



9/27/2026

Sermon Summary: Righteousness can sound like a word describing people who have done enough good things to earn God’s approval, but Scripture tells a very different story. Paul reminds us that every one of us has sinned and fallen short, leveling the playing field and leaving no room for boasting or superiority. Yet God does not leave us on the outside: through the faithfulness of Jesus, God acts to restore what sin has broken and freely welcomes us back into right relationship with him. Our seat at God’s table does not depend on what we accomplish, how well we perform, or the spiritual “badges” we wear—it rests entirely on what Christ has done. And because everyone receives this grace in the same way, Christians are called to stop gatekeeping the table and instead become people who extend to others the welcome we have already received. The righteousness of God therefore changes both where we stand with God and how we stand alongside one another.

Conversation Starter: Think of a place, activity, hobby, or group where you immediately feel like an “insider.” What makes you feel like you belong there?

Prayer: Gracious God, thank you that we do not have to earn our place with you. Quiet the voices in us that tell us to perform, compare, or prove ourselves. Help us receive your grace again tonight, and show us where that grace is calling us to make room for others. Amen.

Read Scripture together: Romans 3:21–31, Optional: Luke 15:11–32

3-Question Study Method

Use this method to understand the passage.

1. What is the passage about?
2. What do I learn about God?
3. What is the lesson I learn that I can apply to my life?

Discussion Questions:

- When you hear the word righteousness, what comes to mind? How does the sermon's definition, "God restoring what is broken into right relationship" change your understanding of it?
- Paul says, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." How does that truth challenge the ways we compare ourselves to others?
- Where are you most tempted to "audition" for your seat at the table, to prove your worth to God, yourself, or other people?
- It was said, that our seat at the table rests not on what we do for God, but on what Christ has done for us. Why can grace like that sometimes be difficult to actually receive?
- In the story of the prodigal son, we can resemble either the younger brother who wonders if he can come home or the older brother who questions whether someone else deserves to be welcomed. Which posture is easier for you to fall into?
- What does "gatekeeping the table" look like in the Church today? How can Christians uphold truth and take sin seriously without turning grace into something people must earn?
- When we consider whether Christians could live with such joy that outsiders would want to become insiders. What would that kind of Christian community actually look and feel like?
- If nobody earns a seat at God's table, and nobody gets there differently than anyone else, what distinctions, hierarchies, or judgments among Christians become harder to justify? Where might the gospel be asking you to give up a sense of superiority, even one you rarely say out loud?

Memory Verse: Romans 3:23–24 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."

Closing Prayer: God of grace, thank you for running toward us before we could ever prove ourselves worthy. Forgive us for the times we have compared, excluded, or guarded a table that was never ours to control. Teach us to rest in what Christ has done rather than what we can accomplish. Fill us with such joy in your grace that we eagerly make room for others. Send us out to live as people who have been welcomed home, and who joyfully pull out a chair for someone else. Amen.