SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Luke 18

Who Receives the Kingdom? — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The kingdom of God is not earned by the respectable; it is received by the needy — the widow who keeps asking, the sinner who begs for mercy, the child who is carried, the beggar who will not be quiet. What is impossible with people is possible with God, because the Son of Man is going up to Jerusalem to be handed over, killed and raised.

00 The Text

LUKE 18 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,

2 saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man.

3 "There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.'

4 "For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man,

5 yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'"

6 And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said;

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?

8 "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"

9 And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed 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 stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

12 'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'

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!'

14 "I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

15 And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them.

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.

17 "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all."

18 A ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

19 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

20 "You know the commandments, 'DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.'"

21 And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth."

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."

23 But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

24 And Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!

25 "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

26 They who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"

27 But He said, "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God."

28 Peter said, "Behold, we have left our own homes and followed You."

29 And He said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,

30 who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life."

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.

32 "For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon,

33 and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again."

34 But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.

35 As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging.

36 Now hearing a crowd going by, he began to inquire what this was.

37 They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.

38 And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

39 Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

40 And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He questioned him,

41 "What do you want Me to do for you?" And he said, "Lord, I want to regain my sight!"

42 And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well."

43 Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

Marked in the text

- **v1** "at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart" — Command / instruction
- **v2** "did not fear God and did not respect man" — Sin / warning
- **v3** "she kept coming to him" — Time / place / contrast
- **v6** "the unrighteous judge" — Sin / warning
- **v7** "will not God bring about justice for His elect" — God — His character & actions
- **v7** "day and night" — Time / place / contrast
- **v8** "He will bring about justice for them quickly" — Promise / blessing
- **v8** "will He find faith on the earth" — Time / place / contrast
- **v9** "trusted in themselves that they were righteous" — Sin / warning

- **v9** “trusted in themselves that they were righteous” — Sin / warning
- **v11** “God, I thank You that I am not like other people” — Sin / warning
- **v13** “standing some distance away” — Time / place / contrast
- **v13** “God, be merciful to me, the sinner” — Command / instruction
- **v14** “went to his house justified” — God — His character & actions
- **v14** “he who humbles himself will be exalted” — Promise / blessing
- **v16** “Permit the children to come to Me” — Command / instruction
- **v17** “receive the kingdom of God like a child” — Command / instruction
- **v19** “No one is good except God alone” — God — His character & actions
- **v22** “One thing you still lack” — Sin / warning
- **v22** “come, follow Me” — Command / instruction
- **v23** “he was extremely rich” — Sin / warning
- **v25** “a camel to go through the eye of a needle” — Time / place / contrast
- **v27** “are possible with God” — God — His character & actions
- **v30** “eternal life” — Promise / blessing
- **v31** “we are going up to Jerusalem” — Time / place / contrast
- **v33** “the third day He will rise again” — God — His character & actions
- **v34** “the meaning of this statement was hidden from them” — Sin / warning
- **v35** “approaching Jericho” — Time / place / contrast
- **v39** “he kept crying out all the more” — Command / instruction
- **v40** “Jesus stopped” — God — His character & actions
- **v41** “What do you want Me to do for you” — God — His character & actions
- **v42** “your faith has made you well” — Promise / blessing
- **v43** “began following Him, glorifying God” — Command / instruction
- **v16** “kingdom of God” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v13** “mercy” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v13** “merciful” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v38** “Son of David” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

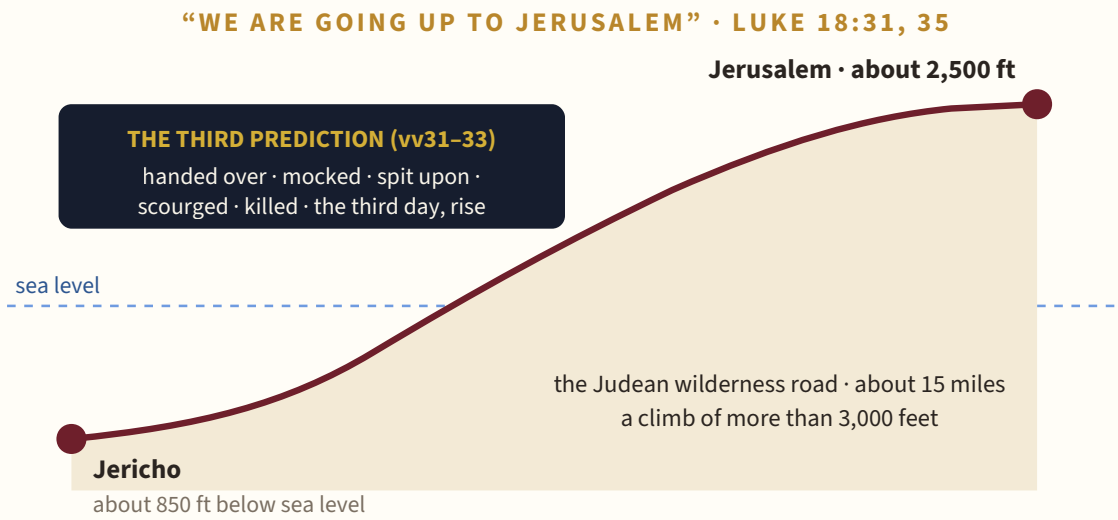
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · LUKE 18:1

"Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,"

FIGURE · THE ROAD UP TO JERUSALEM



Jesus foretells the cross on the way up; the blind man waits at the bottom of the climb, at Jericho.

Setting. Jesus is still teaching on the way to Jerusalem, right after His words about the day of the Son of Man (17:20–37). He tells two parables (vv1–8, 9–14), people bring babies (vv15–17), a ruler questions Him (vv18–30), He takes the Twelve aside (vv31–34), and He approaches Jericho, where a blind beggar sits by the road (vv35–43).

Structure:

- vv1–8 — **the widow and the judge:** pray at all times and do not lose heart (v1); a judge who did not fear God; a widow who kept coming (vv2–3); he gives in so she will not wear him out (vv4–5); will not God bring about justice for His elect — quickly? (vv6–8a); "will He find faith on the earth?" (v8b).
- vv9–14 — **the Pharisee and the tax collector:** told to those who trusted in themselves (v9); two men go up to pray (v10); the Pharisee's "I thank You that I am not like other people" (vv11–12); the tax collector far off, beating his breast: "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" (v13); this man went home justified; humbled and exalted (v14).
- vv15–17 — **like a child:** babies brought for His touch; the disciples rebuke (v15); "Permit the children to come to Me" (v16); receive the kingdom like a child (v17).

- vv18–30 — **the rich ruler:** "Good Teacher, what shall I do?" (v18); no one is good but God (v19); the commandments — kept from youth (vv20–21); "One thing you still lack … come, follow Me" (v22); very sad, extremely rich (v23); the camel and the needle (vv24–25); "Then who can be saved?" — possible with God (vv26–27); "we have left our own homes" — many times as much, and eternal life (vv28–30).
- vv31–34 — **the third prediction:** up to Jerusalem; written by the prophets; handed over, mocked, spit upon, scourged, killed, raised the third day (vv31–33); they understood none of these things (v34).
- vv35–43 — **the blind man:** begging near Jericho (v35); "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by" (vv36–37); "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" — told to be quiet, he cries the more (vv38–39); Jesus stops: "What do you want Me to do for you?" (vv40–41); "your faith has made you well" (v42); he sees, follows, glorifies God; the people praise God (v43).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "God" ×14 — vv2, 4, 7, 11, 13, 16, 17, 19, 24, 25, 27, 29, 43 (×2).
- "say / said / saying" ×23 — through the chapter; "I tell you / Truly I say to you" ×4 — vv8, 14, 17, 29.
- "Jesus" ×9 — vv16, 19, 22, 24, 35, 37, 38, 40, 42.
- "kingdom of God" ×5 — vv16, 17, 24, 25, 29.
- "justice / legal protection" ×4 — vv3, 5, 7, 8.
- "humbled / humbles / exalted / exalts" ×4 — v14.
- "heard / hearing" ×4 — vv22, 23, 26, 36.
- "mercy / merciful" ×3 — vv13, 38, 39; "Son of David" ×2 — vv38, 39.
- "rich / wealthy" ×3 — vv23, 24, 25; "enter" ×3 — vv17, 24, 25.
- "tax collector" ×3 — vv10, 11, 13; "Pharisee" ×2 — vv10, 11.
- "pray / praying" ×3 — vv1, 10, 11; "sight" ×3 — vv41, 42, 43.
- "follow / followed / following" ×3 — vv22, 28, 43.
- "children / babies" ×3 — vv15, 16, 29; "eternal life" ×2 — vv18, 30.
- "faith" ×2 — vv8, 42; "judge" ×2 — vv2, 6; "widow" ×2 — vv3, 5; "fear God" ×2 — vv2, 4.
- In the Pharisee's prayer, "I" ×5 — vv11–12.

Contrasts: An unrighteous judge ⟷ God who brings justice quickly (vv6–8). Pharisee ⟷ tax collector; stood and prayed to himself ⟷ stood far off, eyes down (vv11, 13). Trusted in themselves ⟷ justified (vv9, 14). Exalts ⟷ humbled; humbles ⟷ exalted (v14). Disciples rebuke ⟷ Jesus calls (vv15–16). "What shall I do?" ⟷ "have mercy on me!" (vv18, 38). Extremely rich ⟷ begging (vv23, 35). Impossible with people ⟷ possible with God (v27). The Twelve who see but do not understand ⟷ the blind man who cannot see but calls Him Son of David (vv34, 38). Went away sad ⟷ followed, glorifying God (vv23, 43).

Shape of the chapter: five scenes asking one question — "Then who can be saved?" (v26). The answer keeps coming back the same: the one who asks and keeps asking, the one with nothing to offer, the one carried in someone's arms. In the middle of it Jesus says why that is possible: He is going up to Jerusalem to die and rise (vv31–33).

Chapter theme (my words): God hears those who keep asking and justifies those who bring Him nothing but their sin. The kingdom is received like a child, and the rich man's "one thing" keeps him out, but what is impossible

with people is possible with God — because the Son of Man went up to Jerusalem to be scourged and killed and to rise.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · LUKE 18:14

"I tell you, this man △ went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but ☆ he who humbles himself will be exalted."

FIGURE · TWO PARABLES ABOUT PRAYER

TWO PARABLES ABOUT PRAYER · LUKE 18:1–14

THE WIDOW AND THE JUDGE · vv1–8	THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR · vv9–14
THE JUDGE did not fear God or respect man; gives in only to be left alone (vv2–5)	**THE PHARISEE** stood and prayed "to himself"; "I" five times in two verses (vv11–12)
GOD brings about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night (v7)	**THE TAX COLLECTOR** far off, eyes down, beating his breast: "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" (v13)
If an unjust judge yields, how much more God.	*The one who asked for mercy went home justified.*

Pray and do not lose heart (v1) · pray as a sinner, not as a saint (v13) — both prayers ask God for mercy

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

FIGURE · 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.

Is God like the unjust judge? No — the parable runs from the lesser to the greater. Sproul: "How much more." Spurgeon: "God will be more easily moved than this unjust judge, only be you as importunate as this widow was." Then why the delay? Guzik: "the delays in prayer are not needed to change God, but to change us." And God never gets the verdict wrong: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" (Gen 18:25) — Sproul: "He has never made an unjust verdict in His eternal existence."

What does "quickly" mean if the elect cry "day and night"? I take it this way: when God acts, He acts decisively; His timing looks slow to us, but He "will not delay long" beyond the right moment. The question in verse 8 points to the Son of Man's coming (17:30): the real issue is not whether God is faithful but whether He will find us still believing and still praying. Sproul: "If Jesus came tonight, would He find faith in your house?"

Why did the tax collector go home justified? Not because his prayer was eloquent or his repentance deep enough. He asked God to be *propitiated* — *hilaskomai*, the atonement word (Guzik) — and he called himself "the sinner." Sproul: "He brought absolutely nothing to the table except his sin," and "Faith is the sole instrument by which we grab hold of Christ." Spurgeon warns against turning even conviction into merit: "a sense of sin gives no man a right to grace." Henry: "Justice condemns me; nothing will save me but mercy, mercy." This is Romans 4:5 in story form.

What does it mean to receive the kingdom like a child? To receive it, not achieve it. Spurgeon: "We enter the kingdom by receiving, and therefore children can enter." Guzik: children receive Jesus' blessing "without trying to make themselves worthy of it, or pretending they don't need it." Sproul adds a guardrail: "there is a huge difference between a childlike faith and a childish faith." Our teachers differ on what the passage says about infants and the church — Henry: "If the parents be members of the visible church, the children are so too"; Spurgeon: "He did not baptize them, but he did bless them" (quoted by Guzik). They agree on the main point.

Was Jesus denying He is good (v19)? No. He was pressing the ruler: if only God is good, who is this "Good Teacher"? Guzik: "Good Teacher was a unique title." And He was exposing the man's confidence — Sproul: "He does not grade us on a curve."

Must every disciple sell everything? Sproul reads "sell all" as a test of the first commandment for this man, whose riches were his god, not a rule for every believer. Guzik agrees the riches were an idol. Henry: "Riches are a great hindrance to many in the way to heaven." But every disciple has to be willing; Peter's answer (v28) and Jesus' promise (vv29–30) show that.

The eye of the needle. No gate is meant; it is a picture of the impossible (Barclay and Morris in Guzik; Henry: "a proverbial expression"). Luke uses the surgeon's word *belonē*. The point is verse 27 — salvation is God's work. Sproul: "God's grace does for us what we cannot possibly do for ourselves."

Why were the Twelve blind to the cross? Luke says it three ways in one verse (v34) — they understood none of it, it was hidden, they did not comprehend. Henry: "They are only for the smooth things." Guzik: "They could not see or understand the truth until God opened their eyes" — which Jesus did after the resurrection (24:45).

One blind man or two; going in or coming out of Jericho? Matthew has two blind men; Mark and Luke focus on one (Sproul: Bartimaeus was the spokesman). Mark says "leaving Jericho," Luke "approaching Jericho." Guzik and Sproul both note that Old Testament and New Testament Jericho stood side by side; the healing likely happened between them.

What did the blind man really receive? Sight first — but Jesus said "your faith has made you well" (*sōzō*, "saved"), the same words as 17:19. Sproul: "A felt need may be a real need, but it may not be your deepest need." He called Jesus "Son of David" — Messiah — and then he followed Him up the road to Jerusalem.

Word study (Greek):

- **lose heart — *enkakeō* (G1573):** to grow weary, give up (v1; 2 Cor 4:1, 16; Gal 6:9).
- **wear me out — *hypōpiazō* (G5299):** to give a black eye; Luke 18:5; 1 Cor 9:27.
- **legal protection / justice — *ekdikeō* (G1556), *ekdikēsis* (G1557):** to vindicate, see that right is done (vv3, 5, 7–8).
- **be merciful — *hilaskomai* (G2433):** be propitiated; only here and Heb 2:17.
- **justified — *dikaioō* (G1344):** declared righteous (v14; Rom 4:5).
- **babies — *brephos* (G1025):** infants (v15; 1:41; 2:12; 1 Pet 2:2).
- **good — *agathos* (G18):** good in nature (vv18–19).
- **needle — *belonē* (filed under G956 *belos*):** a surgical needle; only here; eye — *trēma* (G5169).
- **accomplished — *teleō* (G5055):** brought to its end (v31; John 19:30).
- **called out — *boaō* (G994) / cried out — *krazō* (G2896):** a shout, then a raw, repeated cry (vv38–39).
- **have mercy — *eleeō* (G1653):** the beggar's plea (vv38–39; 17:13).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Prayer's enemy is quitting** — *enkakeō* (v1).
2. **God is not the judge; He is the "how much more"** (Sproul).
3. **Five "I"s and no request** — the Pharisee (vv11–12).
4. **"Be merciful" means "be propitiated"** — *hilaskomai* (v13).
5. **Justified is a verdict, not a feeling** (v14).

6. **The kingdom is received, not achieved** (Spurgeon).
7. **The ruler kept his money and lost the kingdom** (Sproul).
8. **Impossible with people, possible with God** — *belonē* (v27).
9. **The Twelve could see and did not; the blind man could not see and did** (vv34, 38).
10. **He stood still** (Guzik).

Cross-references: Gen 18:25; Exod 22:22–23; Ps 34:18; 51:17; Isa 35:5; 53:3–5; 61:1; Matt 19:13–30; 20:29–34; Mark 10:13–52; Luke 1:52–53; 4:18; 11:5–13; 14:11; 16:15; 17:13, 19; 19:1–10; 24:25–27, 45; John 19:30; Rom 4:5; 1 Cor 9:27; 2 Cor 4:1, 16; 8:9; Gal 6:9; Heb 2:17; 1 Pet 2:2.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · LUKE 18:41

““△ What do you want Me to do for you?” And he said, “Lord, I want to regain my sight!””

Command to obey — pray and do not lose heart. There are men I have prayed for for years — sons, brothers, guys who went back out. I have quietly stopped asking. Jesus told this parable for exactly that. This week I will put those names back on my list and pray for them every day, like the widow who kept coming. If He came tonight, I want Him to find faith in my house.

Sin to confess — the Pharisee's prayer. I have prayed "I thank You that I am not like" — not like the guy still using, not like the man in the next cell, not like the brother who fell. That prayer has five "I"s and no mercy in it. I confess it. My only prayer is the tax collector's: "God, be merciful to me, the sinner!" Not a sinner. The sinner.

Promise to trust — he went home justified. He went home declared righteous — not because he cleaned himself up first, but because he asked God to accept the sacrifice in his place. That is the gospel I preach to men who think they are too far gone. "Only to a sinner can God be merciful" (Spurgeon). I will tell one man this week that God justifies the ungodly.

Warning to heed — the one thing. The ruler had kept every commandment he could think of, and still walked away sad, because one thing owned him. I ask honestly: what is my "one thing" — money, a relationship, my reputation, my anger, my comfort? Whatever I won't let go of is what Jesus will put His finger on. What is impossible for me is possible with God.

Example to follow — the blind beggar. He couldn't see Jesus, so he used what he had — his ears and his voice. When the crowd told him to shut up, he got louder. When Jesus asked, "What do you want Me to do for you?" he answered plainly. Then he followed Jesus up the road to Jerusalem. I want that kind of faith: loud when others want me quiet, plain when Jesus asks, and following when the healing comes.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

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? (18:1–8; Luke 11:9) *The delays in prayer are not needed to change God, but to change us (Guzik).*
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? (18:9–13) *He brought absolutely nothing to the table except his sin (Sproul).*
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"? (18:13–14; Rom 4:5) *Come as you are (Spurgeon).*
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? (18:15–17) *A huge difference between a childlike faith and a childish faith (Sproul).*
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? (18:22–25) *He kept his money and lost the kingdom (Sproul).*

6. If Jesus stopped in front of me and asked, “What do you want Me to do for you?” — what would I say? Is that my deepest need? (18:40–43) *A felt need may not be the deepest need (Sproul).*

Worship. God is the Judge of all the earth who always does right, who hears His elect day and night, who justifies the sinner who stands far off, who receives babies and blesses them, who does what is impossible with people. Jesus is the Son of Man who went up to Jerusalem knowing every insult and every blow that was waiting, and the Son of David who stood still on the Jericho road for one beggar’s cry.

Prayer. God, be merciful to me, the sinner. I have nothing in my hand to bring. Keep me from the Pharisee’s prayer and the ruler’s sad walk away. Teach me to pray and not lose heart, to receive Your kingdom like a child, and to let go of the one thing I hold onto. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me — open my eyes, and I will follow You and glorify God. Amen.

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