



# Tell me the stories of Jesus

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## Connect group questions

### *The Apostle Peter – a life transformed*

1. Which story of Jesus is your favourite?

#### **The Apostle Peter – a life transformed**

2. What was the take home point for you from Ray's sermon?
3. Why are 'ordinary' people chosen by God? (1 Cor 1:26-29).
4. What were two notable occasions in Peter's life that helped towards a transformed life? (see the transfiguration - 2 Pet 1:16-21 - and Jesus' resurrection - Acts 2, 1 Pet 1).
5. Whose responsibility is it to 'feed lambs' or 'take care of sheep' and how does this happen?

#### **The Pharisee and the Tax Collector - read Luke 18:9-14**

6. Why do we always want to know where we stand with others?
7. What is the aim of Jesus' story? (Hint: Look again at v9. Do you know people like this?)
8. Someone at church says to you, "I think it is very presumptuous and arrogant to assume you have eternal life". How do you respond?
9. Another person at church says to you, 'Mark is always going on about sin, but I don't sin. I don't know why he's always going on about it.' How would you respond?
10. Discuss the outrage that the first hearers of Jesus' story must have felt when Jesus said it was the tax collector who went home right with God.
11. What is the take home from this passage and Mark's message for you?

**Date:** 22 September 2019  
**Services:** Sunshine Beach and Peregrian  
**Series:** Tell me the stories of Jesus  
**Passage:** Luke 18:9-14  
**Title:** The pharisee and the tax collector

- If there is one thing we share in common – I think it is that we like to know where we stand.
- So whenever we walk into a new situation, we are weighing up where we fit...
- We're measuring how we're being perceived...
- Where do we fit socially, demographically, economically?....
- Where do we fit politically?
- how are we on intelligence?, expertise?, experience?; what about fashion... am I up with it??
- Will I be liked...? will I be able to make these people laugh, or will I be laughed at?
- what's our status?
- Where do we stand? //
- It starts early... It starts with that dreadful practice of allowing two of your peers in primary school to pick which soccer team you're going to play on...
- inevitably... I always got picked last... I was hopeless and no one wanted me on their team...
- "CALDER" – when you were the only one left, the captain left having to choose you – did so less than enthusiastically – with frustrated resignation that his team was now handicapped by having CALDER play...!
- Only matched by my resignation that I had to play!
- But at least I knew where I stood... / /
- And we like to know where we stand...
- The first couple of dates are like that too aren't they...? Well – for guys at least...
- Does she like me? How am I going... do I look alright...? Is my breath Ok? Am I coming across relaxed? Am I saying the right thing? Will she come out with me again?
- I know the Lord was saving the best till last in Susan, but I missed someone early opportunities simply because I wasn't sure where I stood... and I found out later in more than one case that a girl I had taken out once was devastated that I had never called again.... // But because I didn't know where I stood with her, I hadn't asked again...! /
- We like to know where we stand... //
- Don't we??
- when it comes to our children we like to know where we stand... love, respect, adoration... appreciation...
- when it comes to our parents – if they are still around - we like to know where we stand
- do they love me? Are they proud of me?
- ... some children sadly spending a lifetime trying get some attention or acceptance or some praise... //
- But I want to ask you this morning... //
- ...do you know where you stand when it comes to your Father in heaven?
- Do you know where you stand with him? //
- if you were suddenly and sadly in the last days of your life – facing the end – would you be confident of where you stand with God – the one we call 'our Father'?
- Or do you think that is one area where you can never be sure where you stand... never claim certainty...? ///

- Historically people have taken up different positions on this issue.
- Some have thought that's just something you can never know.
- You know – of death and taxes you can always be sure – but where you stand with God – that's another story.
- And then there are others who presumed to know where they stand because – well - they've lived pretty good lives and not done anything major wrong...
- These people are confident of their own righteousness and as a consequence – they look down on everyone else. //
- Jesus sets up a typical example of such people in the story he made up which we read from Luke 18 he told this story to address these exact sort of people...
- A compelling and accurate example – in the Pharisee.
- For those not up on 1st century Judaistic history, a Pharisee was a Jew – in fact a leader among the Jews, who knew the law backwards and tried to ensure it was kept in Israel.
- And the Pharisee in Jesus' story, has worked out where he stands with God... because – well on the negative side – he's NOT like other men – robbers, evil doers, adulterers, tax collectors... And that's got to count for something hasn't it?
- I mean – surely there's no hope for the likes of them!
- And as I'm not like them... not even close...; in the scale of things I'm already more than halfway up the ladder aren't I?
- Then on the positive side – I fast twice a week... more than what was required... I give a tenth of all I get – again – more than what was required.
- That has to push me further up the scale... Or so he assumes....
- ....confident of his own righteousness. //
- And we can understand this guy can't we?
- On the appearance of things – he looks good.
- His performance seems impressive.
- We can understand his confidence! ///
- Indeed – many share his confidence today.
- ... pretty confident of where they stand with God... because on the scale they use – they come up pretty well.
- I'm not a robber; I've never cheated on my wife; I'm not dishonest in the work place... that HAS to count for something... !
- And then on the other side of the scale: I grew up in a Christian home, went to a church school, went to Sunday school as a kid.... I try to help others... I'm good to those who work for me; I give to charity; I I get to church when I can..., (you don't have to be there EVERY week surely....?)
- ...those things to have to count for something... /// Don't they? ///
- Have I described you this morning? //
- Confident of your own righteousness... sure of where you stand with God because – well – you're not perfect – but when compared to others, you are doing OK! //
- Can I say; I understand your conclusion... /
- It's the way life works in every other area... put in a good performance compared to others and you'll do OK – school, QCS, Uni, career, politics, sport... /// reward is performance based /// it's the way life works... ///
- It's just not the way it works when it comes to God. ///

- And what Jesus has to say about it, is quite confronting... in fact some must have seen it as outrageous!
- Because Jesus said it was the tax collector who went home right with God that day – not the Pharisee! What??
- the guy who has made a living ripping people off as he collects taxes for the foreign occupiers of Israel – the Romans!
- the guy who is in end an extortionist... a thief, a robber... and what's more a traitor to Israel – HE goes home knowing where he stands with God. He goes home RIGHT with God!
- How could that be? How could that possibly be? //
- What did he have that the Pharisee didn't have? //
- HUMILITY... //
- SORROW... //
- A TRUST IN GOD'S MERCY... // that's what he's come to ask for... the only thing he asks for...
- A REALISTIC VIEW OF HIMSELF... // "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."
- Humility – standing at a distance and not even looking up to heaven ///
- Sorrow – you can hear it in his voice... and as he beats his chest... //
- The trouble with the Pharisee and those today who can relate to him is – and I want put this as kindly as I can... the trouble is they have an unrealistic understanding of just HOW good they are!
- And I understand it completely because I think it is what the church has been HEARD to say for decades: – be good, be good... follow the rules and all will be well... //
- And so, many are left with no alternative than to assume that because they are not getting locked up for crimes... because there is a demonstrable difference between their behaviour and that of others – then everything must be OK!
- The only trouble? – this is never what the Bible has taught. //
- knowing where you stand with God was never about performance... never about being confident about how good you are... /// it's about being humble and sad about your failure... it's about trusting God's mercy... it's about having a realistic view of yourself... God's view of yourself. ///
- let's think about sin for a bit //
- people have made a grave mistake when it comes to sin
- they think of it as doing naughty things wrong...
- ...and because they can't think of a time when they've been naughty... they assume they are without sin...
- But friends, the first commandment is not about being naughty...
- It's about having any other god, other than the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...
- Or as Jesus' summarised the law, it's about loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.
- Most of my sin, you never see
- The other god I most often serve?? – is ME!
- I manage most of the time – except perhaps when I'm at home – I manage to keep an air of respectability for all to see...
- ... meanwhile most of my sin goes on inside here...
- And when I replace God with me...
- ...well – you don't want to know what goes on here...

- What I think of others; what I want that belongs to others, lust and resentment and judging others and racism...
- all of that stuff happens when I push God aside and play the role of "god" in my little world!  
//
- And because he's human, the Pharisee had the same things going on inside his head... but he wasn't prepared to admit it... or he thought that his public pretensions made up for his private failures... ///
- ...and YOU have the same sort of things going on inside your head... //
- YOU know what goes on inside your head...
- and so does GOD! //
- But the brilliant thing is... // even though we are so flawed, God longs to forgive us and to set about changing us....
- In fact, to make forgiveness possible, His Son Jesus bore the punishment for me, bearing all I deserve for pushing God out and playing god myself... and for all that happens as a result of me doing that...
- And all the Lord wants to hear from us is - God, have mercy on me, a sinner... For there is a principle here that Jesus explains.
- Everyone who exalts HIMSELF will be humbled...
- Everyone who like the Pharisee is proud of their own goodness and all that they've done or not done... one day they'll come crashing down... before God's judgement...
- But on the other hand.... Everyone who humbles himself // will be exalted...
- Everyone who is prepared to admit they've mucked it up... who has come in humility, in sorrow, throwing themselves on God's mercy with a realistic view of themselves... God will lift them up!
- ...he will lift them out of their failure... out of their sorrow...
- And he'll freely forgive them; make them his children; and give them eternal life... !!
- A staggering and wonderful reality. ///
- I saw a brilliant example of this principle during the week on our televisions... the example that everyone who exalts themselves will be humbled... but whoever humbles themselves will be exalted...
- It was plain for all to see on the Bachelor... // did you see the final during the week?
- I'll cut a long story short... but on the final night of the Bachelor... it is revealed which girl the Bachelor has finally chosen... only two from the original 28 remain.
- The two finalists this year were Abby and Chelsie.
- It was a very dramatic build up to the final revelation... and the audience was left guessing as to which one he'd choose... though social media had revealed which was the viewers' favourite... //
- But there was a marked difference in the attitude between the two girls... Abby backed herself... she couldn't believe the Bachelor would choose anyone other than her!
- Meanwhile Chelsie spent the morning crying... but she was convinced that she had blown it and that there was no way he would choose her!
- Finally - the Bachelor told Abby, that his love lay with another...
- ...and then told Chelsie - that he loved her.
- Abbie couldn't believe it WOULDN'T be her!
- Chelsie couldn't believe it WOULD be her!
- ...Abby had exalted herself... and was sadly humbled...

- Chelsie... having approached the final with humility – was exalted... ///
- If you approach God – with self-confident righteousness, backing yourself before him – believing there's NO way you're not OK with him... / you will be humbled...
- But if you come before God – knowing you're undeserving... aware of your failings... with an attitude that says – I can't believe you would want me in your family... you will be exalted....! //
- Do you know where you stand with your Heavenly Father?
- Not because you're confident of your own righteousness and look down on everyone else...
- ... but because in humility and sorrow, trusting in God's mercy, with a realistic view of yourself, you've said – God, have mercy on me, a sinner. //
- You may have always lived with this attitude...
- Or you may have come 50 years ago or more, 10 years, 5, 2, 1 year ago – a couple of months ago... last week... whenever it was... // go home with a glad and thankful heart today – knowing where you stand – not because YOU are good – but HE is good. //
- Or it may be that you've seen things in a new light this morning... up to this point you've been confident in your own righteousness... but you've been spoken to this morning about the true nature of your failure to live God's way... and I want to urge you to come with humility and sorrow, saying – God have mercy on me a sinner... and join those of us going home, knowing where we stand with our Heavenly Father...