

# FAITH @ HOME

Week of October 27, 2019

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

## ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

**READ:** Luke 18:9-14

**REFLECT:** We pray to God for many reasons. We pray to say “Thank you!” (thanksgiving) “I’m sorry.” (penitence) “I love you!” (oblation, adoration) or even “WOW!” (praise). We pray to ask “please” or “help,” for ourselves or for others (petition, intercession). Whatever our method or reason for prayer, God hears us. Nothing is too big or too small for God.

In today’s story from Luke, we learn about the prayers offered by two very different people. The Pharisee was a powerful and respected person, while the tax collector was dishonest and despised. In his prayer, the Pharisee glorified himself and his choices. He thanked God that he was NOT like the tax collector and others he considered bad. By contrast, the tax collector prayed for mercy from God for his bad choices! Jesus says, “those who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

In the Way of Love, we are called to pray, to speak to God, and listen for God’s voice in ourselves and in our world. I wonder what God thought about the prayers of the Pharisee and the tax collector?

**RESPOND:** Sometimes it is difficult to sit still and stay focused for prayer. Choose a way to keep your hands busy while your mind and heart can wander. Gather up Legos, clay, building blocks, or paper and markers, and have a family “pray date.” Who needs prayers today? After some time of playful and prayerful meditation, check back in as you clean up together. What did the Spirit tell you? Where did you feel God today? Were your prayers heard?

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: AMANDA WISCHKAEMPER



Amanda Wischkaemper is devoted to telling and hearing stories, building relationships, and finding reasons to laugh. She is a professional actor, dialect coach, theatre educator, and dog-person. In her 13th year of Episcopal Children’s Formation, she currently serves as Director of Children’s Ministry at St. David’s Episcopal Church in Austin, Texas, alongside her Music Director husband (Mark), and turbo-toddler (Abby).

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## ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

**READ:** 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

**REFLECT:** Paul is at the end of his life and he is looking forward to his reward in heaven. He reflects on his work and tries to inspire his companions to carry on. Sometimes we feel like we've just done all that we can do – we are poured out and close to empty.

The reality is that sometimes we feel very alone. Paul talks about feeling alone and deserted by his friends. He says, "But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength." (2 Timothy 4:17, NRSV) The strength was not just for his benefit, but for those who depended on his leadership. God stands by us so that we can be there for others.

**RESPOND:** Think about a time when you felt really lonely. Working on something alone is different than feeling unsupported. At times when you don't get the help you need, what can you do? Even though Paul didn't get the help he needed, he knew there were people counting on him. Let someone know when you need help, and when you feel lonely think about your faith as a bright light that shines inside you. Light a candle to remind you of the light of faith in your life.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: LISA PUCCIO



Lisa Puccio is the Coordinator for Special Needs Worship and Family Formation at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Houston, Texas. Lisa leads Rhythms of Grace Houston, a weekly worship service for special needs families, and oversees ministries for children and parents at St. Andrew's. She has worked in parish ministry since 2002, served two terms as vice president of Forma, and is a member of the diocesan formation advisory committee in the Diocese of Texas. Lisa and her husband Mike have four grown children.

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# FAITH @ HOME

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## ADULT AND YOUTH

**READ:** Luke 18:9-14

**REFLECT:** We all want to be good people, and most of the time (just be honest) we want to live our faith in the world. We also want people to experience the unconditional love of God for everyone, no exceptions. We see many people who have been ostracized, left out, or deserted. We see many people that aren't valued or who do not believe they are valued. We see others engaging in behaviors that perpetuate the others' pain. As disciples of Christ, we are called to speak for those who have no voice, to defend those who need defending, and to behave in ways that show the Kingdom of God. But we are called to do so because we are answering God's commandment to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves, and not so that we can be recognized, praised, and rewarded. We are called to love and not to condemn.

**RESPOND:** Be honest with yourself and with your family. How does it feel to be praised for doing good work? How does it feel to be recognized for doing the right thing? It feels good, right? That's okay—but is that your motivation for your behavior or is it to love God and your neighbor? Say a prayer together as a family asking God to point out where you exalt yourself and to give you strength to humble yourself, even if your actions go unnoticed.

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: KATHERINE DOYLE



Katherine is the Coordinator for Youth and Young Adult Ministries and the rector of St. Thomas Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Kentucky. She lives in Louisville with her husband and whichever of her four young adult children happen to be home at the time. Katherine's greatest joy is being a mama: first to her own four and then to all the children, youth, and young adults who call her Mama Doyle. She often finds God in the ordinary messiness of everyday life and writes about it on her blog [thesixdoyles.blogspot.com](http://thesixdoyles.blogspot.com).

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## ADULT AND ADULT

**READ:** Luke 18:9-14

**REFLECT:** I woke up today feeling pretty sure of myself, like I had it all together and was doing all the things a law-abiding citizen with a 45-minute commute needed to be doing. I used my blinkers, made appropriate lane changes (despite the fact that there were several folks who cut me off in traffic), and I backed into my parking space so that I could exit easily, only to find when I got into my office that my shirt was both inside out and backwards. How could I get “shirt putting on” so wrong? Well, it started with trying to get dressed in the dark so as not to wake my dear husband before his alarm went off, and it ended with me in the bathroom of my office building, trying to restore the shirt to the right and gather up my last shred of dignity left to walk back to my office as though the whole thing had never happened.

In today’s Gospel, the Pharisee got it totally wrong too. There was the obvious, “Thank you that I’m not like them...” more specifically, “like him” (meaning the tax collector), followed by his list off how very right he had gotten it with tithing and all. But, amidst his list of “getting it right,” he missed the whole point of going to the temple to pray, shedding light on the focus of the Pharisee’s heart and self. The Pharisee’s words are such a contrast to the tax collector’s (funny his title didn’t even merit capitalization in the Bible), which came right from the heart: “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” His words also illuminate his heart and focus: on God.

I’m thankful today for a humbling little reminder that no, in fact, I don’t have it all figured out. I find myself wanting to focus less on how I’m measuring up next to everyone else and more on the focus of my heart (and, to be safe, the tag of my shirt).

**RESPOND:** The next time the tag in your shirt bothers you, allow that “little irritant” to remind you where the focus of your heart needs to be. “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”

## ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: KARIANN LESSNER



KariAnn Lessner has led youth and children’s ministries in The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Texas for over twenty years. Currently the Minister for Children and Families at Christ Church Cathedral in Houston, she loves serving as a summer camp session director at Camp Allen and is a frequent speaker to women’s groups throughout Texas. In addition, she produces the podcast “You Brew You,” where she sits down with folks to share what God is brewing in their lives in the hopes that each person is infused with grace and courage by the other’s faith. She enjoys spending time with her family, hammocking, reading, and sipping sun tea in the great outdoors.

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