LUKE 18

Who Receives the Kingdom?

a widow who would not quit, a sinner who would not look up, a ruler who walked away, and a beggar who would not be quiet

> *"But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'"*
> LUKE 18:13

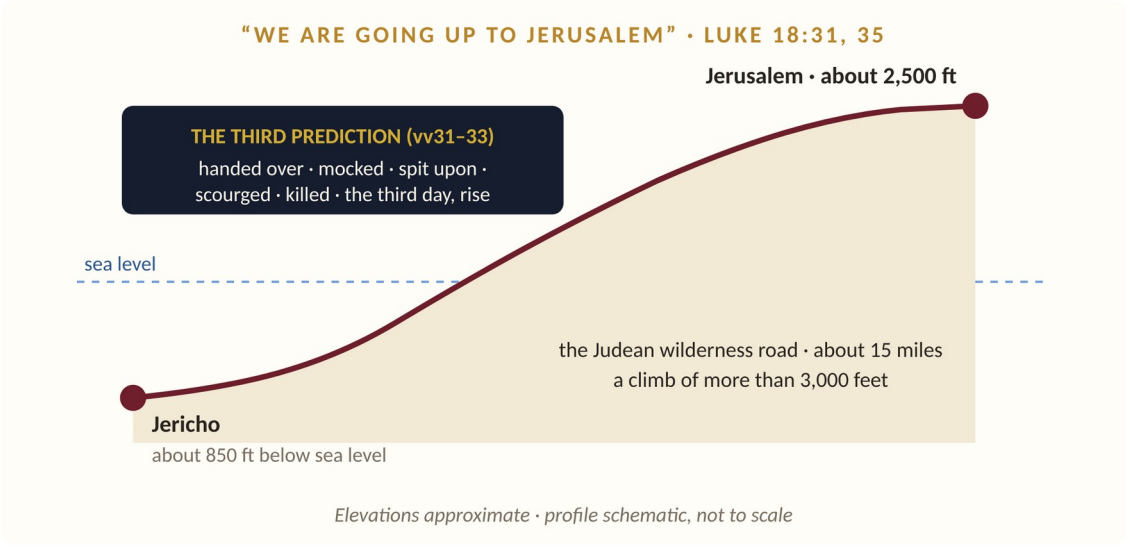
A SMITH FOR CHRIST STUDY · FOUR VOICES: GUZIK · SPROUL · SPURGEON · HENRY

Where we are in Luke

1. Luke 18 follows straight on from chapter 17.

2. Verses 1–14 hold two parables found only in Luke — the widow and the judge, the Pharisee and the tax collector.

3. The social world matters.



Pray and Do Not Lose Heart

A widow who kept coming, a judge who gave in, and a God who will not delay long

LUKE 18:7

now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?

DAVID GUZIK

Delays change us, not God; no runaway knocks.

R.C. SPROUL

“How much more”; God never gives an unjust verdict; would He find faith?

C.H. SPURGEON

No canonical hours; importunity, not eloquence, wins.

MATTHEW HENRY

Our privilege to pray; never grow weary; God will be gracious.

ἐγκακέω

ENKAKEŌ · “LOSE HEART”

To give in to evil, to grow weary, to lose courage — en plus kakos, bad.

God, Be Merciful to Me, the Sinner

Two men went up to pray; only one went home justified

LUKE 18:13

"But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'

DAVID GUZIK

Hilaskomai — an atoning sacrifice; the wrong road altogether.

R.C. SPROUL

Pelagian Pharisee; nothing in his hand; faith alone grabs Christ.

C.H. SPURGEON

Only to a sinner can God be merciful; come as you are.

MATTHEW HENRY

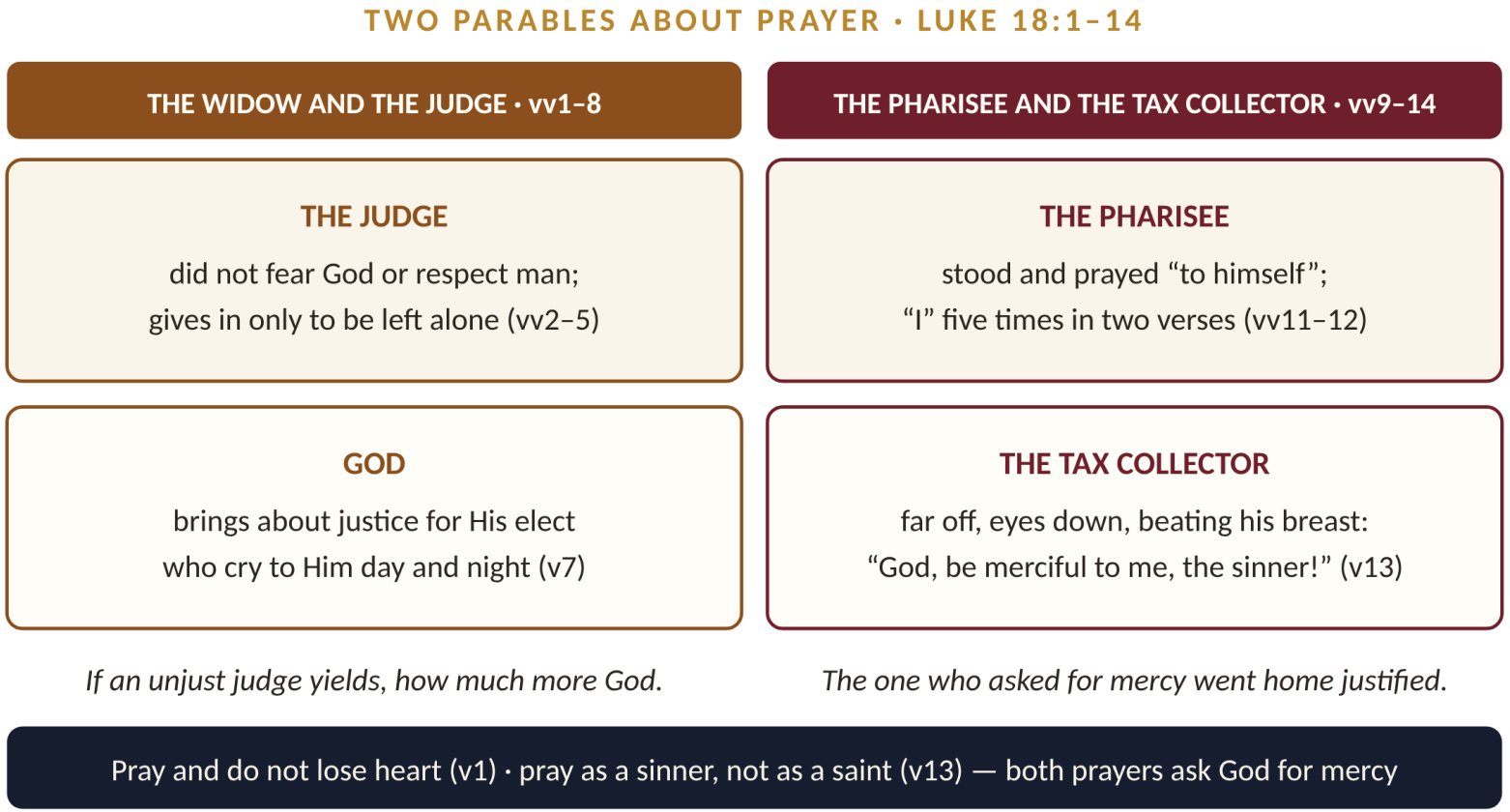
Justice condemns me; nothing will save me but mercy.

ἱλάσκομαι

HILASKOMAI · "BE MERCIFUL"

Not the ordinary word for mercy (eleeō, used by the blind man in vv38–39) but the temple word: to be propitiated, to have one's wrath turned away by an atoning sacrifice.

Two parables about prayer



Read each column top to bottom: the first parable argues from the lesser to the greater; the second shows which prayer God hears.

Receive the Kingdom Like a Child

Babies brought for a touch, disciples who rebuke, and a Lord who calls them

LUKE 18:16

But Jesus called for them, saying, "Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

DAVID GUZIK

Children loved Him; they receive without trying to be worthy.

R.C. SPROUL

Childlike, not childish; trust God implicitly — no one else.

C.H. SPURGEON

We enter by receiving; the door that admits a child.

MATTHEW HENRY

One gracious touch; whom disciples rebuke the Master invites.

βρέφος
BREPHOS · "BABY, INFANT"

Luke alone uses the word here; Matthew and Mark say "children" (paidia).

One Thing You Still Lack

A rich ruler, a camel and a needle, and the God who does the impossible

LUKE 18:22

When Jesus heard this, He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

DAVID GUZIK

Riches his idol; a humorous picture of the impossible.

R.C. SPROUL

No grading on a curve; kept his money, lost the kingdom.

MATTHEW HENRY

Riches a great hindrance; what we leave is made up to us.

ἀγαθός
AGATHOS · "GOOD"

Good in the full sense — good in nature, not merely kind.

The ruler and the beggar

TWO MEN ASK JESUS A QUESTION · LUKE 18:18–43

	THE RICH RULER	THE BLIND BEGGAR
CAME AS	"Good Teacher" — a ruler (v18)	a blind beggar by the road (v35)
ASKED	"what shall I do …?" (v18)	"have mercy on me!" (vv38–39)
HAD	"extremely rich" (v23)	nothing — he was begging (v35)
JESUS SAID	"One thing you still lack" (v22)	"What do you want Me to do?" (v41)
WENT AWAY	"very sad" (v23)	seeing, "glorifying God" (v43)
AND THEN	keeps his wealth	"began following Him" (v43)

"The things that are impossible with people are possible with God" (v27) — and the poor man shows it.

Read across: the man with everything walks away sad; the man with nothing goes away seeing and follows Jesus.

Son of David, Have Mercy on Me

The third prediction of the cross, hidden from the Twelve, and a blind man who would not be quiet

LUKE 18:31

Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished.

DAVID GUZIK

Sought Jesus by hearing; He stood still for mercy.

R.C. SPROUL

A felt need may not be the deepest need; darkness vanished.

C.H. SPURGEON

Jesus of Nazareth passes by — this is the hour.

MATTHEW HENRY

It was written; Christ is kinder than His followers.

τελέω

TELEŌ · "ACCOMPLISHED"

To bring to its end, to finish, to fulfill.

What to carry from this chapter

1

Prayer's enemy is quitting.

Jesus names the danger first — "not to lose heart" (enkakeō, v1).

2

God is not the judge; He is the "how much more."

Sproul: the parable runs from lesser to greater.

3

Five "I"s and no request.

The Pharisee says "I" five times in two verses (vv11–12) and asks God for nothing.

4

"Be merciful" means "be propitiated."

Hilaskomai (v13) is the atonement word; its only other use is Hebrews 2:17.

More to carry

5

Justified is a verdict, not a feeling.

He “went to his house justified” (v14).

6

The kingdom is received, not achieved.

Spurgeon: “We enter the kingdom by receiving, and therefore children can enter.”

7

The ruler kept his money and lost the kingdom.

Sproul’s line. Jesus put His finger on the one god the man would not give up (v22).

8

Impossible with people, possible with God.

A surgeon’s needle (belonē) and a camel: no one squeezes in.

Talk it through

1. What have I stopped praying for because the answer was slow? What would it look like to go back to that prayer this week like the widow?

2. If I wrote down my honest prayer from last week, would it sound more like the Pharisee's or the tax collector's? Who do I compare myself to?

3. What do I bring to God as if it earns me something — my sobriety, my record, my religion? What would it mean to come "as a sinner, and as nothing else"?

4. What is the difference between childlike and childish faith in my life? Where do I need to grow up, and where do I need to become like a child again?

5. What is the "one thing" Jesus might put His finger on in my life — the thing I would walk away sad rather than let go of?

CLOSING

Luke 18 asks who can be saved, and answers with the people nobody would pick — a widow, a tax collector, a baby, a blind beggar — while a rich, religious ruler walks away sad. What is impossible with people is possible with God. Keep praying; come as a sinner; receive like a child; and when He stops for you, follow Him.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

Full Deep Dive, O·I·A study and reflection journal: see the Luke study page.