

Hands of Repentance

- In college, broke hand/wrist. Indoor soccer. Incident. Cast. Changed lot things for me! Realize how important hands are.
- This Lent, theme for Weds: Hands/Passion. Looking at various ppl (and what they did w/hands) that played role in Passion of Xp: like Pt & Pilate, Judas & Caiaphas, soldiers. And from what they did w/hands, we can learn re Savior's love for us, and re how we show love to our Savior. Hands/Passion.
- Today, on AW, as begin Lent, looking at 2 pairs hands: of a Pharisee & tax collector. I know you know story; not unfamiliar. But today I want you look at it w/new perspective; focus on their hands; see connection between action/hands and attitude/hearts; look for hands/repentance.
- **Vs. 9-11a.** Pause. So far so good. Came to temple; came to pray to Lord; good things. Jewish people often prayed w/hands in air. Psg in 1 Tim 2: **"I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer" (8).** Also out loud; hear; fine. So can see hands, hear voice. At first sounds like great prayer: **"God, I thank you."** But from what follows, you can tell, in heart, feels like: instead him thanking God, should be God thanking him; should sound more like "God, you're welcome:" **vs. 11b-12.** You're welcome! Fasting not wrong; tithing; keeping Coms obvlsy – these were commanded by God, and usually things did w/hands. So from outward perspective, appears doing right things w/hands.
- But connect the hands & heart. When get right down to it, what this man doing in heart? Comparing self to others. Like w/one hand, pointing to self; other hand, pointing at ppl around. And when you do that (compare self to others; one hand pointing self, other others), two things inevtbly happen:
- First, think too highly of self. This guy did: "Look how great I am; look what I do; I'm doing what God wants; God should be thankful to me!" Me/I: lot of "I"s here (**vs. 11b-12**, "I"s). That's looking at self, thinking way to highly of self. This guy so self-righteous, doesn't even recognize own sin. And second, when compare self to others: think too lowly of them. Again: **vs. 11b.** Know smthng: tax collector probly heard him say that. True: off at distance, but in same area/temple; and remem, Jews prayed out loud. So tax collector probly heard this Pharisee, thanking God, in prayer, for being better than him. Pharisee was thinking too lowly of others. And that's what haps when you compare self to ppl around you!
- Dear Xians, gathered in repentance on this AW, take this prbl to hrt! This parable is for you, to get you STOP comparing self to others! J tells this parable **vs. 9a** (highly; hand at selves), **vs. 9b** (lowly; hand at ppl around) – they're comparing selves to others. And do not tell me you don't compare self to others, as well. You do same thing: look down nose at sinners around you (look them, I'd never!); prop self up on pedestal of pride (look at me, what I do). You may never say it w/words, but in heart, harbor thoughts of: holier than thou. Just look inside yourself, ask: true, re me? Do I compare myself to others? And I think you'll find truth. I know that's the truth I find when I look in my heart. It's called self-righteousness; it ugly! Ugly as **vs. 11b.** And that ugly, self-righteous monster is right here, inside every one of us! Today on this AW, let's strip away façade, pull back curtains, look deep down inside at who we truly are – which what J wants us do, why tells this prbl. And what we find: we are no diff than this Pharisee. Got hand pointed right here, out there. And these are not hands/repentance.



- So we move to back of temple, find another pray-er. **Vs. 13ab**. Pause. Did that w/hand. Fist; literally beat fist into chest, like this. Not smthng we do. More of Jewish custom: physcl demnstrtn of mourning, humility. So, he's beating chest w/hand, says **vs. 13c**. Wasn't comparing self to others. No, this man: comparing self to God. He had one hand pointed here; up there, to Lord, to whom we're all acctbl, to whom we all owe perfect obedience, before whom we'll all smday stand for jdgmnt. When you compare yourself to God, his will, his law, you'll always get more accurate picture of self. See, God's law doesn't lie; it's like mirror: shows us exactly who we really are, all our sins/flaws, right down into heart. We like cover that up; want everyone around us see our goodness, think of us as good ppl. Know what: I'm not good person; neither you; none of us are! No one is good! With this parable, J is teaching us to compare ourselves, not to other ppl, but to God, so that: 1) we don't fool ourselves into thinking we're good ppl, and 2) that we repent for not being good ppl. AW is 1) reality check, and 2) an abrupt call to repentance. J wants us, with our hands (maybe not literally, but certainly w/hearts) to beat our chest, just like this tax collector, and cry out to God in repentance: **vs. 13c**. **Vs. 13c** (hand up to God; hand pointed here at heart).
- And when we do that, when come before Lord with hands/repentance, then J says, **vs. 14**. J takes us by the hand, shows us his hands: that carried cross, carried our sins; that were nailed to cross to take away our sins (still has marks in hands!). J's hands worked miracles for the sick, and for us they work miracle of faith & forgiveness: even for self-righteous ppl like us, who compare ourselves to others. J's hands raised the dead back to life, and now raise us up from the death of sin to a new life: being justified before God. **Vs. 14a**. Word justified means now God's doing some comparing of his own. He sets you right next to J, compares 2 of you; now sees same thing. Bec of sacrifice of J on cross, when God looks at you and at J, sees same thing: his holy, sinless child. He no longer sees your sins, bec Xp taken them away, and his holiness covers you. So you are justified before God; you've been made right with God, thru J.
- When I got cast off, my hand was made right. Broken bones healed; wrist fixed; things back to normal. Mostly. Strange thing: after being in cast for weeks, right arm noticeably smaller than left, right hand noticeably weaker than left – simply bec they went unused all that time. Was easy to compare the two. It's easy to compare yourself to ppl around you. But when you get into that bad habit, that's when you start thinking you're better than them. It's in our sinful nature to think that way: think more highly of self, more lowly of others. But with this parable, J says STOP comparing self to ppl around. Instead, compare self to God. Let his holiness humble you, and let his righteousness restore you. Jesus gave life on cross to forgive you, even for sin of self-righteousness. So come to Jesus with hands/repentance, and then go home knowing that, bec of J, you are justified before God. You're in his hands; you're in good hands.

Luke 18:9-14

⁹To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week and [I] give a tenth of all I get.’

¹³“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

¹⁴“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”