

# Opposites with No Name

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] I'll give you a minute to get there. We've been talking about more than a name.
- We're talking about people in the Bible who we don't know their name, but they played an important role in us learning of things about the Lord Jesus Christ.
- We talked about the little boy who, we don't know his name, but he had the five loaves and the two fishes, the feeding of the 5,000. We talked about the man who was in hell, the rich man in hell, but we don't know his name.
- Today we're talking about opposites with no name. Opposites with no name. The book of Luke, chapter 18.
- Look with me beginning at verse 9. Luke, chapter 18, beginning at verse 9. It says, And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others.
- [ 1 : 1 1 ] Stop right there for a second. Notice how this starts off. He spake a parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous. We have a lot of that today in our country and a lot around the world.
- People are trusting in themselves. You know, and they despise others who, you know, have different opinions. A lot of people do that. Verse 10. He says, here's what he said to them.
- Two men went up into the temple to pray. The one a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself. God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, and even as this publican.
- Stop right there for a second. Notice what it says there. Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself. His prayer wasn't getting to God.
- It was with himself. We have a lot of people do that, too. They don't trust the Lord Jesus Christ, and so the prayer is not going very far. Up to the ceiling.
- [ 2 : 1 9 ] He goes on. Verse 12. I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.
- One's thinking of all the things that he does and how good he is and how righteous he is. The other one, God, be merciful to me. Verse 14. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.
- For everyone that exalted himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. He says, this one who says, I can't do anything for myself.
- God, I need your help. He says, that one is going to get the help that he needs. That one is going to get the help from God that he needs. So, let's have a word of prayer, and we'll talk about these two guys.
- Okay? Dear Heavenly Father, I pray this morning that you would help us to learn. Lord, we've got a Pharisee and a publican. A religious man and a tax collector.

[ 3 : 37 ] And Lord, I pray that you would help us to see the contrast between the two. Lord, that you would help us to see that we need to be like the publican. We need to be humble. We need to understand that we are sinners.

In need of a Savior. Lord, we need to understand that we cannot do it on our own. We cannot make it on our own. We need your help. And Lord, may we learn lessons from these two men.

As we begin to look at them today and carry on to next week. Lord, just open our eyes, we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. There's only one of you. You ever thought and think about that?

There's only one of you. We were talking yesterday. For those of you that don't know, Garrett will be here a little bit later. Garrett has a twin. But they're different.

He'll tell you that they're different. He'll tell you that they are not alike in any... They don't even look... They look alike, sort of, but they're not identical twins. They're fraternal twins. And so, he's got a twin, but they're different.

[ 4 : 38 ] If you've met other twins, you know... Octavia and Dexton. Octavia and Dexton. That's right. They're twins. They, uh... They're different. Yeah, what a difference, yes.

They, uh... Different personalities. Different ways of doing things. Different likes and dislikes. They're different. So, there's only one of you. God created you. He made you unique.

He made you special. Whether it be in your looks, your personality, your abilities, your capabilities, whatever it is. He made you special. And we, as individuals, have to deal with God.

I can't say, I want all these people to go to heaven. I do want you all to go to heaven. But, I can't make that decision for you. You have to make that decision yourself. So, I can't say, I want all of you to work and make a million dollars in your lifetime.

I can't do that. Depends on you and what you do and your work ethic and stuff. See, even identical twins, while they look a lot alike, they're not the same.

[ 5 : 43 ] I had a couple of twins when I taught school. Kim and Kristen. And you talk about two who look alike. They were almost identical.

I finally got so I could tell the two of them apart, even at a distance. The way they did things, the way they carried themselves, the mannerisms and things, I got so I could tell the two of them apart.

But, I mean, they looked alike. But they were different. And they had different ideas, different styles, different things that they did. In the story that Jesus is telling us here, this parable, he's talking about two men.

We don't know their name. They were opposites, though. Here's one who is a Pharisee. Pharisees were religious leaders in Israel.

They knew the law. They knew how to do everything right. They knew all the rituals. They knew all of that stuff. The other one's a publican. The other one is hated by most of the Jewish people because he was a Jewish man collecting taxes for the Roman government.

[ 6 : 52 ] I mean, you think, first of all, Jews and Romans. No. Then you think, just like the rest of us, taxes. No. He had both. And he was doing all of that.

And so here's these two guys. The religious leader of the Jews. A guy that most Jews do not like at all. And one of the things, first of all, we see about them, the fact that they're opposites, is what motivated them in their life.

They had contrasting motives. They did not have the same motive in the things. You know, on the surface, when the story begins, we can't judge their motives.

Because they're two unnamed men. We don't know a whole lot about them. They're doing the same thing. They're heading into the temple. They're going there to pray.

So here's two men, both Jewish, both heading into the temple. Both heading in, we think, to go and pray and stuff. But what they were going to pray about were two different things.

[ 7 : 53 ] And how they were going to handle their prayer was two different things. You know, when we look at them, we think, hey, you know, they're the same nationality. They're the same religion. They're the same.

But no, they're so different. Look at verse 10 again. Two men went up into the temple to pray. The one a Pharisee, the other a Republican, coming from two different thought processes. Jesus sees their heart.

We're looking from the outside. There's two men going to the temple. They're going to pray. You think about people when they come to church. People driving by, they see people coming into church. They say, oh, they're going to church.

They're going to hear the Bible. They're going to fellowship with others. They're going to, you know, worship God. They're going to. Having lived down south, and particularly down south, the church is for all kinds of things.

There are a lot of good people in the church in the south. Right? Alberta knows. She's from Tennessee. She lived in Tennessee. All kinds of good people who wanted to worship God and do what God wants them to do.

[ 8 : 58 ] But I can also tell you from having lived in the south, there's all kinds of people who go to church because it's good for business. If you don't have a church that you go to and belong to and part of, you're not a good businessman.

People question you. But if you go to a church, especially there's some, you know, every town has certain churches. If you go to that church, oh, you must be okay. You're good and stuff. And so they go for business purposes.

So there are different reasons people go to church. Why are you here today? Verse 18 and 9, verse 9, he says, he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous.

They weren't trusting God. They weren't trusting what they were learning. I'm a good person. I'm a good person. Therefore, I go to church.

People see me. I act the right way. I say the right things. I do the right things. I'm a good person. You know, that is not why we go to church.

[ 10 : 03 ] Why don't we come to church? To worship God. To learn about God. To draw closer to God. God is the central thing of everything here.

We want to have that in our life. These two men, they're going to have a different religious display. That's going to be the next thing.

A religious display. The Pharisees of Jesus' day, they were known for their outward appearance. Their outward display of what they did spiritually. But, again, they knew all the laws.

They knew all the rituals. They knew everything they were supposed to do in church. They handled everything just right. They were good church members. But, what did Jesus say about Pharisees?

Over in Matthew chapter 23, beginning at verse 25. Matthew 23, 25 and on. It says, Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.

[ 11 : 03 ] Oh, that is not what they expected to hear from him. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. For ye may clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

They are not good people. This is Matthew chapter 23, verse 25. Verse 26. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and the platter.

Then go outside of them, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites.

For ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness.

Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. What is he saying? He's saying, look, you look good on the outside.

[ 12 : 12 ] He says, but you look like someone's taken a cup. And they pick it up, they run it under the water, they run the rag over the outside of it and say, oh, that's good, it's all set.

He says, no, they never touched the inside of the cup, where the tea and stuff was or whatever, coffee, where your lips touched and everything. They just kind of, it's clean. And he says, no, that's not clean.

He says, you're like whited sepulchres. Sepulchres, a tomb, right? So he says, you're like a whited tomb. Take and you paint the tomb on the outside, you paint it this white stuff, it looks good, it reflects the sunlight, oh, it's so beautiful.

The final resting place of so-and-so, look at that, isn't it? But he says, what's on the inside? Dead men's bones. Decay, rot.

All kinds of things. And he says, you Pharisees, you're being hypocritical. You make yourself look good on the outside, but what's going on on the inside?

[ 13 : 16 ] What's happening there? Let me illustrate it for you this way. The Queen Mary. The ship was built in 1936. It spent four decades going back and forth between America and England and used in different ways, even went through World War II.

And finally they retired it. And they retired it, and it was going to be a floating hotel and museum in Long Beach, California.

So they brought it to Long Beach and sailed it there and set it up where it was going to be and then began working on it. They wanted to work on it, fix it up, make it so it could be this hotel, restaurant, everything.

And while they were working on it, one of the things they decided to do, it had three smokestacks. They decided to take those smokestacks off, take them on to shore, take time to go through them, clean them, refurbish them, make sure everything was okay before they put them back on.

They were fixing those up as well. Well, when they got them on shore and started working on them, they discovered something. Those smokestacks had decayed.

[ 14 : 36 ] They had had three-quarter inch steel plates that they had been made out of. When they went to work on those, they found out those steel plates had disintegrated. They were gone. What they were holding on to, what they had sitting there, was 30 layers of paint.

Think about that. 30 layers of paint. Painted it every year, I guess, or every so often, close to a year. And he says, look, here's what has happened.

There's nothing on the inside holding these together. They look good on the outside. They were these nice black smokestacks. They stand up off the ship. They look majestic. They look at them. But he says, there's nothing there.

God's saying the same thing. He says, you Pharisees, you look good on the outside. But is there anything there on the inside? Today, a lot of people try to work hard to cover up the sinful nature they have, the sinful condition they have in their life.

And we try to cover up the fact that we're sinners. And he says, no, don't cover up. You know, we make our way to church. We work hard at our jobs.

[ 15 : 49 ] We try to keep the golden rule when we're dealing with other people and everything. But the Bible tells us the heart is deceitful and wicked. It's not what it's supposed to be.

And so often, that's the way we are. Jeremiah 17.9. Jeremiah 17.9 says this. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

Who can know it? You ever have times when you're just sitting there and this thought comes flashing through your mind and you go, where in the world did that come from? That has nothing to do with what I believe, nothing to do with being a Christian.

That is one of the most horrific things I could ever have thought of. Why? Where did it come from? Well, the devil's always out there working. The devil's always out there trying to get you to go different directions, get you away from it.

But our heart is deceitful, he says. We need to be careful. Keep your mind on Christ. Keep your mind on what he has for you. See, the difference between this Pharisee, who had all this going on, he says, you're whited supplicers and everything, was the publican, who had a repentant desire.

[ 17 : 07 ] A repentant desire. Whenever you see the word publican in Scripture, like I said, it deals with a man who was Jewish, who worked for the Roman government to collect taxes from Jewish people.

Anytime you see the word publican in Scripture, usually somewhere close by is the word sinners. The publicans, they were sinners.

Why were they sinners? They were doing their job, right? Well, yes, but most of the publicans had this little thing that they would do. It's like, the Romans want this much in taxes from every person.

So I'm going to up that just a little bit. So everybody I go to, instead of owing this, you owe this. Why would they do that? So they could pay Rome this and they'd keep this.

Republicans were usually guys who were pretty rich after they did that job for a little while. Because they were always adding on and adding on and adding on. You know, they were known for their deception.

[ 18 : 09 ] They were known for being basically thieves. They cheated people. And they were despised and hated by the people. You know, they were actually considered the worst of the worst.

You know, if you would be a publican and do these type of things, you remember when Jesus met Zacchaeus, the wee little man?

He was a publican. And you remember when Jesus went to his house, and everybody's like, why are you going to a publican's house? Why would you do that? Because he needed a savior. He needed someone who was going to forgive him of his sin and help him.

And so Jesus went to his house, talked with him. And Zacchaeus decides that Jesus is who he needs to be following. And what did Zacchaeus do? He says he gave back fourfold.

He had a list. He knew who he'd cheated. And he gave it back to them. Fourfold. See, when Jesus comes into a life, he makes a difference.

[ 19 : 17 ] Remember the rich young ruler? He came to Jesus, and he wanted to know about salvation, and Jesus told him some things. And again, he's another unnamed person.

We don't know his name. But he came to Jesus, and in Mark chapter 10, verse 17, it says this, And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running and kneeled to him and asked, Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?

He wanted to go to heaven. He wanted to add some religion to his life and look good in the things that he was doing. And I remember he wound up walking away because Jesus said, Give up all of that stuff.

Follow me. Give up all of those things. They're not important. They're not. When you die, where's all that stuff going? Not with you.

So he says, You know what? Give all that up and follow me. We'll talk this morning about joy, having joy because of Jesus Christ. This young man, he didn't have joy.

[ 20 : 26 ] He was looking. He was searching. He wanted to know what he could do. But he got so caught up in his self-sufficiency, so caught up in his selfish lifestyle, that he just couldn't picture himself giving all that stuff away and not living that way anymore.

He could not see the sufficiency of Jesus Christ in his life. See, Christianity is not a religion. A lot of people, What religion are you?

I'm a Christian. I don't say that. What religion are you? I really don't have one. I believe in Jesus Christ, and I have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

I don't have a religion. I have a relationship. Romans, chapter 8, verse 15. For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The spirit of self-bearers witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ.

[ 21 : 45 ] That's verses, Romans 8, 15 to 17. Romans 8, 15 to 17. He says, Look, you come to Christ, forget all the riches and all the wealth and all of those things.

He says, Forget all those things. He says, Look, when you come to Christ, you made a joint heir with Jesus Christ. You're made an heir of God.

You're made a child of God. You have so much more than this world can ever give you. Then, he points out a mistake.

A comparison mistake. A comparison mistake. When we see the Pharisees compares himself with the publican. I am so much better than he is. I am so much more spiritual than he is.

I am, that's one of the things that irritates me to no end. You have people come up to you and tell you who the spiritual people are. You know, Oh, these people are spiritual.

[ 22 : 52 ] These people, you know, God knows the heart. I don't. I don't know if they're the publicans or if they're the Pharisees.

They look good on the outside, but what's going on on the inside? Don't ever come up to me and say, Oh, these are the spiritual people. No, don't do that. Okay. Peter was struggling, comparing himself with other people at one time.

You remember after Jesus rose from the dead and they've been together, they've had time there on the beach having lunch together and everything and Jesus has gone through the thing with Peter about do you love me?

Do you love me? Do you love me? Then they're talking and he tells Peter about how Peter's going to die. He gives Peter some insight into what's going to be coming up.

And Peter's okay with that until something happens. In John chapter 21, verses 19 to 21. John 21, 19 to 21.

[ 24 : 02 ] It says this, This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he said unto him, Follow me.

Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following. The one who had been right there at the supper, laying right next to Jesus around that table.

He said, Lord, which is he, not that. He said, Peter said, seeing him, said to Jesus, Lord, what shall this man do?

Peter, you're going to go through these things, you're going to do this, and you're going to face this, and you're going to go through all of this. Okay, what about him? Peter? And he was pointing at John.

See, too often we try to compare ourselves with other people. Too often we try to compare ourselves. I'm better than they are. I'm maybe not as good as that one, but I'm better than this one and this one and this one.

[ 25 : 07 ] And he says, no, don't do that. See, Peter doesn't make any argument when Jesus tells him how he's going to die. Tells him what his future kind of holds, but he's willing to do it.

And he did. But then he sees John and is like, wait a minute. What about him? What about him doesn't matter to us? We're serving God.

We're doing what God has asked us to do. We're following him. God has a plan for each one of us. It's interesting.

You kind of remember what Jesus' response was? Let me put it to you in modern terms. Quit comparing, Peter.

Doesn't matter. Don't compare. Just follow me and my will for your life. You do that. John 21, 22. Jesus saith unto him, if I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

[ 26 : 13 ] Follow thou me. John does not matter. You and I matter. We have the relationship. We have the time that we're spending together right now.

We have a communication taking place. Don't worry about John. What are you and I? Where do we stand, Peter? Are you willing to follow me no matter what? This publican, this Pharisee, gave, first of all, a self-centered prayer.

A self-centered prayer. Isn't it interesting the way the Bible records that? In verse 11 there, Luke 18, verse 11, the Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself.

That's an interesting way of putting what was going on. This prayer meeting that was taking place that he was having, God didn't show up at that prayer meeting because he was praying with himself.

He's talking to himself. Too often our prayers are like that. We're talking to ourselves. We're talking out loud what we think things should be.

[ 27 : 23 ] We're not going to God and asking him his opinion. We're not asking him what his word says. We're not asking him what he thinks we should do. How often do you go to prayer and say, Lord, your will be done.

We go to prayer and say, Lord, here's what needs to happen. Y'all chuckling. We do that, don't we? God, I've got this situation.

In this situation, it would be all taken care of if you just did this. And that's not the way it works. we need to go to God and understand what he has for us.

We need to go to God and say, look, God, I've been calling the shots and I'm tired of it. I'm tired of doing things and they're not turning out right. I'm tired of the fact that everything I seem to do doesn't work out the way it should, not the way I expected.

So God, I'm tired of doing all of this. What do you want me to do? Let me follow you and what you have for me. You know, there's a lot of times we go to prayer and it's like, we go there, but is God really a part of what we're doing?

[ 28 : 43 ] Church of Laodicea, if you remember, it said that that church in Revelation chapter 3 verses 14 through 20, it said that church was rich, that church was increasing in goods, but where was Christ in that church?

Outside the door, knocking to get in. They were doing everything they could to make themselves look good, but Jesus is on the outside waiting to get in, waiting for them to open the door and let him in.

See, we need to be so very careful that we as a church, we as individuals, Christ is welcome. He comes into our life. We welcome him there and we follow him and we allow him to do his work in our life.

I'm going to have to stop there because we're running out of time, but let me stop there today and just remind you, it's not a comparison between us and others.

The comparison is, how am I doing according to what God wants me to do? Am I following him? Am I following his word and what he has for me? Let's pray.

[ 30 : 01 ]    Father, we just thank you for this time.