

SORRY, NOT SORRY

Scripture used: Luke 18: 9-14 (NIV)

OVERVIEW

Big Idea:

In this fourth sermon in the series on the Christian difference, the main theme is repentance. Our scripture is not about condemnation and judgment, but focuses instead on the importance of a lifestyle of repentance. Pastor Tilden used the amusing example of the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) where one obtains a license and thus the right to drive. The DMV is the gateway to exciting freedom, but we never want to go there again. As followers of Christ, that should not be the way we approach repentance. Repentance is more like checking bags at the airport, which reduces our burden before we soar to great heights! That isn't what repentance and apologies mean to us, though. We've all heard many half-hearted apologies from celebrities, politicians, and even family members. They sound like this: "I am sorry if you felt hurt" or "mistakes were made" and the worst example "sorry, not sorry!" Repentance needs to be different; we have to go ALL IN!

KEY POINTS

- 1) **Point #1 There are a number of clear steps to issue a heartfelt apology.** You have to accept responsibility for things under your control. You have to acknowledge the serious impact of your actions. And you have to make amends and adjustments. There has to be a clear commitment to learn, change & fix things. This 3-step process is the same one that is used by the top executive coaches and consultants around the world. Apologizing is an important skill, no matter who you are.
- 2) **Point #2 The Pharisee in the parable is not a bad person.** We often see Pharisees as self-righteous, hypocritical, and proud people. But they exhibited a sincere sacrificial faith, wanted to correctly fulfill God's law, and help the coming of God's kingdom. The Pharisee demonstrated ritual purity, deep concern and devotion, and was earnestly seeking God. We share the Pharisees' blind spots, and have to be careful of the same thought processes and behaviors. The Pharisee is chosen in the parable not because he was wicked, but because he was morally "good". He had no major sins, and God should have been pleased with him. Yet everyone needs to repent, and make repentance an integral part of our lifestyle.
- 3) **Point #3 We cannot worry about what others think of us.** Pastor Tilden used his own life as someone who grew up seeking a sense of worth by comparing himself to others, and looking down on those who did not perform as well. This is a metric or benchmark of pride, envy, and brokenness that God never intended us to use. God loves us because we are His creatures. Our identity comes from God. We need to show gratitude and acceptance through the seasons of life -- which makes us realize the value in ourselves without detracting from the value of others.
- 4) **Point #4 The tax collector used public worship to repent.** Tax collectors were Roman "collaborators": they were corrupt, traitorous, and extortionist. The tax collector is intensely hated, yet he leaves the temple justified because of his true repentance. He takes a huge risk by sharing his repentance in public; his reputation is at stake. His whole posture is of one who knows himself to be undeserving and asking for mercy. He longs for genuine atonement, surrender, and change. We're in the middle, between the Pharisee and the tax collector. We should always keep in mind that Christ has made the ultimate atonement for our sins on the cross, and this is our path to grace.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - When you read the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector, who do you identify with? Does it surprise you to learn that the Pharisee was trying to honor God, yet still needed to repent?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - What is something that you need to apologize for right now? Who have you hurt, and what do you need to do to make it right? What do you think is stopping you?
- 3) **DO** - Reflect on something you did that requires repentance. It can be hard to repent privately, but Jesus calls us to repent publicly! Pray to God "help me to live repentantly!" Then go to the person who deserves a genuine apology. Acknowledge what you did, the impact it had, and what changes you've made.