

Ash Wednesday

Sermon Road Map
Pastor Roger W. Huffman

Luke 18:9-14
February 17, 2021

Hands of Repentance

- Have you noticed? You can tell a lot about a person from their hands.
- The calloused hands of the laborer. Oil-stained hands of a mechanic.
- Chapped hands of the seaman or dishwasher.
- Gentle hands of the caregiver. Dry and cracked craft hands of the potter.
- The exercised and protected hands of the surgeon, pianist - its their life.
- The care for hands of the hand model.
- Noticeable when we use to shake hands. Seen also by visual observation.
- This year for Lent we'll observe **The Hands of the Passion** for God's insights.
- Tonight, not the hands of Peter, Pilate, Judas, or even Jesus.
- The hands of the 2 men Jesus speaks of in a parable - tonight's Gospel.
 - ◆ Hands of the impenitent self-assured. Hands of the repentant servant.
 - ◆ Setting: the temple court where God's people gathered to worship/pray.

❖ **Hands of the impenitent self-assured.**

- First man: Pharisee - serious about their religion and proud of it.
 - ◆ Law and tradition-based, hyper-devout. Modeling and showing off.
 - ◆ Considered themselves to be the *real Israelites* on display.
 - ◆ This man picked a prominent place, by himself, to show off his *righteousness*.
- With self-righteous hands lifted high he prays, **God, I thank you...**
 - ◆ Nice start. If he'd only stopped. Giving thanks to God is good and wise.
 - ◆ His worship was not worship of God, but of himself.
 - ◆ **God, I thank you that I am not like other people, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.**
 - ◆ Holding up his hands didn't glorify God! He glorified himself for being *good*.
 - ◆ For not only did he *keep the commandments. He went above and beyond!*
 - ***I fast twice a week. I give a tenth of all my income.***
 - God required fasting once a year. He did 100 times that!
 - He supersized his tithe - 10% of all income - gifts too!
 - ◆ He wanted to make sure God noticed and yes, everyone at the temple!
- To others he looked impressive. But not to God who sees the heart.
 - ◆ Was he that impressed with himself - or insecure, boosting his confidence?
 - ◆ Did he sense something was missing - seeking affirmation from others?
 - ◆ Was he so self-confident and arrogant - blinded by pride - believed his lies?
 - ◆ No matter what the cause - the self-assured go home empty-handed.
- Tonight we begin this season of self-reflection on our failings, weakness, sin
 - ◆ To be honest with ourselves, so our confession is not just ritual - empty words.
 - ◆ To be humbled by our mortality, the wages of our sin. We're not impressive.
 - ◆ *To get real.* Let God and his word reveal what is real - our need for a Savior.

❖ **Hands of the repentant servant.**

- The second man stood out of sight. Ashamed. There to stand before God alone.
- **His hands?** Beat his chest, convicted of his sin and guilt. Hung limp or low?
- He doesn't blame life, others, or God. He owns his failings, foolishness, sin.
- He doesn't look God in the eye like an equal - like he has a right to be there.
- His confidence is in God's mercy, not himself. **God, be merciful to me, a sinner!**
 - ◆ *Look on my pitiful condition with your heart for my desperate need for help.*
- The repentant don't compare themselves to the *really wicked people*.
 - ◆ The repentant compare themselves to God and his will. No room for pride.
 - ◆ They never boast in themselves. Only in Jesus, God's mercy in the flesh.
 - ◆ The repentant pray from the heart: **God, be merciful to me, a sinner!**
 - Short (English: 7 words; Greek: 6). Powerful. To the point. Heartfelt.
- **Repentant hands**, held low to catch and cling to God's renowned mercy.
 - ◆ ***I tell you, this man went home justified rather than the other, because everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.***
 - ◆ God exalts the humble not because they are humble, but because he's merciful.
 - ◆ The arrogance of the proud leaves no room for God to be their God, their Help.
- Jesus shared this parable with the people - with us.
 - ◆ The problem of pride is the root of all sin. Pride blinds us to reality.
 - *I'm not that bad. I'm better than many others. At least I am not like...*
 - ◆ Do we take pride in our theology, even in our politics, seeing self as superior?
 - The telltale sign: *Who do I look down my nose at in the secrecy of my heart?*
 - ◆ While it looks like self-loathing humility to think, *I'm so bad I'm unforgivable*, anyone who holds to such a conviction actually refuses to submit to God's word. That is an act of profound pride and arrogance.
- There's actually a hidden third person in the parable. Jesus, who told it.
 - ◆ Jesus had every reason to boast of his righteousness and obedience.
 - ◆ Jesus faced every temptation we face, yet **never** sinned. Wow!
 - ◆ He let the Father proclaim his righteousness - God's gift to us, covering us.
 - ◆ What mercy! Jesus not only paid for our failings, weakness, foolish desires and choices, missteps, and open rebellion. He covers us with his righteousness, so we can stand before God as his children - now and in all eternity.
 - ◆ In mercy Jesus comes to us, body and blood, in Communion to heal, release, relieve, renew, refresh, restore us - exalting the humble repentant by his grace.
 - ◆ Jesus shows us that being a servant of God is a title of honor - gift from God - the role we were made for - the source of true fulfillment.
 - ◆ ***Going home justified***, declared innocent and right through Jesus' saving work, we live lifting up humble hands in prayer, service, and love in lives of **joyful repentance** - repentance that is honest about our sin and eager to confess it to our God, **knowing** he has forgiven us and sets us free.
 - ◆ Savor this story from your Savior to train your **Hands of Repentance**.