

THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR





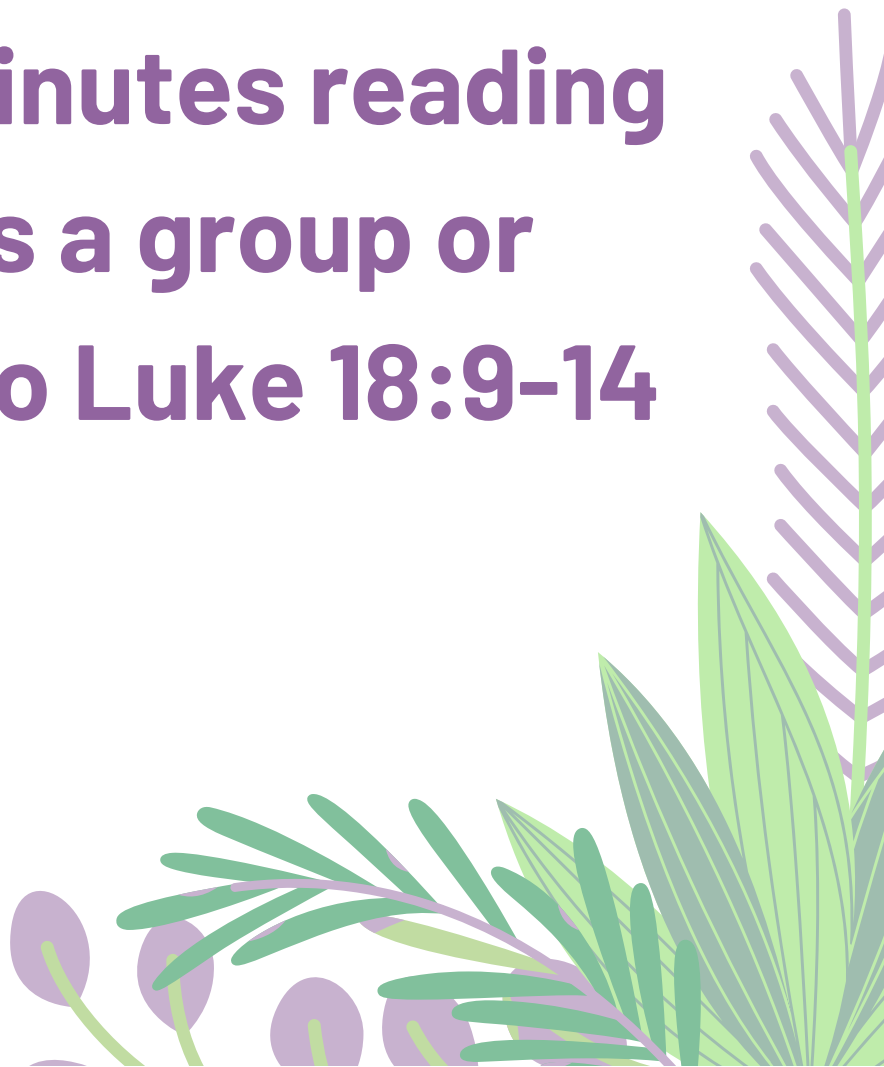
Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer. Use this opening prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Lord Jesus, open our eyes to see and open our ears to hear where you are in these scriptures. We pray your Holy Spirit living in us would reveal its wisdom to us and point us towards you and how we may be generous and live generously. Amen!

Reading

Before you discuss the questions on the next page as a group, spend 5 minutes reading aloud as a group or listening to Luke 18:9-14



LET'S Talk



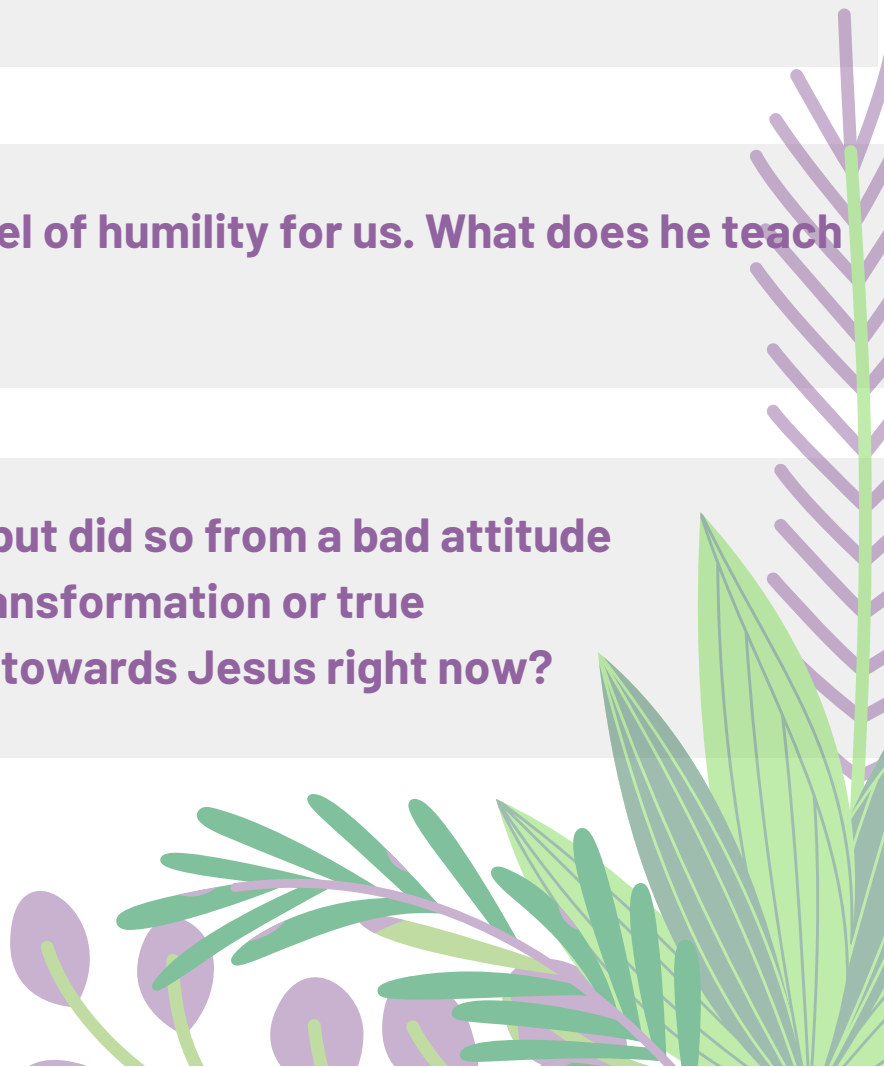
Spend 15 minutes discussing the questions below

The Pharisee did what his faith/religion had taught him to do. Why do you think Jesus was upset with him?

The Pharisee revelled in his accomplishments and how he compared with other people. Can you think of examples where we do this in modern society?

The tax collector is a great model of humility for us. What does he teach us about being humble?

The Pharisee fasted and tithed but did so from a bad attitude and not from a place of heart transformation or true generosity. Where is your heart towards Jesus right now?





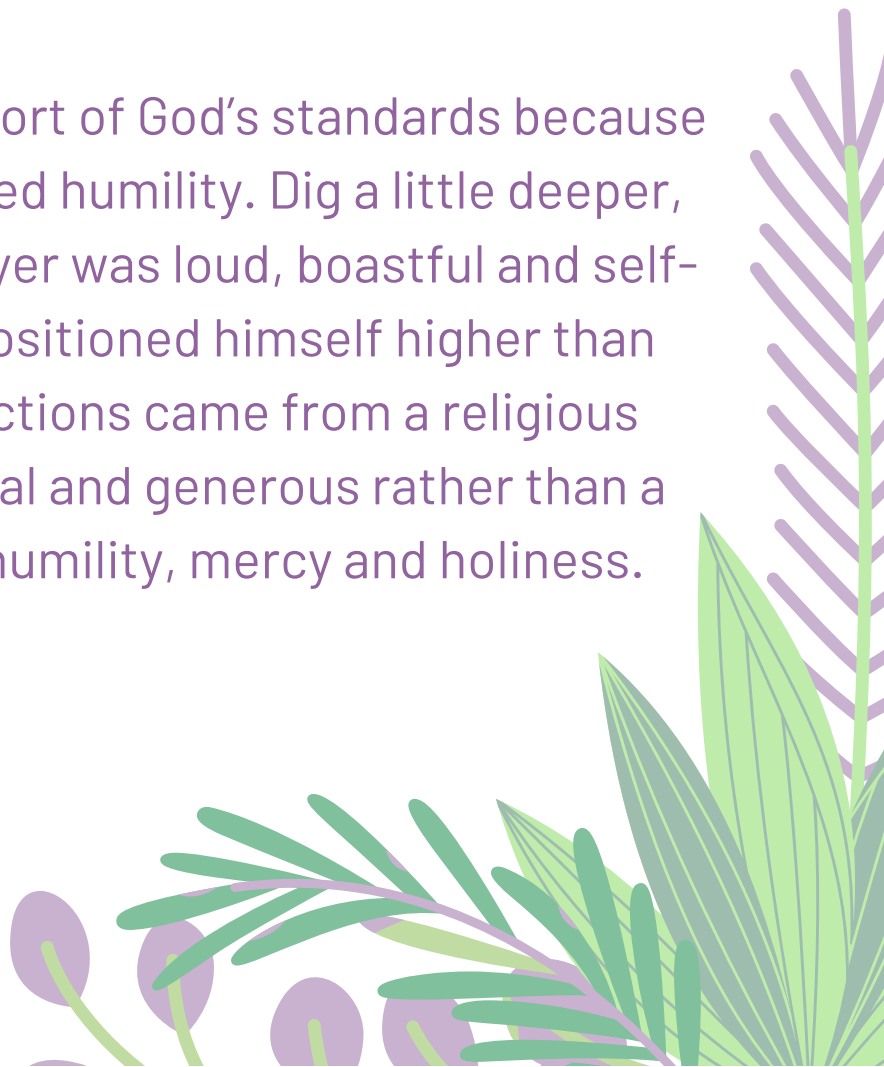
Reflection

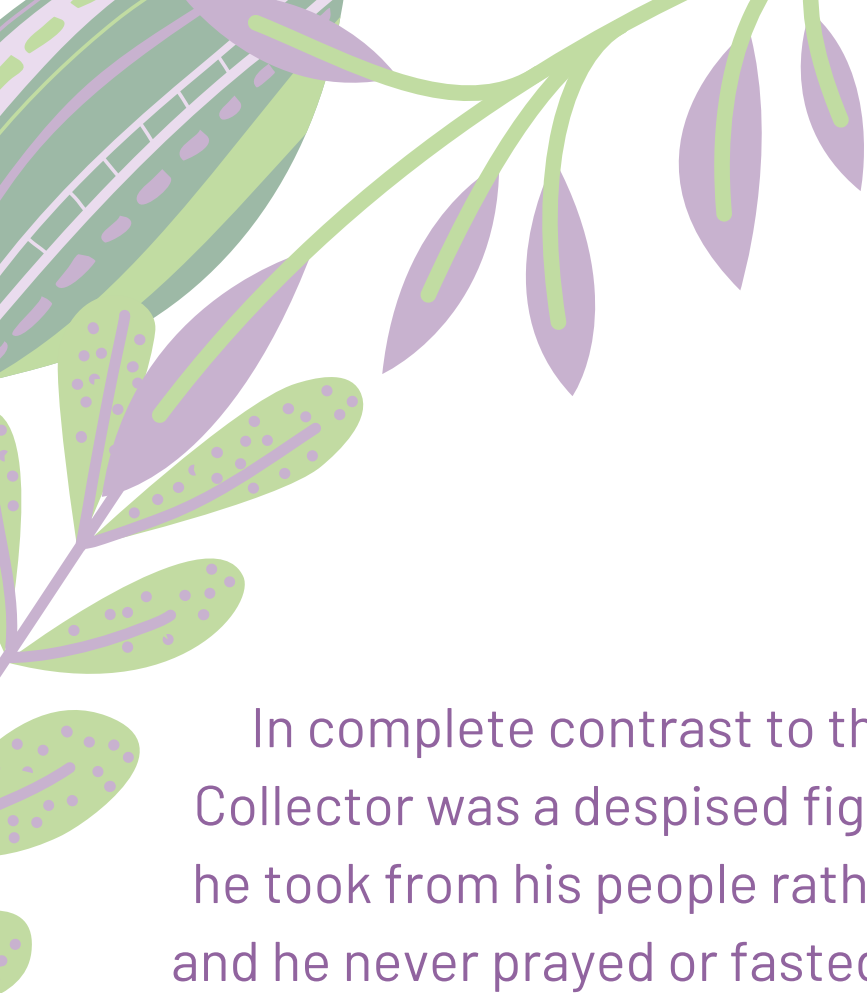
Spend 15 minutes in reflection as a group. As part of this time please read the reflection below and/or listen to the sermon from Luke Bunting (Giving and Generosity Officer)

What does Jesus say about generosity in this parable?

Through this parable, Jesus is teaching us that having a humble heart that seeks mercy and shuns religiosity is a central part of living generously. The Pharisee was doing everything right according to human standards; he tithed his whole income (not just part of it as was expected) and prayed at the temple regularly. He fasted twice a week (again far more than expected) and was a leader in the community.

Yet the Pharisee fell short of God's standards because he and his prayer lacked humility. Dig a little deeper, and the Pharisee's prayer was loud, boastful and self-congratulating; he positioned himself higher than others. His stated actions came from a religious attitude to seem moral and generous rather than a heart compelled to humility, mercy and holiness.



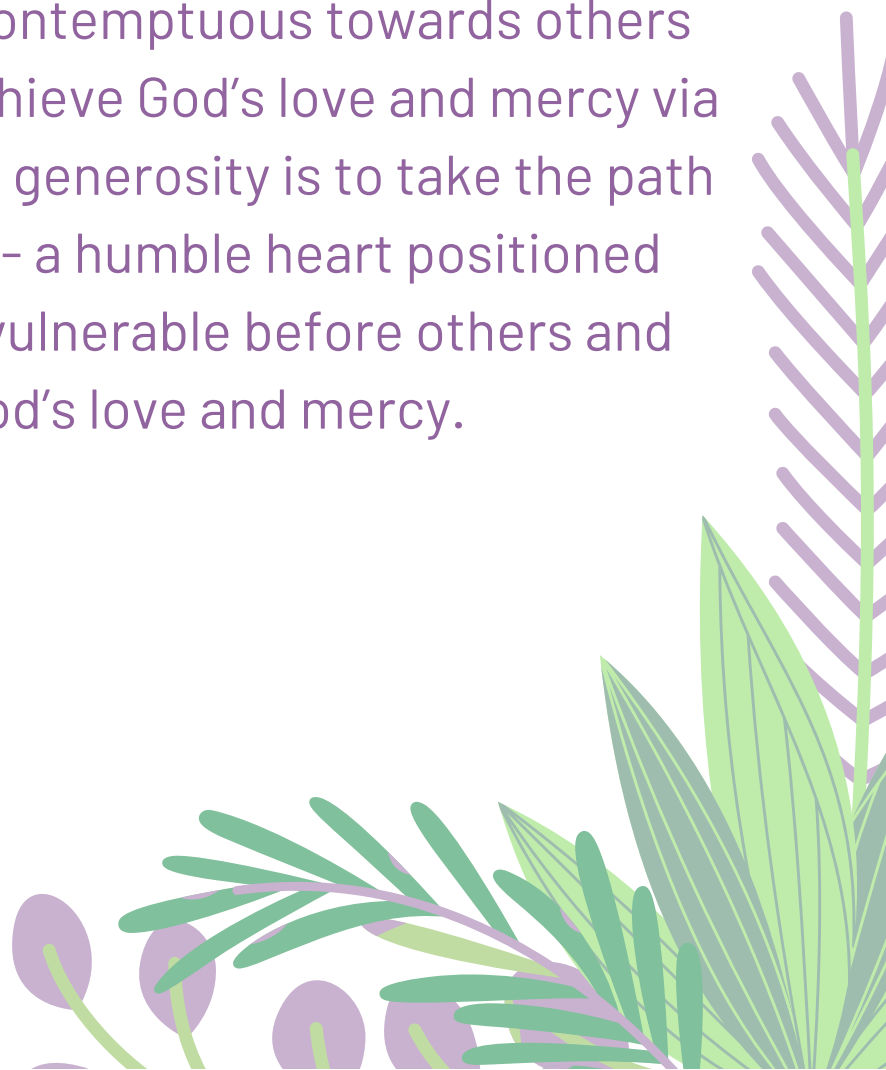


In complete contrast to the Pharisee, the Tax Collector was a despised figure in the community; he took from his people rather than giving to them and he never prayed or fasted. Yet the Tax Collector met God's standards because he came to pray with humility.

He knew he had done wrong and was looking for mercy from God, the only one who could forgive his sins. The reality is that the Pharisee and the Tax Collector seemed so different on the outside. Yet, on the inside, they were both the same, both sinners, both needing God's mercy, but only the Tax Collector recognised this deep need and longing for Jesus.

“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. All those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” This statement sums up how Jesus sees a generous life. Generosity is not an amount of money, how many times you perform a task or even how well you do it.

That path leads us to the Pharisee - obsessed with the self and status, contemptuous towards others and thinking he can achieve God’s love and mercy via religious actions. True generosity is to take the path of the Tax Collector - a humble heart positioned towards God, being vulnerable before others and receiving God’s love and mercy.

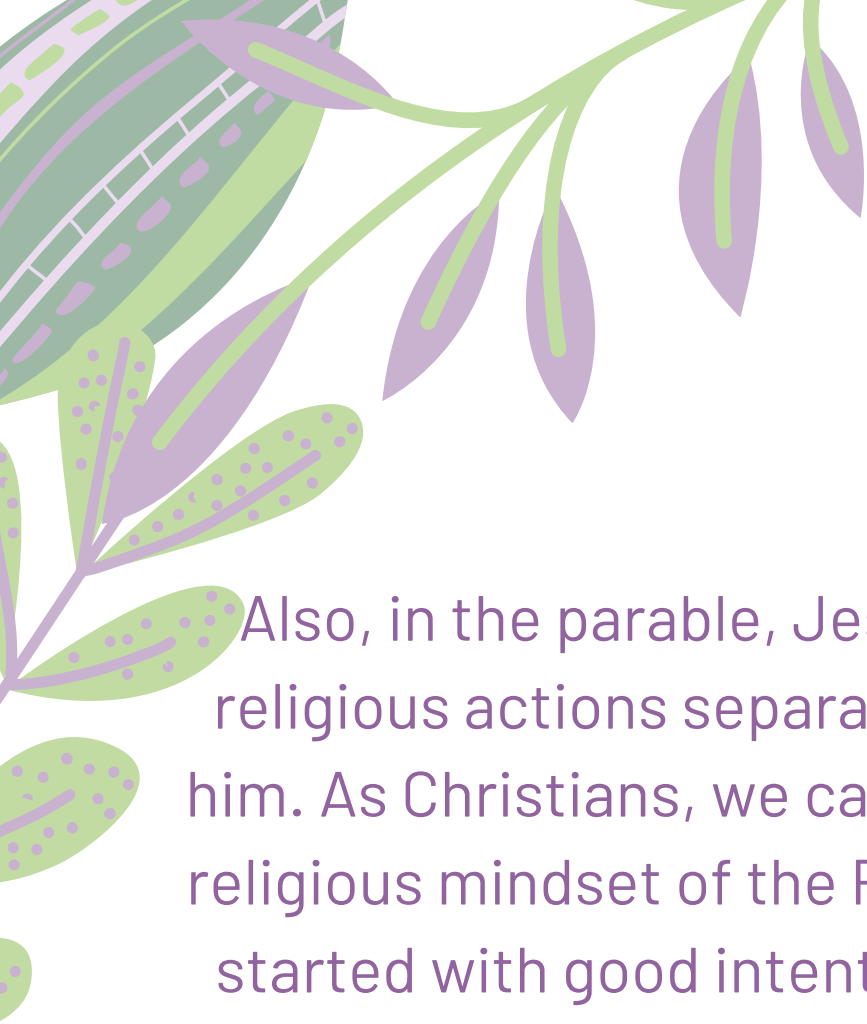


How might we respond?

Through this parable, Jesus is inviting us to adopt this humble position before him just like the Tax Collector did, knowing we have nothing without God's love and generosity. With God, we can live a life of worship and generosity. A life that values a heart's attitude over any actions or amounts, celebrating others over comparison with others and receiving God's love and mercy over achieving it.

Do you think Jesus is inviting you to make a change in your heart's attitude, celebrate others or receive his love and mercy? How can you best respond to that invitation today?





Also, in the parable, Jesus is challenging religious actions separate from a heart for him. As Christians, we can often slip into the religious mindset of the Pharisee, even if we started with good intentions. Our financial giving can stay at the same level and become a formality. We may begrudgingly serve in the same team at church out of obligation or show off what we do for God before others.

**What part of your life has become religious?
Where would you like to make a change in
your heart or habits?**

Prayer

Spend 5 minutes in prayer and gratitude. Use this closing prayer as a prompt if you want a place to start.

Jesus, thank you for your example of humility in this parable and throughout your life and teachings. We pray that we can learn to adopt a humble posture before you at all times and that you challenge every area of our lives that has become a religious exercise. Give us the grace to value the attitude of the heart over any actions or amounts, celebrate others rather than compare with others and receive your love and mercy over achieving it. Amen!

