

“God, Have mercy on me, a sinner” Luke chapter 18 verse 13

There is one thing that all human beings have in common, which we are wise never to lose sight of. There is not one of us who is perfect.

I'm sure that only someone ultimately deluded would ever deny that. But we can only say that we are not perfect if we are measuring ourselves against some idea of perfection, and because we are personal beings, that perfect thing must also be a personal being. The degree to which we fall short of that perfection is, in the Bible, called sin. “All have sinned”, says the New Testament, “and fall short of the glory of God.

When we come to relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven all our sin and we become reborn, a new creation in him. The journey of faith is a process of learning to live out of the reality of that new creation.

But we do well never to forget that, apart from Jesus, we remain people whose imperfection leaves us short of the perfection that can only be found in God. We need to remember this, because the person quoted in today verse is one of two in a story Jesus told about two men who went to the temple to pray. One had measured himself against the requirements of God's moral and religious law, and thought he'd done rather well; better than 'other men', in fact. Amazingly, he thought that by living according to a set of rules, regulations and behaviours, he, by his own efforts and merit had made himself right with God. Inevitably, this left him vulnerable to pride, arrogance and self-righteousness.

The other man, aware of the gulf between him and a perfectly holy God, stood at a distance, beat his breast and threw himself on God's mercy and grace.

This one, said Jesus, went home justified before God, because he had understood that the only attitude that we can realistically adopt before God is humility.

Prayer

Father, the fact that I am all too imperfect is obvious. When I come before you in prayer, I cannot come by virtue of my own righteousness, because that is woefully inadequate to justify me before you. Please keep me from the pride of self-righteousness, and may I always remember that it is only by faith in Christ and his righteousness and perfection that I can approach you, and may I do so in humility and gratitude. In Jesus' name, amen.

All these devotionals can be found on our website inghamitechurch.org on the 'Resources' page. Click on the link to go there.