concern about our neighbor to comparative judgment, we fall into a trap. In prayer today, ask God to point out the log in your eye, so that you can more clearly care for others.

Wednesday – Read Luke 18:13 and Psalm 51:1-5, 15-17. **Have Mercy.** The tax collector is a great illustration of the depth of God's mercy. No one is too far, too fallen, or too faulty for God to redeem. An important step, though, and what is missing from the Pharisee, is an acknowledgement of our shortcomings. Psalm 51 is an historic poem that highlights our dependence on God and God's abundant mercy. As you pray, be honest about where you need God today and believe that God will give mercy.

Thursday – Read Luke 18:14 and 1 Samuel 2:1-10. **Humbling the Exalted.** As Jesus says in the first half of his closing remark in Luke 18:14, "All who exalt themselves will be humbled." There is an expression about the news that fits just as well for the Gospel: it's job is "to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." When we puff ourselves up, or allow ourselves to be puffed up by others, we lose the critical perspective that God is God and we are not. In prayer today, reflect on times you have been humbled. Has it allowed you to see God better?

Friday – Read Luke 18:14 and Luke 1:46-55. **Exalting the Humble.** Jesus closes by saying, "All who humble themselves will be exalted." His mother, Mary, sings a similar tune in Luke 1:46-55. God has "lifted up the lowly" and "filled the hungry with good things," and so her "soul magnifies the Lord." When God blesses the humble, they praise God, unlike the proud, who probably think they made their own blessings. As you pray, ask God to create in you a humble heart, so that your soul can magnify God.

Saturday – Read Galatians 6:1-10. **In the Pew Next to You.** Instead of dismissing the tax collector, the Pharisee should have engaged him. In Galatians 6, Paul gives instructions to bear each other's burdens and "work for the good of all." Our faith isn't an every-man-for-himself faith. I rely on you, you rely on me, and we both rely on God. God may put someone in the pew right next to you who needs encouragement, friendship, or healing that you can give. Pray today that God would prepare you to notice who's sitting around you during worship tomorrow.

Lectionary Readings: Job 38:1-7; Psalm 104:1-9, 24, 35c; Hebrews 5:1-10; Mark 10:35-45.

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