

Sermon 2010 Pentecost 22  
Text: Luke 18:9-17  
Theme: "Terrified Souls Welcome"  
10-24-10

**We like rewards in life. It is just how we function. Maybe it is part of being American or maybe it is just that old Protestant work ethic but we like the system where we work really hard to achieve something and then sit back and take pride in our accomplishments. Look at our favorite saying that is not in the Bible.**

**"God helps those who help themselves." Not there. No matter how much parents, teachers and coaches may want it to be. In fact the Bible teaches us the polar opposite. God helps terrified souls who have nowhere to turn.**

**We hear the words from the preacher on Sunday and then we promptly leave this building and begin sacrificing and striving to do everything right according to the world. We work and study 6 days a week late into the night so we can make money or grades or both. We don't take vacations with our families or spend time with our friends. We save every dime we can find and think we are doing a good work by never relaxing. We work on Saturday mornings and Sunday afternoons so that we can get ahead and we expect a little recognition by golly! We stand proudly before God and say, "Oh thank you Lord that I am not as other people. Thank you Lord that I**

**am so productive and so successful and that hardly anybody knows about my faults and insecurities and fears.**

**And Jesus says, so what? You have managed my assets well. You have only done your job. You have taken my assets and used the abilities I gave you to improve what was always mine. So what? What do you have to be haughty about? Nothing was yours in the first place and nothing is yours now and sooner or later; guess what? You will leave this earth just the way you came in – taking nothing with you. And in the mean time, have you sacrificed everything and everyone else I have given you to please the world and your own sinful flesh?**

**But then there is that person who did everything wrong by societal standards. He never made the sacrifices we made. He was a loser, always laid back and relaxed. He never worried about all the things he could not control. And sometimes he sinned right out there in front of God and everybody! So, now he stands before God with his head bowed and saying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Be merciful to me? Is he kidding? Why should God be merciful to him? What did he ever do to deserve any mercy? He did nothing?**

**Exactly. He did nothing. But neither have you. Neither have I. Salvation comes not because we have done anything but in spite of what we do. See, any sin we commit would nullify salvation if it**

**were based on our work. Any sin. Any sin at all – no matter how great or how small.**

**Like a little baby helplessly waits to be fed, we waited for God's holy water to wash us when we were born and his Grace flowed into us. You can't earn it. You have to just receive it like a little child. Cain wanted to earn it and couldn't. The Pharisee tried to earn it and couldn't. Only as a little child do we receive the pure gift. Trying to earn it cheapens it and in fact loses it.**

**See when you come to God's holy altar and your hands and your heart are full of all of your achievements, all of your abilities, all of your pride – boy that's a lot to hold onto. A human being can only hold so much right. So in order for there to be room for all of God's Grace, empty your hands. When you come to this altar today, just leave all your garbage in the pew – the ushers will get it later. Leave your self justifications and explanations of why you had to sin or why your sin was not that bad. Leave behind ALL your excuses – I know it's a lot but don't worry about it, Scott will order a dumpster. Leave behind your accusations of others and grudges against your brothers and sisters....**

**Leave it all behind... and come up here with empty hands because God will fill you up. He will pour his body into your weak and trembling body. He will pour his blood into your dry and**

**withering veins. When we have laid down all our trophies and fallen on our knees, he fills us with his grace and that changes the way everything in our lives works. We walk away from the altar truly and completely justified. We walk away with no fear. We walk away full of and overflowing with joy.**