

# How to Go Home Justified

Luke: All Things New



## Series Goal

That Mercy Hill Church would be made new as we follow the One who is making all things new!



## Sermon Text

Luke 18:9-14



## Big Idea

We're not right. Not all of us are willing to admit it. But, deep down, we all feel it. And we have different ways of trying to get better—we have different ways of attempting “justification.” In this parable, Jesus gives us two of the most common approaches. One looks quite clean on the outside but ends in a mess. The other looks like a train-wreck but it leads to freedom and life.

### (1) The Way of the Religious (vv. 9-12)

**Observation #1: He Is Externally Clean**—This man is hiding the stains of the heart under the makeup of good deeds.

**Observation #2: He Is Standing by Himself**—this man has positioned himself up front in the temple towards the altar.

**Observation #3: He Is Praying “to Himself”**—If you look closely, you'll see that He mentions God, but He's not really talking to God. As one commentator puts it: “He glances at God, but contemplates himself” (Plummer). We might say that this man references, but quickly passes by, God while on his way to self-adoration.

**Observation #4: He Is Trusting in Himself**—See v. 9a.

There's a tragic irony in all of this. The one who thinks he's justified in himself is the one who's truly condemned before God. The one who thinks he's righteous in himself is the one who is truly becoming more and more monstrous in his personal dealings with others. There's got to be another way!

### (2) The Way of the Christian (vv. 13-14)

**Observation #1: He Is Externally a Mess**—We read that he is “beat[ing] his breast.” It's a mark of grief, of mourning, of contrition.

**Observation #2: He Is Standing at a Distance**—Where the Pharisee understands himself to be a great Saint and takes his place up at the very front of the line, this tax collector, understanding himself to be a great sinner, has taken his place at the very back. He is “standing far off . . .”

**Observation #3: He Is Praying towards Heaven**—Technically, this man, we are told, while he was praying, “would not even lift up his eyes to heaven . . .” But I am telling you, his are the only prayers that actually make it there!

**Observation #4: He Is Trusting in God and His Mercy Alone!**—When this man says, “God, be merciful . . .”, he is not merely asking for God to sweep his sin under the rug. He is asking for God to make atonement, to make propitiation, to provide the blood-payment of a substitutionary sacrifice for the forgiveness of His sins.

When you get this, everything changes! You're put in the right with God, freely, on the basis of the righteousness of another. You are secure. You are loved. You are free. And do you want to know what else? You become more loving. The only way to break that trusting-in-self-contempt-for-others connection we saw back up in v. 9 is to come to know the free and abounding love of God for you in this way—to stop trusting in yourself that you are righteous and to place your trust in Christ!

## Reflection Questions



- In what ways are you like the Pharisee in this parable? Look at the four observations made above. Which do you most relate to? Why?
- In what ways are you like the tax collector in this parable? Look at the four observations made above. Which do you most relate to? Why? Where do you need most to grow?
- “God casts away many in anger for their supposed goodness, but none for their confessed badness” (John Trapp). What do you think this means? How is it convicting? How is it encouraging?