

to try this spiritual prayer discipline. You may want to align your breathing with these meaningful words: (Inhaling) "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God," (Exhaling) "have mercy on me, a sinner." Try this exercise today and record your thoughts below. Has this exercise made you more aware of God's grace and forgiveness?

Thursday, March 5

Read Luke 18:9-14. There were three thoughts about prayer shared in connection with this scripture. The first lesson is pride and prayer does not mix while praying. What does this brief description of this lesson on prayer mean to you? C.S. Lewis in his book, *Mere Christianity*, described pride as "the great sin" and the "essential vice." It's been said that pride is the only sin and that all other sin is a subset of pride. What do you think? Can you see the meaning behind Lewis' thought or that pride is the only sin? How do you define pride? Contemplate these questions and write your thoughts here.

Friday, March 6

Read Luke 18:9-14 once more. The second and third lesson about prayer derived from this parable are: 1) one who despises another cannot pray and 2) true prayer sets our lives beside the life of Jesus Christ and our Creator God. These lessons are related in that we should not compare ourselves to others when considering our spiritual lives and growth. Rather, we should consider the life and ministry of Jesus as God's standard. This may seem to be too high a standard but there is grace in our attempt to live a life of discipleship. Consider these thoughts and record your reflection here praying for God's wisdom and guidance.

Message Notes March 1, 2026

Christ Challenged! *The Unfair Pharisees**

- I. We began this series of messages with an overall understanding of Jesus' beliefs on how to treat our _____.
 - A. Satan was an enemy of a _____ nature and today we meet the first _____ enemies of Jesus: the Pharisees.
 - B. Who are these Pharisees? What did they _____?
 1. The Pharisees were an _____ Jewish religious sect and _____ movement.
 2. They were known for their strict observance of both written Mosaic _____ and oral _____.
 3. Jesus often criticized them as _____ who prioritized legal technicalities over _____.
- II. Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector here's some _____ that sets the stage for this parable.
 - A. Jewish law prescribed only _____ absolutely obligatory fast.
 1. There were those who wished to gain special _____ by fasting on Mondays and Thursdays.
 2. Mondays and Thursdays were _____ days when Jerusalem was full of people.
 - B. Certainly, while this parable is about the Pharisee's hypocrisy and pompous _____, it is also a beautiful lesson about _____ and our relationship with God.
- III. Some thoughts on _____, because in this season of Lent when we are to experience _____ growth.

*Luke 18:9-14

- A. First, _____ and _____ do not mix.
- B. Second, a person who _____ others cannot pray.
- C. Third, true prayer comes from setting our lives beside the life of _____ and our _____.

- IV. This parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector focus on the _____ of the Pharisees but it also offers these wonderful lessons on _____.
 - A. This parable is for _____ those who stood around Jesus 2000 plus years ago and it's for _____ living 2000 plus years later.
 - B. Jesus's final words concerning this parable are, "_____ who exalt themselves will be humbled, but _____ who humble themselves will be exalted."

Daily Devotional Guide

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

Monday, March 2

Our Lenten Message Series, titled *Christ: Challenged!* enumerated the various enemies of Jesus. The series began with the overarching theme that Jesus instructs us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Mathew 5:44). The first enemy of Jesus we discussed was the Devil, indicating that many of our struggles are spiritual and not of this world. The Pharisees were the first human enemies that we are dealing with in this series. The Pharisees were quick to decide that Jesus needed to be

destroyed once he began his public ministry. How easy do you think it was for Jesus to forgive the Pharisees? How do you see Jesus loving the Pharisees? Why was Jesus such a threat to the Pharisees? Who are your enemies? How are you loving them? Contemplate these questions and write your reflections here.

Tuesday, March 3

Where were the Pharisees? Try answering this question from the Message Notes or by the full message from this past Sunday. How are the Pharisees similar to Jesus? How are they different? What was your perception of the Pharisees before Sunday's message? What was Jesus' perception of the Pharisees? Google or use another web browser to look for further information about the Pharisees. Write down any additional information you discovered. Pray for a deeper understanding of the Pharisees and think about how they affected Jesus' message, ministry and mission.

Wednesday, March 4

Read Luke 18:9-14. The Parable of The Pharisee and the Tax Collector identifies out the hypocrisy of the Pharisee with a twist of the story through which Jesus makes the Tax Collector the hero. The Tax Collector goes home justified by God. Having prayed for forgiveness, the Tax Collector received the love of God and God's desire for the Tax Collector to align (justify) his life according to God's ways and standards. The prayer of the Tax Collector, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" is similar to what is known as The Jesus Prayer or The Prayer of the Heart. The Jesus Prayer is "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." It is a meditative rhythmic prayer from the Eastern Orthodox tradition. It is meant to be repeated mentally until the words seep deep within our heart and soul. Take some time today