

God Only Saves Broken People

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[0:00] Jesus told this parable. Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

! The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself. God, I thank you that I am not like all other men, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. But the tax collector stood at a distance.

He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

[1:08] And then we're going to move down to verse 35, and I'll read to the end of the chapter.

Verse 35. As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.

When he heard the crowd going by, he asked, what was happening? They told him, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.

He called out, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet.

But he shouted all the more, son of David, have mercy on me. Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him.

When he came near, Jesus asked him, what do you want me to do for you? Lord, I want to see, he replied.

[2:13] Jesus said to him, receive your sight. Your faith has healed you. Immediately, he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God.

When all the people saw it, they also praised God. This morning, I want to talk to you about you.

And I want to talk to you about God. And I want to talk to you about the ways of God. A lot of people are wrong about God. A lot of people, including us, forget that God only saves broken people.

He only saves broken people. So if you were in the Sunday school this morning, were you convicted? I certainly was.

And when you were convicted, if you weren't there, we were talking about anger. And why do we get angry? And we broke that down.

[3:26] And I felt my shirt getting tighter and tighter. And I thought of some people I needed to apologize to. Certainly.

And when you're in that situation, it's easy to forget, right then and there, that God only saves broken people.

He knew exactly what we needed to hear. He knows exactly where we are. And he comes to us just right then and there in our brokenness.

And he offers us salvation. That's what I want to talk to you about this morning. People think that God only cares about the good and the strong. That he only cares about people doing their best. And people that are shining. And so you do your best. You shine. Or God won't think twice about you. He won't look at you. But that's where they are so wrong.

[4:25] That's where we are so wrong. So often. The good news, the gospel is, that God is not like that. He only saves broken people. And that's what I want to talk to you about.

I'm not going to start there. Instead, I'm going to start with something that happened to me. A few, about a month or two ago now, my wife's laptop was sitting on the kitchen counter. And it fell off.

And the screen broke. And it was done. Well, can I tell you how I felt when I found out? I was frustrated and aggravated, to say the least.

I instantly said to myself, we are buying a new one. Even before the screen broke on this one, the disk drive broke on it. The wireless router dealy bob thing broke on it. We had to send it in. And this was all within a month and a half. And now the screen breaks. And I said, I hate this thing.

[5 : 32] I'm not fixing it. We're buying a new one. We don't like broken things. We don't like broken things. We'd rather just throw them away. And that's how we think about God a lot of times.

We think that he doesn't have time. He doesn't have patience. He doesn't have grace for broken things. But we couldn't be more wrong. Bring your guilt and your conviction.

Bring your frustration with yourself, rightful as it is, and bring it to this truth that God only saves broken people. And that's what you see in our two stories that we had read for you.

And the first story begins in verse 9. That's what we're going to look at. We're going to look at the first story. Then we're going to look at the second story. And it says it has the same truth.

And in verse 9, we ask who's speaking? And it's Jesus. He's the Son of God. He was born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit.

[6 : 36] He is God in the flesh. He says, when you see me, you see the Father. So now he's going to tell us a story about what kind of God we have.

If anyone knows about God, it's him because he is God. So he's come to show us God. He's going to tell us what he's like.

Then we ask, who is he telling this story to? Well, he's telling this story to people who thought that God only saved fixed people and strong people and good people.

You see that. To some who were confident in their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else. So these were people that had it together. They had it together. They measured up.

They felt like they measured up. They were doing enough. And then you had people that didn't measure up. That weren't doing enough. And so these Pharisees, these people, these righteous people, thought there were two kinds of people.

[7 : 43] And they thought they were on the good side. But they were wrong on both accounts. There are not two kinds of people. There's only broken people.

And they were not on the good side. And how soon we forget that God looks on the heart. They were good on the outside.

But in their hearts, they were proud. They were lifted up. They were self-righteous, self-sufficient. They said, here is God's law. You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not lie. You shall not covet. And they said, I have kept all of these.

And to be sure that they've kept all of them, they made another ring of rules around God's rules. An extra ring of rules. Rules to help me keep God's rules. And, you know, to a certain degree, that maybe there's a place for that sort of thing.

[8 : 42] But this is where they went wrong. They took a step further. They said, to break my rules, to break our rules, is to break God's rules. You can't break my rules without breaking God's rules. And so you start to see their heart.

So they have God the lawgiver. He has the right to tell us what to do. And then, they have themselves. Right next to God.

See, God can tell us what to do because he made us. He shaped you in your mother's womb every day before you were born when it was written in his book. He is your God.

He is your creator. And he has the right to tell you how to live. But then right next to God, this Pharisee had himself. I can make laws too.

Laws just as binding, just as important, and I can expect them to be obeyed. And then when they are disobeyed, I can judge. And so this Pharisee, a Pharisee, went up to the temple to pray.

[9 : 47] And he was comfortable. He was at home. This was his place. This is where he belonged. And he went right up in the front.

I see none of you are like that. He was comfortable in front of everyone, and then he prayed. And what did he pray?

It says in verse 11, the Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself, or to himself. He's making rules for himself, so why not pray to himself, or about himself?

And so he begins to talk about his favorite person. I, I, I, I, I, I.

I'm glad I'm not like everyone else. I'm glad I'm not like that tax collector over there, that traitor, that thief, and he just gives me the heebie-jeebies looking at him. I fast twice a week, and I give a tenth of everything I get.

[10:52] I, I, I, I, and that's where we'll leave him. Talking to himself, about himself. Everyone's looking at him.

Wow. What a good guy. But Jesus quickly leaves him. Jesus doesn't pay much attention to him. And his eyes run to the back.

To the back. And there Jesus puts his eyes, and sees a tax collector. And the thing you have to understand is, this tax collector is a traitor.

He was a thief. The Pharisee was right about him. He was a traitor and a thief. See, what happened was, the Romans, they were in charge, they divided up the territory into taxation districts, and then, they had this wonderful system of selling the office of tax collector to the highest bidder.

And what they asked for is, we need this amount of money. We need, I We need X amount of money every year collected from this district. And so, no matter how much you collect, all you need to turn in is this amount of money.

[12:07] And so, you can see, this is, this is a business opportunity. A business opportunity. And this man is a businessman. And he saw a good deal.

He knew a good deal when he saw it. And he said, yeah, I'd be siding with God's, the oppressors. I would be siding against God's people. I would be stealing left, right, center. But I will do it.

And so, he had turned his back on God's people. He had turned his back on God himself. And he had sold his soul for money.

But now he's in the temple. In the back. And he can't even lift his eyes to heaven.

Have you ever been there? He can't hardly even talk. He's wracked with guilt. And he's finally come to his senses.

[13:04] And he sees his life before him. He sees what he had been doing. And his greed. And his idolatry. His cruelty.

His lies. His cheating. His bullying. He was a mean, ugly person. And it's all there. He had treated people like trash.

And he had crushed the weak. And now he saw it all there. And it was a nightmare to him. Have you ever been there?

And you finally realize, this is what I am. I put up a good front. I like to think of myself as a decent person. But this is what I am.

I'm no better than this. This is the truth. Everything else has been a lie. But this is where I am. This is really what it's like. I am ruined. And all I can do is beat his chest.

[14:11] And all I can do is pray, God, have mercy on me, a sinner. Have mercy on me. Now, do you love stories with a sudden twist? You love movies that all of a sudden at the end, everything is switched up on you.

Well, two men went up to the temple to pray. One is comfortable being there. One is a good guy. One takes God seriously. One loves God's laws.

One likes being there. He had a good history. He had a good week. He could look back and see, yep, there's some pretty good things done this week. And the other is totally uncomfortable being there.

Maybe you're uncomfortable being here. Maybe you think, I don't belong with these people. Well, listen to how the story ends.

Verse 14. I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. Now, justified is a courtroom word.

[15:15] It's a legal word. It's a law system word. So two people go to the court to argue their case before the judge. And one, the judge judges and condemns one.

And he justifies and declares innocent the other one. And so two men go up to the court. And they're presenting their case. And one says, I am innocent.

Look, I've done nothing wrong. Everywhere, I've obeyed. I've kept the law. And you'll find nothing to condemn. And the other one stands before the judge and says, I'm guilty.

I've done it. And I can hardly stand it. And I wish I could die to end this guilt. There's no words to describe how wretched I am. And the judge looks at the first and says, Guilty.

And he looks to the second, who can say nothing good for himself, and says, Justified. Innocent. Righteous. And if that were to work, if we were to see that, we would say, What?

[16 : 19] What? How can that be? Because God only saves broken people. He only saves broken people.

And now here's our second story. It's like the first, except it's different, because it really happened. Jesus' first story was something that could have happened, but it didn't happen, just like he said it. But the second story is something that really happened, and we see it in verse 35. And this story is different, too, because it doesn't have two men, it only has one man. And he is a broken man.

He was blind. And there was no way that he could get a job. And so all he had was begging. And if you would have seen him, it would have broken your heart.

Have you ever seen a real beggar? I'm being serious. Have you ever seen a real beggar? Not a panhandler. Not someone with a perfectly healthy body who's begging.

[17 : 32] But have you ever seen a real beggar? In Ethiopia, I saw a real beggar. His legs were shriveled up, and he was sitting on top of them.

And he held out his hand for everyone, just like this. And he looked down, and he held out his hand like that. I'll never forget the shape of his hand.

And he was almost embarrassing to look at, because he was so weak, so gut-wrenching, so broken. That's where this man is, blind and broken.

And he's left to live off the charity of others. He's left to living off the mercy of others. And looking back, maybe it was that severe mercy that prepared him to be saved on this day, because he was used to crying out for mercy, and it prepared him to ask for mercy when something good came along.

One day, he was begging, and he heard Jesus coming by, and he asked, who is it? And they say, it's Jesus. And instantly, he knew what to do. He starts screaming.

[18 : 40] He starts screaming, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! Have mercy on me! Have mercy on me! Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! And people told him to be quiet.

But he shouted all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me! Have mercy on me! He's going to be heard. He's going to be heard.

See, they, all these other people, they didn't need Jesus like he needed Jesus. And oh, he needed him. Jesus could help him. Jesus could change everything.

And so he screamed over and over, faster and faster, until Jesus, who's always leading a crowd, stops dead in his tracks, and he says, bring him here.

Bring him here. And then Jesus said, the sweetest words a sinner has ever heard. What do you want me to do for you?

[19 : 41] What do you want me to do for you? I love Jesus so much for that question. And he says, I want to see. I want to see.

Then receive your sight. Jesus has a gift for him. Jesus, who creates sight, who created worlds, who created the Son, has a gift for him now.

He says, receive your sight. And immediately, he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. Now, who did Jesus save that day?

A broken person. The world told him to be quiet, and Jesus told him to come close. The world says, Jesus has no time for you.

Jesus says, bring him here. And then, what do you want me to do for you? What do you want me to do for you?

[20 : 52] See, the world says that you have to be good and strong and you have to shine for God to even notice you. And Jesus comes and he says, God only saves broken people. So, do you want to be saved?

Do you want your sins forgiven? Do you want your life changed? Do you want God to rescue you from your sin and from your guilt, the stranglehold that Satan has on your life?

Well, then look at these two men, the tax collector and the blind man, and learn how to be saved.

These things are written for us so that we might be wise unto salvation, so that you would know how to be saved.

Now, look at them. They have three things in common. There's three lessons to teach us about what God is like, about what we need to be saved.

Lesson number one is this, they saw their true condition. They saw their true condition. They saw how helpless they really were and what did they cry out for?

[22:06] Mercy. Mercy. Both times, they cried for mercy. Now, people only cry for mercy when they see how helpless they are. How helpless they are.

I don't know, when I was in fifth, sixth grade or whatever, we played a game called mercy. You know that game where you lock hands like this and then the first person to hurt the other one bad enough wins.

But what do you cry? Mercy. Mercy. When you know you can't do anything and it's hurting so bad and you need out of this situation, you cry for mercy.

So there's, these people are crying for mercy because they know how helpless they are. There's no, there's not pulling up the bootstraps. There's no, God helps those who help themselves.

They're all beyond that. They need mercy. See, God only saves broken people. He doesn't heal the healthy.

[23:08] He heals the sick. He doesn't fix the fine. He fixes the broken. He saves sinners, not righteous people. So as long as you see yourself as pretty good, as doing all right, as long as you think I can do this, then I tell you the truth.

There is no hope for you. Your hope is a lie. There is no hope for you. But the surprise is that as soon as you see how helpless you are and how hopeless your situation is, that's exactly when you get qualified for real hope.

That's exactly when you get qualified for salvation because God only saves broken people. He only gives grace to the needy. So what do you need to learn if you're going to be saved?

If you're going to have God's grace storm into your life and change you and give you a new record, a new life, a new world to live in, a new future, you need to see your true condition.

And what does the Bible say? What does God say about you? There's no exceptions here. The Bible is very clear. What does the Bible say? It says you are guilty.

[24:24] It doesn't pat you on your back for your good things. It puts his finger on your bad things and says these are real. You have sinned against a holy God.

You can paint them, you can put all the makeup you want on them, but this is the reality. You are guilty. You're not okay with God. And he is not okay with you.

The Bible says we're transgressors. That's a big word, but everyone knows what it is. You draw a line, you tell your son don't do this, and they cross the line.

They don't, it's not even they wander across the line. They cross the line because they want what they want. That's what God says about us. He has drawn a line and said this is what you should do. You shall not do this and we do it. We're transgressors. So the son, mom tells the son do not go in the kitchen. Do you ever tell your kids don't go in the kitchen.

[25:27] Do not cross this line. And then before you know it they're in the line, over the line. They're in the kitchen. They heard what you said. They just didn't care. They forgot it.

They didn't think it was that important. That's what we are. We're transgressors. The word of God comes in and we say I don't care. I'll do whatever I want. Or I forgot about it. As if God's speaking to us means nothing to us.

As if it's not even worth remembering. That's a transgressor. We see it in other people but you will never be saved until you see it in yourself. That's what you've done. That's who you are.

The Bible says not only are you a transgressor, you are dirty. God is holy. He is light. He is good. He is loving. He is pure.

And in him there is no darkness. There's nothing that you could put your finger on and say, well that's not quite good enough. Pure. Undeified. But sin defiles us.

[26:26] It makes you dirty. And the Bible says we're dead. We're spiritually dead. We don't respond to God. He speaks and we keep going.

He tells us to do something and we don't do it. We're so broken. So we are that computer that won't turn on. And you press the button and you press the button and it doesn't come on.

That's us. The button's pressed and yet it doesn't ever come to life. There's no power. There's no life in it.

And God looks at you. God looks at men and their fallen condition and says that's how you are. You're dead. You're the dead battery in the car.

You turn the key and there's no life. Now until you see your true condition you'll never cry out for mercy. So who cries out for mercy?

[27:26] Who cries out to be saved? Those who are guilty. Those who are dirty. Those who are dead. You say I'm guilty.

I'm dirty. And I'm broken and there's nothing I can do about it. Jesus have mercy on me a sinner. Now the Pharisee didn't need a God of mercy.

He didn't need a God of mercy and he didn't find a God of mercy. The tax collector needed a God of mercy and that's exactly what he found.

So mercy doesn't ask you to save yourself. Mercy saves you. Mercy doesn't ask you to change.

Mercy changes you. Mercy doesn't say wait I'll wait until you do something.

Mercy comes and makes you do whatever it asks. So mercy doesn't ask for a payment. So much church so many good works so much turning over the leaf before it reaches out.

[28:31] Mercy runs to the sinner and finds the sinner exactly dead dirty guilty everything else and saves them. That's the mercy of God.

He doesn't demand righteousness before he saves. He gives righteousness in order to save. And he doesn't demand change before he saves. He saves and then gives you a change of life and it's all a gift.

He has it in himself and he gives it to us. And so from first to last God saves broken people. Now did you see it?

The tax collector went home justified. The blind man went home seen. God's love came upon these people and saved them. It rushed upon them.

It threw its arms around the returning sinner. There's mercy in God. And that is the second lesson.

[29:32] You have to see that there is mercy in God. You have to see that there is mercy in God. that you don't need to heal yourself.

And you don't need to make yourself all better. Because there's mercy in God. And he delights in mercy. He delighted in saving the tax collector.

He delighted in saving the blind man. His hands are already open wide. God delights in mercy.

You don't have to twist his arm. God delights So if you come needing mercy, I tell you to expect mercy. Expect love.

Because that's the kind of God that he is. That's the second lesson. You have to see that there is mercy in God. You'll never call on him if you don't think he's merciful. A lot of people know that God is holy and just and righteous and has all these expectations.

[30:33] But that is not enough to save you. You have to see that there is love and grace and mercy in him. And then when you see that his hands are open wide and he's welcoming and receiving sinners, that's when you run to him.

So one, you have to see, wait a second, I am a sinner. And secondly, there is mercy for sinners. Now that's the first two lessons. Here's the third lesson.

You need to cry until you're heard. in your brokenness, in your sin, in your guilt, Christian, in your brokenness, in your sin, in your guilt, lost person, you cry until you're heard.

The tax collector cried until he was heard. The blind man cried out for mercy. I need mercy. Son of David, have mercy on me. And when there was resistance, when people were stopping him and telling him to be quiet, he cried all the louder.

And it seemed like Jesus didn't hear him. And he cried all the louder. And he cried until he was heard. And some of you need to keep crying until you're heard.

[31:40] Don't give up until you are heard. Don't give up until God saves you. And that's what faith does. Faith says, I can't do anything else. I have to keep crying out.

I'm dead in my sins and my transgressions. I'm dead. I'm as good as dead. I can't save myself. But he can. And so armed with those two things, my guilt, my shame, my sin, my inability to save myself, and God's mercy for sinners, what else can I do but keep crying out?

And God hears. And this is what he does. He justifies the wicked. He says to the traitor, you're innocent.

He forgives us all of our sins. He washes the dirty sinner until there's not a spot of sin on them. He forgives us all of our sin, washes us clean, and he gives us his own righteousness.

Christian, wrapped around you is the righteousness of God himself. God finds any fault in his own righteousness.

[32 : 54] How secure are you, Christian? How secure and innocent you are in his sight. But how can he do that? How can he say to the wicked you're justified?

Well, it's through the death of Jesus Christ because Jesus took upon himself the sin of all who would believe. It's what Jesus did for sinners on the cross.

He suffered the punishment their sins deserved, and so now they can be forgiven. He paid the whole price for them. Everything that had to be paid was paid.

Let me repeat that. Everything that had to be paid was paid. And then he gives us his son's righteousness. So now on the record book in heaven, on the law books in heaven, if you believe there is no sin there, only perfect righteousness.

In God's eyes, it's not just that we haven't sinned. It's just that we've always obeyed. Because he gives us Christ righteousness.

[34 : 06] He sees how we threw all of our weight on Jesus Christ, and he says to us, justified. He washes us, cleanses us, gives us a robe of righteousness, and then begins to change our lives.

He puts his spirit within us, and now the Holy Spirit walks before us, and teaches us, and instructs us.

Well, the tax collector went home justified. He went home saved. He showed up a sinner, guilty, dirty, defiled, and he went home justified.

You can too. The blind man showed up to a spot that morning, blind, helpless, needing mercy, and he went home dancing and singing and praising God.

And you can too. But they both cried out for mercy. Will you?

[35 : 11] will you? Let's pray. Our heavenly father, thank you that we can bring our brokenness and our sin and our guilt and our shame to you, and that you are not put off by it, but you know how to deal with it, and you know how to forgive, and you know how to take care of our sin and throw it into the deepest ocean, bury it in the furthest sea, put it behind your back and never remember it against us again.

Thank you that you are greater than our sin, greater than our guilt, your love is greater than anything that we can do, and so we come to you in our brokenness, and we ask that you would save, you would sanctify, you would give us grace and victory over our sin.

I pray for the lost here. Open their eyes so that they could see their true condition, open their eyes so that they can see that there is mercy in you, and then give them grace to cry out and save them.

Thank you that sinners can be saved in a day. Pray that you would do that today. In Jesus' name, and for his sake, for his glory, amen.