Evangelist-Daniel Ruegg Email-epaphras11@earthlink.net Web site-mariettarenochurchofchrist.org

 **Meeting Times**

 Sunday Bible Study-9:30 am Sunday Morning Worship-10:30 am Sunday Evening Worship-6:30 pm Wednesday Bible Study-7:00 pm

 **Our Fall meeting with Brian Price**

 **November 4th – 9th**

 **Please mark your calendars**

****

**Wealthy, Religious and Good?**

Luke. 18:9-14

This morning we will be spending our time in the Word of God looking at a young man who came to Jesus with a certain favorable identity he had of himself and how Jesus tried to open his eyes to perceive a more truthful reflection of how God saw him. He was a ruler of the Jews who was

quite wealthy and viewed himself as religiously good.

In Luke’s gospel, just before we are introduced to this wealthy, religious, good young man, Luke records a parable Jesus taught for those who ***“trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt,” (Luke. 18:9)****.* Jesus tells the story of a conscientious religiously zealous man who confessed to God while he prayed in the temple. He did not confess his sins, but rather confessed how religiously good he was. His confession of upright goodness was illuminated that much brighter and so much clearer as it was spoken against the dark sinful background of the character of a tax collector who was praying in the temple as well. He confesses that he is not a swindler. He confesses that he is not unjust. He confesses that he is not an adulterer. He confesses that while he is clean and innocent of such immorality, the tax collector he sees in the temple is a vivid reminder and confirmation of how thankful he is that he can confess his righteousness while the tax collector certainly cannot. He confesses that he fasts twice a week, even though the law only required one fast a year on the day of Atonement *(Lev. 16:29-30).* He confesses that while the law required a tithe be given from his corn, wine, oil and cattle *(Deut. 14:22-23)*, he gave a tithe of everything he owned, including the smallest of herbs in his garden, giving even a tenth of his mint, dill and cumin *(Mt. 23:23).* How thankful, then, he certainly must have been that he not only had the discipline and moral integrity to keep himself from great sinful atrocities, but had the conscientious awareness that only giving the minimal required amount of sacrifice is hardly enough for the Creator of the universe! While some thank God that they’re a country boy and others may even thank God that they know not to use the 10 items or less lane when they have 11 items in their cart, this man thanked God that he was among the privileged few who understood what God was most pleased with: diligent sacrificial goodness. Meanwhile, standing some distance away, the tax collector poured out unto God a confession of his own. The confession was heartfelt, sincere, and most of all...embarrassing. Unlike David who felt compelled to raise his eyes to heaven in seek of His compassion, the tax collector was too guilt ridden by his conduct to be able to do the same. ***“To You I lift up my eyes, O You who are enthroned in the heavens! Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the LORD our God, until He is gracious to us,” (Ps. 123:1-2).***He couldn’t relate to this description of David’s earnest yearning for the compassion of the LORD, as the disgrace and humiliation he felt within himself was much too heavy to be able to bring his eyes up to the general direction of the LORD at all. Broken by the pain of guilt, he felt more comfortable identifying himself with a description like this one in Ezekiel: ***“...they will loathe themselves in their own sight for the evils which they have committed, for all their abominations,” (Ezek. 6:9)****.* Beating his chest in despair and humiliating acceptance of full responsibility for all of his sins, he offers a much different and much shorter confession than that of the Pharisee. ***“’God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’ I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted,” (Luke. 18:13-14).***How do you feel about this final concluding statement of Jesus at the end of the parable? Does it frustrate you that God disregards the prayer of the moral Pharisee while accepting the confession of guilt from the sinful tax collector? Does it conflict with your understanding of how God views diligent sacrificial goodness? Which of the two do you more closely resemble and which of the two would you most rather be? The truth Jesus shows us is that diligent sacrificial goodness has its place in our lives, but we often fail to approach it in the way God is most pleased with. Those who live a life dedicated to diligent sacrificial goodness for the purpose of creating the identity that they are spiritually wealthy, religious and good will never be accepted by God. On the other hand, those who are compelled to strive to offer unto God a life of diligent sacrificial goodness out of utter thankfulness for God’s mercy upon their sins, despite feeling helpless, needy and lost, will always be accepted by God *(Luke. 7:36-48).* Feel free to read Mark’s account of the conversation Jesus has with a rich young man in Mark 10:17-31 in preparation of our study this morning of these truths Jesus reveals to us. Article by Daniel Ruegg