

Preached on 8/7/22 at GBC - Ruston

"This MAN Receiveth Sinners"

Lk.15:1,2

Men (**MANKIND**) by nature hold such a **HIGH OPINION** of themselves, but that **HIGH OPINION** they hold concerning themselves and those they love is always based on a **WRONG STANDARD** – “*For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: **but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.***”(II Cor.10:12) We must always keep in mind what Paul wrote concerning the unregenerate mind – “*Because the carnal mind [is] **enmity against God:** for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*”(Rom.8:7,8) The unregenerate mind **CAN ONLY ASSUME** that they must do something to be saved, keep doing something to remain saved, and hopefully if they have done enough and avoided enough, in the end they might be saved. The Jews once asked our Lord – “*What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?*”(Jn.6:28) The rich young ruler approached our Lord and asked: “*Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?*”(Matt.19:16) Do you see their **FALSE ASSUMPTION**? They **THOUGHT** salvation or eternal life is something one **EARN**s or **MERITS**. This is what every sinner by nature thinks and believes, even you and me **BEFORE** God was pleased to reveal Himself to us and in us. Even though this is what we all think by nature, our Lord and the entirety of God’s Word plainly teaches salvation is “*the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord*”. Remember what Christ said to that woman at the well – “*Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*”(Jn.4:10) Consider Peter’s rebuke of **SIMON** – “*But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, **because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.***”(Acts 8:20) **One more:** “*For the wages of sin [is] death; **but the gift of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.***”(Rom.6:23) Man is the same now as he has always been since Adam fell in the garden. Adam **THOUGHT** he could do something to correct his error, and all his seed follow his same error. We see that on display in these verses we want to begin looking at today.

“*Then DREW near the publicans and sinners.*” This word “*then*” serves almost like the word “*therefore*”, giving us the context or timing of these publicans and sinners drawing near to our Lord. By reading **Luke 14** in the “Call To Worship”, we learned that these publicans and sinners drew near to Christ as he exited the Pharisees home where He had been invited to eat on the Sabbath day – “*And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him.*” The entirety of Christ’s discourse in **Luke 14** was a **REPROOF** and **REFUTATION** of the scribes and pharisees who **THOUGHT THEY WERE RIGHTEOUS**, thinking themselves to be the true children of God, and despising **PUBLICANS** and **SINNERS** – “*And he spake this parable unto **certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.***”(Lk.18:9) Keep in mind, Christ always made it clear that He **DID NOT COME** to call those who **THOUGHT THEY WERE** righteous to repentance - **HE CAME TO CALL SINNERS TO REPENTANCE** – “*But go ye and learn what [that] **meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice:** for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*”(Matt.9:13); “*When Jesus heard [it], he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*”(Mk.2:17); “*I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to*

repentance.”(Lk.5:32) **WHAT AMAZING GRACE** – Here’s a group of sinners (**PUBLICANS AND SINNERS**), who are considered by most as the basest of the base - **who considered themselves without hope**, yet they “**drew near unto Christ**”. These hopeless sinners drawing near to Christ reminds me of that woman who could not be deterred from Christ – **Matt.15:22-28**. This also brings to my mind Christ’s words concerning **ALL HIS PEOPLE** on another occasion – “**No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me DRAW him: and I will raise him up at the last day.**”(Jn.6:44) The original word in our text translated “**drew near**” means ‘to bring near or **TO DRAW**’. These “**publicans and sinners**” weren’t coming to Christ of their own freewill and accord, **they were being drawn by Christ** – “**And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will DRAW all [men] unto me.**”(Jn.12:32) **Let me say this before I move on: Any SINNER, including those of us whom Christ redeemed, who thinks or begins to entertain the idea that they ARE HOLY OR RIGHTEOUS based on things they are doing will always be found among those who “DESPISE OTHERS”.**

Notice the response of these moral, sincere, dedicated, **LOST** religionists to these sinners drawing near to Christ– “**And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, THIS [man] receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.**” If you’ll recall from our reading **Luke 14**. Christ’s words had been a stern rebuke against them, leaving them without excuse. Nonetheless, here they are **MURMURING** over Christ receiving sinners and eating with them. **Here’s what I find so interesting about these Pharisees and Scribes:** I don’t have a perfect chronological order of every event, word, or miracle of Christ **UP TO THIS POINT**, but Christ had done enough that some of the Pharisee’s own disciples acknowledged Christ to be special. **Think about it:** By this time, Christ had turned water into wine; He had fed the 5000; He had cured a man’s leprosy; healed a paralyzed man; raised the widow’s son from the dead in **Lk.7**; He had cast out demons; **THINGS WHICH HAD NEVER BEEN DONE BEFORE**. Even Nicodemus, a **PHARISEE** knew of Christ’s miracles – “**There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.**”(Jn.3:1,2) In spite of this overwhelming evidence which proved Him to be the **TRUE MESSIAH**, here stands the Scribes and Pharisees, murmuring, and not even acknowledging this **UNIQUE PERSON** to be anything at all – “**The Pharisees and scribes murmured, say THIS [man].**” In the original language, the word “**man**” doesn’t even appear, just the word translated “**THIS**”. By this statement they didn’t mean **this great man**, or **this great prophet**, or **this great master of Israel**. Their words were words of contempt, as in **THIS FELLOW**. Here’s the same language – “**Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.**” “**Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: [as for] this [fellow], we know not from whence he is.**”(Jn.9:24,28,29) The word translated “**murmured**” is ‘always used to express many indignantly complaining’. These men thought of and looked on Christ as a mere man. Matter of fact they looked on Him as a sinful man, even though the evidence proved Him to be much more. All the evidence proved Him to be “**the true and mighty God**”, the One promised by God, prophesied of by God’s prophets, and the One “**able also to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him**”. **What a tragedy** – Here stood the **ONE** who to know **IS ETERNAL LIFE**, and yet these **RELIGIOUS MEN COULD NOT SEE HIM** – “**At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.**

All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and [he] to whomsoever the Son will reveal [him].”(Matt.11:25-27) Wise Solomon stated it perfectly – “The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them.”(Prov.20:12)

In spite of these Scribes and Pharisees spiritual darkness and depravity, by their words they declared that which is the greatest of news to **THOSE THEY DESPISED** – “*This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*” The word translated “*receiveth*” is so important to those who see themselves and know themselves to be “**SINNERS**”. This word “*receiveth*” means ‘to receive to one’s self, to admit, to give access to one’s self; to admit one or receive one into intercourse and companionship’. Who does Christ ‘receive to Himself in intercourse and companionship’? It certainly wasn’t the scribes and pharisees – “*But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in [yourselves], neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.*”(Matt.23:13); “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*”(Matt.23:15); “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier [matters] of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*”(Matt.23:23); “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead [men’s] bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*”(Matt.23:27,28) Think about Christ’s parable concerning the publican and the pharisee over in **Lk.18:9-12** – “*And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men [are], extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.*” Those who consider themselves **RIGHTEOUS** see no need for and have no desire for the **ONLY RIGHTEOUSNESS** that enables God to be both “*a just God and a Savior*” – **Rom.10:1-3 – QUOTE IT!** Remember Christ’s words – “*They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick.*”(Lk.5:31) **Listen to me carefully:** Those who are sick - those who find themselves in this number the scribes and pharisees murmured about, to them - Christ is the GREAT PHYSICIAN that meets their every need. Didn’t the Apostle Paul include himself in this group? “*This [is] a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*” **This is amazing to even consider:** Christ who is eternal God, who is perfectly holy in thought, word, and deed; who never thought an evil thought or performed an evil deed; who **ALWAYS** did the will of His Father, condescends to take into communion and union with Himself those who **ARE** “*sinners*”. I love what **J.K.Popham** said of this phrase: “*this man receiveth sinners*” – “It is a great condescension for God to take notice of, and hold communion with, the holy angels, the elect angels; but what a stoop it is for God to lay hold of our nature, to look upon wretched sinners, vile worms, **who in their own eyes**, as quickened and instructed by the Spirit, are not fit to be near Him!” Listen to the difference in the language of the **PUBLICAN** in that great parable of the pharisee and the publican - “*And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as [his] eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.*”(Lk.18:13) How can a **HOLY** and **JUST GOD** show Himself as merciful and actually be merciful to sinners? Can He show mercy just

because we admit we are vile or because He feels sorry for our awful condition? **ABSOLUTELY NOT!** The Publican's words show us **HOW** God can be just and justifier of the **UNGODLY**. The word translated "*be merciful*" is used **only 2 times** in the entire New Testament, in this verse and in Heb.2:17 – "*Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto [his] brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things [pertaining] to God, to **MAKE RECONCILIATION FOR** the sins of the people.*" In both verses it means the same thing, 'to be propitious, to appease one's self, to conciliate one's self'. Sinners **CANNOT** reconcile themselves to God by anything they do or by anything done through them, even by God the Holy Spirit. God alone **MUST RECONCILE** sinners to Himself. Listen to Isaiah – "*I, [even] I, [am] **he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake**, and will not remember thy sins.*"(Isa.43:25) **How did God do this** – "*And all things [are] of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech [you] by us: we pray [you] in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him [to be] sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*"(II Cor.5:18-21) Isn't that **GOOD NEWS**? Isn't that **THE BEST OF NEWS**?

One last thing: Not only does Christ receive sinners, but He "*eateth with them*". There's no doubt that Christ did physically interact with and eat with many publicans and sinners – His Apostles; Zacchaeus; Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. But Christ did much more than eat with them physically – **HE ATE AND FED THEM SPIRITUALLY**. Do you remember what Christ said to His apostles when they returned to the well in Samaria, bidding him to eat? "*In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him [ought] to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.*"(Jn.4:31-34) Just like our Lord instructed them and us, His children "*eat*" or feed on Christ's "*flesh*" and His "*blood*", which is "*meat indeed*" and "*drink indeed*" – **Turn to Jn.6:53-58**.

IN closing, are you a "**SINNER**"? If you have been taught of God, seeing yourself in your character as a sinner, and seeing God in His Holy character as both "*a just God and a Savior*", **REMEMBER** - "*this MAN receiveth publican and sinners and eateth with them*". **Listen to our Lord:** "*Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*"(Jn.14:23) **WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS!!!!!!**