

## ***Paths Of Life - Sin & Repentance***

\*Video - Ally Bank Toy Truck Commercial\*

Good morning, Church. My name is Jeremy - I'm on staff here at SSC.

How many of you guys remember that commercial? There was another one with two little girls. He asks them if they want a pony. He gives one girl a toy and says to the one "Come here", and then he gives her a REAL pony. The other little girl is like "whaaa?"

Today, we're talking about something that relates to this commercial. We've been going through a series called Paths of Life, which is all about different ways that we connect with God and experience true Life - the Life that only Jesus can bring. These are things that followers of Jesus have done throughout History.

This week, we're starting with something super fundamental - Sin & Repentance. ...I know. And then a hush fell over the room. I gotta be honest, sin is kind of a hard topic. I was texting somebody and told them I was speaking, I told them I was speaking on this topic, and they were like "Oh...new guy drew the short straw, huh?"

But as I got thinking and praying, I thought of this commercial. I thought of the little boy with the truck. "It's a piece of junk! I want the red one" and then that face at the end. And I got thinking about how this idea is really something that we all experience. The whole point of this commercial was "Even kids know it's wrong..."... "You wouldn't treat a kid this way. Why would you let your bank treat you this way?" It's really smart to use kids too, because, have you ever seen a kid when something isn't fair?

I've worked a lot with our Student Ministry. And if there's one thing I've learned it's that you have to overthink every game. Because if one team has even the teeniest advantage, what are you gonna hear? It's not...? FAIR! If you've got a Middle Schooler, you know. There could be an Oh Henry bar on the line and you would think Civil War had broken out in the back of Smythe St Church.

Today I want us to look at something Jesus says that completely shifts our view of Right and Wrong. We're gonna look at a passage where Jesus talks about two men. Both men say a prayer, but only one experiences forgiveness, and this changes our view of Right and Wrong. It changes our view of Sin and Repentance. Let's turn in our Bibles to the book of Luke chapter 18 verses 9-14.

In case you don't know, the Bible is actually 66 books. These books are a collection of History, Poetry, Prophetic messages to God's people, Letters to the Early Church. 4 of these books are what we call the Gospels and they're the historical account of Jesus' real life here on Earth. What the Church did with the books of the Bible is break them down into chapters and verse to make stuff easier to find and help people know where we're at.

Book of Luke - Gospel - Chapter 18 - Verses 9-14

*[Jesus] told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."* [ESV]

**PRAY!**

So, here we are in Luke chapter 18. Jesus starts telling a story. It wasn't uncommon for Him to do this. Jesus taught through stories often. We call them Parables. What a Parable is is a story that has a spiritual meaning. It has a truth that we're supposed to take from it and apply to our lives - apply to our relationship with God. In this story, there are some really powerful points about sin and forgiveness, and it has a lot to do with our perspective on Right and Wrong.

Each and every one of us has a sense of Right and Wrong. That's why we've got commercials like the one we saw. That's why we've got kids saying "That's NOT FAIR!". That why we go home mad when somebody gets all the credit for something we did. We want justice when we feel we've been taken advantage of, or when we find out somebody else has been taken advantage of.

I'm about to sound like an old man, but one show that I really love is Law & Order: SVU. I really get into the story. They do a really good job of just pulling you in. One of the things I love *and hate* about the show is that they don't always get the bad guy. Sometimes they don't catch them. Sometimes they do catch them, but they get off on some technicality or whatever. When that happens, you're just like ready to throw the remote through the TV and just be like, "GAHHH! That's wrong"

Quite often in life we tend to take this sense of Right and Wrong, and we create almost like a measuring system out of it. "Well, I didn't steal any trucks from kids

today...” “I gave some money to a homeless person” “I cleaned off the car next to mine” “I swore at this person...but I was nice to this other person” We live with this mentality of if I do enough good and try not to do anything bad, that’s enough.

Jesus comes along to this group of people and he tells them this parable, because they had boughten into this mentality. Luke records that, “[Jesus] told this parable to some ***who trusted in themselves*** that they were righteous...”

The whole reason that Jesus told this story was because He wanted to shift their thinking away from the measuring, away from the doing enough good to outweigh the bad, away from the earning... He wanted to point them towards a much deeper realization of Who God is and what the character of God truly is.

Jesus is trying to pull these people away from trusting in themselves to earn their way out of their sin, and He’s trying to point them towards a proper understanding of what sin really is.

Because when we think about this mentality of Right and Wrong, we’re left with a really big question - Where Did It Come From?

Obviously, there’s nowhere that it’s written down that the boy should’ve gotten the Red Truck. There’s nowhere that it’s written down that *you* should’ve gotten the promotion or the credit for something. Maybe there’s a policy or contract that says something similar, but it’s something deeper inside of us that says it’s wrong, isn’t there? We didn’t write down laws about killing people in order to make it wrong. We wrote those laws down to express our agreement on the fact that that is fundamentally Wrong to do. We wrote it because we realize that human life has value and it is Right that it be protected.

So if these rules of Right of Wrong come from something deeper, if they come from something outside of ourselves, if they’re not just rules we agreed on... Where are they from?

The Book of Romans, a letter written to the Early Church, says this:

*When Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires... They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them.*

*[Rom. 2:14-15 ESV]*

When Paul says Gentiles, he's talking about anyone who is not Jewish and did not receive the "Law" that was given to Moses in the Old Testament. What he's saying here is that, even though the Gentiles don't have the "Law", they show that God has given them an understanding of what it means to be human and treat other human beings.

Yes, there will always be exceptions. There will always be people who have quieted that inner sense of Right and Wrong, or have been through things that have quieted that sense for them; but it still stands that God has placed Right and Wrong in our being as humans, and that He is the essence of what it means to do Right. He is the perfect example and Author of these inner rules of Right and Wrong.

When we understand that Right and Wrong come from a person, from an Author, we start to realize that doing wrong is more than just an action. It's Sin. It's an attitude against God.

**Sin is not just about actions that are wrong. Sin is an attitude of turning our hearts away from a Holy God.**

Sin is more than "I did this", or "I didn't do that". Sin is turning our hearts away from a God who is the Author of Right and Wrong.

It's not just standing in a temple, trusting in yourself that you're righteous, and saying "God, I'm not like this, I'm not like that. I do this and this and that and that." Sin isn't about the lists and scales and earning.

Sin is an attitude that says I can earn, I can outweigh, I can excuse this, I can justify this... Sin is all about us and what we want to dictate as Right and Wrong.

Have you ever noticed that we'll judge other people by their actions, but we judge ourselves by our intentions? We'll try to excuse ourselves all day long. "Well, I meant to do this..." "Yeah, sure I said those words to my wife or husband, but only because I was mad." "Yeah, I lied about this, but only because I knew they'd over-react"

If we don't excuse, we'll try to shift the blame. "Well, I might have done this, but only because they did that". "I might've charged them too much for this work I did, but only because they were so hard to work with". "Yeah, I covered this up, but it really wasn't my fault..."

Here's the thing: When we try to stick to a system of weighing and measuring, we always come up short, and we always find ourselves trying to tip the scale.

Sin isn't about actions that are wrong. It's an attitude that says, "I want to be in charge of the weighing and measuring". It's an attitude that turns our hearts away from a perfect and holy God.

What do you notice about the Pharisee and his prayer?

It's all stuff that he did. It's all comparing.

*"The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.'*

Can you imagine being in church and hearing the person next to you, "God thank you that I'm not like \_\_\_\_\_. Thank yooooou, Jesus!"

That's where Jesus talk about the other man. A tax collector.

Tax collectors were thugs and crooks. They didn't have the same safeguards and accountability we have now. They would charge people WAY, WAY more than they owed and pocket the difference. When people heard "tax collector", the lights got dim and the bad guy music started.

*"The tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'*

*Jesus Said: "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."*

The hard part about realizing that sin is more than an action is that it really seals the deal on the fact there's nothing we can do to repay it. There's nothing we can do to outweigh an offence against a perfect and Holy God.

Lucky for us, that's not the end of story. "For God so loved the world that He gave His Son" - Jesus - so that we wouldn't have to fall under the weight of our sin. God came down to earth, He put on flesh and bone, and He forgave our sins by dying on a cross. He rose again on the 3rd day to show that we could have new life in Him. We don't have to walk in our old way anymore.

We can turn towards Him. That's repentance. That's calling out to God and saying "Lord, have mercy on me a sinner". Help me turn my heart towards You.

**Repentance is not just about saying sorry for what we've done wrong.**  
**Repentance is an attitude of turning our hearts back to a Forgiving God.**

It's about coming to that place of realizing that we can't make this right and that we need to turn our hearts back to the One who loved us enough to forgive all the rebellion against Him. All of the trying to do things our way. All the trying to earn and outweigh and be "good enough". It's about embracing the life He freely gives and the mercy He offers each and every one of us. The paths He leads us to walk in.

I've been reading a book with a student that I'm mentoring. We grabbed a coffee and were chatting about it last week. It's a book called "Mere Christianity" by C.S. Lewis and I wanna close with this....

*After you have realized that there is a real Moral Law, and a Power behind that law, and that you have put yourself wrong with that Power...that is when Christianity begins to talk. When you know you are sick, you will listen to the doctor. When you have realized that our position is nearly desperate you will begin to understand what the Christians are talking about....They tell you how the demands of this law which you and I cannot meet have been met on our behalf, how God himself becomes a man to save men from the disapproval of God.*

That's the hope of the Gospel. That's the Good News of Jesus. That's beauty of repentance and the opportunity that you have right now - to accept the grace that's offered through His sacrifice.