**New Kilpatrick**

**Podcast**

**23rd October 2022**

**Luke 18:9-14**

**Centring**

On our knees

In our hearts

Amid questions

Unsure

Certain

Wondering

Humble

Broken

Healed

Hurt

On the wrong side of prejudice

However we come here

This is our home

This is the house of God

This is the very gate of heaven

Hello… I’m Roddy Hamilton the minister of New Kilpatrick Parish and thank you for the time to be together today… The story we tell today gathers us in a place of worship… as we are gathered today… but it centres of two people… both there to pray… yet it is not quite a simple as that… Apparently it matters how you present yourself… not with hats and your Sunday best… but between humility or pride… and only one of those works…

**Prayer**

Loving God

May you be generous…

Yet you can be no other

May you be gracious…

Yet you know no other way

May you be forgiving…

Yet it is all you can be

And may **we** be honest

And silent

Before you

(Pause)

And may the silence speak

Of our hurt and hurting of others

Our judgement and judgement of others

Our prejudice and prejudice towards others

(Pause)

Loving God

May we find our humility

And recognise the grace that support us

It is all we have

And know the love that forgives us

There is nothing else we have

And know the peace that can be ours

For it is your greatest gift

May it be ours

Together

Shared

As we serve each other

A gospel of grace

And hope

And generous love

Hear us, O God

Hear us and hold us

So be it

Amen

**Scripture Background**

A parable… not unlike last week’s persistent widow… though the two were unlikely to have been told back-to-back originally… Luke collects different stories under themes and this is about prayer…

It is all hyperbole to emphasis a point… a pharisee… one who knows his religion well… has some degree of pride in it… but genuinely works hard to fulfil all the laws… and the tax collector… the one who has chosen a life where few will be sympathetic given he would be a collaborator with the Romans… And by the way… they would all be ‘he’…

When you hear the story… listen to the places they take in the temple… imagine the body language… hear their words and imagine how they might be said… loudly or whispered… all of that is part off the drama and lesson of the story…

**Scripture Reading Luke 18:9-14**

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: **10**‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax-collector. **11**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. **12**I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.” **13**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!” **14**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.’

**Reflection**

Our newish youth group: Something Different happens every fortnight… I panic when working with young people because I feel rather useless, uncool, and without much of an idea what to say or what their world is like… But that is only from my perspective apparently…

From the other side… while young folk can easily see through you trying too hard… what they seek are role models… versions of adults that offer some integrity and stability and sense of values…

So, I searched through the headlines this last week to find such role models…

In a flash of inspiration ended up going through the culture pages of the newspapers… thinking about films of superheroes…

But apparently, today’s superheroes are bad role models… because they tend to be violent, sarcastic, selfish and rich. Unlike the old superman version of superheroes, they don’t have normal lives like Clark Kent, they aren’t vulnerable or have real life problems they have to cope with and find a way through…

Then we come across these two anti-heroes in the gospel… a choice between role models… The pharisee and the tax collector.

Let’s think about them… The pharisee has come through a tradition created to enable folk to do their absolute best before God… helped by a plethora of rules to keep them right… rules designed to keep them as pure and clean before God… so that they fulfil their desire to follow God closely…

It makes perfect sense… We do the same ourselves here… In bucket-loads… what we can and cannot do in order to be followers of God… what to believe and what not to believe to help us keep on the straight and narrow… we invented the Apostles Creed, Catechisms (Man’s chief end is to glorify God etc), rules about who can come to communion, membership classes…

The other role model is the tax collector… who stands aside… can’t raise his eyes because he hasn’t followed the rules… hasn’t kept himself clean… after all he is a tax collector… and as the story is told we know who the anti-hero is going to be…

But maybe we are a bit of both… We long to have the attitude of the tax collector but end up realising we are more of a pharisee… rather than pursuing actual liberation in our faith we become absorbed with policing the boundaries… and in doing so we even offer a moral superiority, excluding or condemning those who aren’t familiar with our ways…

Luke is an interesting and upsetting gospel… Reading it honestly… especially the stories over the last few weeks: persistent widow, pharisee and tax collector… we have to realise what is actually being said here… how Luke is illustrating again and again… a complete reversal of power for the traditional hierarchies that structure our contemporary life… Luke is speaking a prophetic word to all communities that are tempted to emphasise rigid and at times inhumane positions.

By contrast… the vision of the kingdom of God in Luke is one that is found on the wrong side of history… The blessings of God’s justice are received, as pure mercy and grace… and from a position of weakness, dependence, lack… In such a place… there are no ground for condemning others… or having a self-assured righteousness… or owning a feeling of exceptionalism…

As role models for our community here… what might the pharisee and tax collector say of us… What songs should we sing, prayers should we make, approach to presbytery plans should we have… as we live in love alongside other flawed, struggling human beings… who seek to know something of the sacred…

Because Luke is constantly pushing us towards the latter.

**Pause**

This story hides a well-known prayer that has been said for centuries as an act of supplication… It is known as the Jesus prayer… a reshaping of the words of the tax collector… who says… God, be merciful to me, a sinner!…

The ancients reformed that prayer… Lord Jesus Christ… Son of God… forgive me… a sinner… Lord Jesus Christ… Son of God… forgive me… a sinner…

And the pattern for this prayer is to breath in and we say to ourselves the first line… and breathe out with the second… not too deeply or we’ll all pass out… but a gentle drawing in of the grace of God… and letting go of all that hurts…

So I invite you… for the next few moments… to repeat quietly to yourselves… eyes open or closed… breathing in saying… Lord Jesus Christ… son of God… and breathing out.. . forgive me a sinner…

Candle lit…

**News**

**Prayers for Others**

Loving God

Thank you we are not like…

Not like…

Yet we are too often like

Those who frighten us

Hurt us

Reduce us

So, we pray for a world

We judge too much in our prayers

And pray instead for peace

For renewal

For forgiveness

And for hope

To all those whose lives are broken

Because of conflict and fear and reputation

Loving God

We pray for Ukraine and Russia

We pray for Tigray and Haiti

We pray longing for a way of living

That sees the gift in each other

And not the fear

We pray for our leadership

For our politicians

Which we so easily disparage

Yet we long for a country at peace

That stops blaming

And seeks to reduce the gap between us all

Economically, politically, socially

We pray for our environment

And those who seek to find a way

To live again, peacefully with creation

That recognises its worth and beauty and generosity

We pray for all those we so easily find a prejudice against

Because of culture, sexuality, age,

Where we build up rules built out of fear rather than love

For our families

For our friends

And in humility

May our prayers begin with us

Toward those closest to us

And those ill and worried

Anxious and afraid

That we find a place where all are welcomed

And respected

Affirmed and renewed

In a place shaped by your kingdom

And equal for all

Hear our prayer

So be it

Amen

**Benediction**

**Sung Amen

Doxology**