

LUKE 18:9-14

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt:

¹⁰ “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

¹¹ The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.’

¹³ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’

¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other, for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

PART OF THE CHORUS OF AN OLD COUNTRY SONG PROCLAIMS: “OH LORD IT’S HARD TO BE HUMBLE WHEN YOU’RE PERFECT IN EVERY WAY....”

THOSE WORDS COULD HAVE BEEN THE THEME SONG OF THE PHARISEE IN THE PARABLE JESUS TOLD, IF SUCH THINGS HAD EXISTED BACK THEN.

THIS IS NOT SURPRISING SINCE MOST CHRISTIANS HAVE A NEGATIVE VIEW OF PHARISEES, WHO WERE SOME OF THE CHIEF OPPONENTS OF JESUS.

HOWEVER, IN THAT TIME PHARISEES WERE ADMIRER BY MOST JEWS FOR TWO MAIN REASONS.

THE FIRST WAS THEIR DEVOTION TO KEEPING THE LAW WITH A FIERCE INTENSITY THAT SURPASSED OTHER JEWS.

THE OTHER REASON WAS BECAUSE BEFORE ROMAN OCCUPATION THE PHARISEES STOOD UP TO A DIFFERENT FOREIGN POWER THAT ATTEMPTED TO WIPE OUT THE JEWISH FAITH.

THEY FORBADE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES INCLUDING WORSHIP IN THE TEMPLE AND KEEPING BIBLICAL LAW.

THE PHARISEES RESISTED THOSE RULINGS AND MANY DIED RATHER THAN BOW DOWN TO IDOLS OR FORSAKE THE LAW.

THEIR DEVOTION TO AND PRESERVATION OF THE JEWISH FAITH WAS STILL HONORED IN JESUS’ TIME.

FURTHERMORE, WE SHOULD REMEMBER, THAT NOT ALL PHARISEES WERE OPPOSED TO JESUS, AND MOST OF THEM WERE PROBABLY GOOD MEN.

UNFORTUNATELY, BOTH THEIR HISTORICAL FAITHFULNESS AND THEIR CURRENT RELIGIOUS PRACTICE GAVE RISE TO THE SIN OF PRIDE WITHIN THE RANKS OF THE PHARISEES.

THE ROOT OF THAT PROBLEM CAN BE FOUND IN A STORY A PASTOR TOLD ABOUT HIS OWN EXPERIENCE AS A YOUNG TEENAGER.

HE RECALLED THAT WHEN HE RECEIVED A NEW BICYCLE FOR HIS BIRTHDAY, HE THOUGHT THAT HE AND THE BIKE LOOKED VERY COOL TOGETHER.

ONE DAY WHILE RIDING HOME HE SPOTTED A GIRL HE HAD A CRUSH ON AND DECIDED HE WOULD IMPRESS HER WITH HIS RIDING SKILLS.

WHEN HE WAS NOT TOO FAR FROM HER HE PROCEEDED TO PERFORM A TRICK, WHICH IF EXECUTED PROPERLY, WOULD HAVE SURELY IMPRESSED THE YOUNG LADY.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE BOY LANDED IN ONE SPOT AND HIS BIKE IN ANOTHER, WHICH SPOILED THE IMPRESSION HE HOPED TO GIVE

THUS, HE LEARNED AS A BOY THE TRUTH OF THE PROVERBIAL DECLARATION, FOUND IN PROVERBS 16:18:

“PRIDE GOETH BEFORE DESTRUCTION AND A HAUGHTY SPIRIT BEFORE THE FALL.”

LOOKING BACK ON THE INCIDENT, THE MINISTER REFLECTED THAT SOMETHING SIMILAR HAPPENS WHENEVER WE TRY TO IMPRESS GOD.

JESUS MADE A SIMILAR POINT IN THE PARABLE HE TOLD ABOUT TWO MEN WHO WENT INTO THE TEMPLE TO PRAY.

THE ISSUE WAS NOT THAT THEY PRAYED OUT LOUD, SINCE THAT WAS A COMMON PRACTICE, BUT RATHER THE MANNER AND WORDS OF ONE MAN’S PRAYER.

THE PHARISEE, AS WE HEARD IN THE GOSPEL READING, DID NOT SO MUCH PRAY TO GOD, AS LET GOD KNOW WHAT A GOOD AND FAITHFUL MAN HE WAS.

HE WAS FILLED WITH PRIDE. AS THE TYNDALE COMMENTARY SAYS: “HE GLANCES AT GOD, BUT COMPLIMENTS HIMSELF.”

INDEED, THE PHARISEE ONLY BARELY OFFERED PRAISE TO GOD, BEFORE HE CELEBRATED HIMSELF.

FURTHERMORE, THE WORDS OF HIS PRAYER REVEAL HE FELT HE DID NOT NEED ANYTHING FROM GOD, EXCEPT PERHAPS A PAT ON THE BACK FOR BEING SUCH A RIGHTEOUS PERSON.

TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, HE WAS SO IMPRESSED WITH HIMSELF, HE EXPECTED NOT ONLY HIS FELLOW JEWS, BUT ALSO THE LORD GOD TO BE EQUALLY IMPRESSED.

SADLY, THE PHARISEE THOUGHT WHAT HE VIEWED AS HIS STATUS BEFORE GOD, WAS DUE TO HIS OWN ACTIONS AND LIFE STYLE.

AND IF YOU THINK SELF-RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE ANNOY YOU, IMAGINE HOW MUCH MORE ANNOYING THEY ARE TO GOD.

THIS IS ALSO TRUE CONCERNING CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE NO IDEA THEY ARE NOT AS WONDERFUL IN GOD’S SIGHT AS THEY IMAGINE.

TRULY, PRIDE IN AND BOASTING ABOUT HIMSELF, INSTEAD OF ABOUT GOD, WAS THE PHARISEE’S FIRST SIN.

THE APOSTLE PAUL, WHO WAS ALSO A PHARISEE, WROTE ABOUT THIS TO THOSE CORINTHIAN CHRISTIANS WHO EXHIBITED PRIDE SIMILAR TO THE PHARISEE IN THE PARABLE.

HE WROTE IN 2 CORINTHIANS 10:17, “LET THE ONE WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.”

IN OTHER WORDS, WE SHOULD BOAST ABOUT JESUS AND NOT OURSELVES.

OF COURSE, IF WE ARE SPEAKING ABOUT LIVING IN THE WORLD TODAY, SEEKING ADMISSION TO SCHOOL OR IN A JOB SEARCH, IT IS EXPECTED WE NEED TO PROMOTE OURSELVES.

HOWEVER, TO DO SO CONCERNING OUR FAITHFULNESS AS CHRISTIANS OR AS GOOD PEOPLE- IS TO EXHIBIT THE SIN OF PRIDE.

THIS WAS THE POINT JESUS WAS MAKING CONCERNING THE PRAYER OF THE PHARISEE, WHO THOUGHT MORE ABOUT HIMSELF THAN HE DID ABOUT GOD.

CONSEQUENTLY, HIS RELIGIOUS PRIDE GOT IN THE WAY OF HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

HE CLOSED HIMSELF OFF TO GOD'S CORRECTION, AND THE BLESSING THE LORD COULD HAVE GIVEN HIM, IF HE HAD ACKNOWLEDGED HE NEEDED GOD'S GRACE.

PRIDE IS INDEED AN OBSTACLE TO BOTH FAITH IN THE LORD AND REAL PRAYER.

IT BLINDS US TO OUR TRUE NATURE AND CUTS US OFF FROM REALLY EXPERIENCING THE DEPTHS OF GOD'S LOVE.

THE SECOND SIN OF THE PHARISEE IN THE PARABLE WAS HE COMPARED HIMSELF TO OTHER PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY OTHER JEWS, AND JUDGED HIMSELF TO BE MORALLY AND RELIGIOUSLY SUPERIOR.

BUT THE TRUTH IS- IF WE TRY HARD ENOUGH EVERYONE CAN FIND SOMEONE THEY SEEM TO BE SUPERIOR TO, SPIRITUALLY AND OTHERWISE.

HOWEVER, IT IS EQUALLY TRUE THAT IF WE MAKE AN HONEST COMPARISON, WE WILL ALSO FIND PEOPLE WHO SEEM SUPERIOR TO US IN FAITH AND OTHERWISE.

HERE US A STORY THAT HELPS TO ILLUSTRATE THE PROBLEM OF COMPARING OURSELVES WITH OTHERS.

A MAN, WHO LIVED IN THE HILLS OF SCOTLAND, PAINTED HIS HOUSE ALL WHITE.

AFTER HE WAS DONE, HE WAS VERY PLEASED WITH HOW PURE IT LOOKED AGAINST THE GREEN HILLS.

BUT THEN NEXT YEAR DURING WINTER, THE HILLS WERE COVERED WITH A THICK LAYER OF FRESHLY FALLEN SNOW.

WHEN THE MAN CAME HOME THAT DAY HE WAS SHOCKED TO SEE HOW DIRTY HIS WHITE HOUSE LOOKED IN THE MIDST OF NEWLY FALLEN PRISTINE SNOW.

THE HOUSE WAS THE SAME HOUSE, BUT THE BACKGROUND CHANGED-AND WITH IT THE MAN'S PERSPECTIVE OF JUST HOW "PERFECT" HIS HOUSE LOOKED.

SIMILARLY, WHENEVER WE COMPARE OURSELVES WITH OTHERS AND SEE OURSELVES AS UPRIGHT- GOD KNOWS SOMEONE ELSE AGAINST WHOM OUR FLAWS WILL BE CLEARLY SEEN.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE QUESTION: WHO DOES THE BIBLE, SPECIFICALLY THE NEW TESTAMENT, SAY WE OUGHT TO COMPARE OURSELVES TO?

THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION IS, OF COURSE, JESUS OUR LORD AND SAVIOR.

HE IS THE TRUE ROLE MODEL FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN, AND SO, LET'S THINK ABOUT WHAT IT WOULD MEAN TO COMPARE OURSELVES WITH CHRIST.

WE MIGHT BRING UP OUR FAITHFULNESS IN WORSHIP, OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS, OUR PRAYER LIFE, OR HOW WELL WE TREAT OTHER PEOPLE.

THE LIST COULD GO ON AND ON WITH ACTIONS, WORDS, AND CHARACTER TRAITS THAT REVEAL OUR GOODNESS.

AND YET, NO MATTER HOW LONG THE LIST OR WHAT WONDERFUL THINGS WE OR EVEN OTHERS MIGHT PUT ON IT, THE TRUTH IS NONE OF US CAN COME CLOSE TO JESUS.

THIS CAN BE DISCOURAGING TO REALIZE THAT NO MATTER HOW SINCERE WE ARE, OR HOW HARD WE TRY, WE WILL STILL SIN AND OTHERWISE FALL SHORT.

NONE OF US WILL CATCH UP TO HIM, LET ALONE SURPASS THE LORD. WE CAN NEVER BE GOOD ENOUGH TO STEP ALONGSIDE OF JESUS AS HIS EQUAL.

AFTER ALL, WHEN WE REALLY SEE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US AND JESUS, WE WILL HAVE TO ADMIT HOW DINGY AND DIRTY IN GOD'S SIGHT WE LOOK IN COMPARISON TO HIS SON.

THIS CAN BE FRUSTRATING WHEN WE REMEMBER THAT SCRIPTURE CALLS US TO NOT MERELY FOLLOW JESUS, BUT ALSO BE LIKE HIM.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5 INSTRUCTS US: "LET THE SAME MIND BE IN YOU THAT WAS IN CHRIST JESUS."

AND EPHESIANS 5:1-2 DIRECTS CHRISTIANS: "... BE IMITATORS OF GOD, AS BELOVED CHILDREN.

AND WALK IN LOVE, AS CHRIST LOVED US AND GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR US, A FRAGRANT OFFERING AND SACRIFICE TO GOD."

THE GOOD NEWS IS- WE DO HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT TO HELP US TO BECOME MORE LIKE JESUS.

BUT EVEN WITH THAT HELP, AND THE NEW LIFE WE HAVE IN CHRIST, WE WILL NEVER MATCH HIS SINLESSNESS.

SO, WHERE DOES IT LEAVE US? IT LEAVES US RECOGNIZING OUR SINFULNESS AND OTHER SHORTCOMINGS, AND CALLING FOR GOD'S MERCY.

THE MERCY OF GOD SHOWN THROUGH JESUS HIS SON WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US, IS GREAT INDEED.

IT IS SO GREAT, THAT EVEN THOUGH WE CANNOT HOPE TO PLACE OURSELVES NEXT TO CHRIST, HE IN FACT WILL PLACE HIMSELF ALONG SIDE US.

REMEMBER, THE LORD HAS PROMISED TO NEVER LEAVE OR FORSAKE US.

AND THE GREATEST FULFILLMENT OF THAT PROMISE WILL BE EXPERIENCED WHEN WE STAND IN JUDGMENT BEFORE THE THRONE OF ALMIGHTY GOD.

JESUS, OUR SAVIOR WILL COME DOWN OFF OF HIS THRONE TO STAND BESIDE US.

HIS LIGHT AND RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL OVERSHADOW US. SO THAT WHAT IS SEEN IN US WILL BE PLEASING TO GOD.

PRIDE WILL NOT GET US TO THAT PLACE, WHERE JESUS STANDS ALONGSIDE US.

HUMILITY IS A KEY FACTOR IN BEING OPEN TO GOD'S GRACE AND MERCY, AND BEING SAVED AND JUSTIFIED BY CHRIST.

JESUS TEACHES THIS THROUGH THE EXAMPLE OF HOW THE TAX COLLECTOR PRAYED.

HE DID SO IN SINCERE HUMILITY, NOT SO MUCH USING WORDS BUT IN HIS HEARTFELT REPENTANCE, AND SEEKING GOD'S MERCY FOR HIS SINS.

IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THE TAX COLLECTOR FELT NO NEED TO LIST ALL HIS WRONG DOING AND OTHER SINS, HE TRUSTED THAT GOD ALREADY KNEW THEM.

THE TAX COLLECTOR, UNLIKE THE PHARISEE, WAS REALLY PRAYING TO GOD AND NOT FOR THE BENEFIT OF TRYING TO IMPRESS OTHER PEOPLE OR GOD.

THE POINT JESUS WAS MAKING WAS THAT WE SHOULD LEARN FROM BEHAVIOR OF BOTH MEN IN THE STORY.

AFTER ALL, NEITHER MAN WAS EITHER AS GOOD OR BAD AS HE THOUGHT HIMSELF TO BE. BOTH WERE SINNERS.

THE TAX COLLECTOR CAME OUT ON TOP, SO TO SPEAK, ONLY BECAUSE HE WAS REPENTANT AND SOUGHT GOD'S MERCY.

THEREFORE, JESUS SAID THAT THE TAX COLLECTOR WAS JUSTIFIED IN GOD'S SIGHT.

CONVERSELY, IT COULD BE SAID THAT THE PHARISEE LEFT THE TEMPLE THAT DAY SELF-SATISFIED.

WHILE THERE ARE TIMES IN LIFE THAT SELF-SATISFACTION HAS SOME VALUE, IT IS ABSOLUTELY USELESS IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

JUSTIFICATION, THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, HOWEVER IS PRICELESS AND ETERNAL. LET US REMEMBER THIS AND REJOICE IN GOD'S GRACE AND MERCY. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY: LUKE 18:9-14

THE PHARISEE, AS WE HEARD IN THE GOSPEL READING, DID NOT SO MUCH PRAY TO GOD, AS LET GOD KNOW WHAT A GOOD AND FAITHFUL MAN HE WAS. HE WAS FILLED WITH PRIDE. INDEED, THE PHARISEE ONLY BARELY OFFERED PRAISE TO GOD, BEFORE HE CELEBRATED HIMSELF.

FURTHERMORE, THE WORDS OF HIS PRAYER REVEAL HE FELT HE DID NOT NEED ANYTHING FROM GOD, EXPECT PERHAPS A PAT ON THE BACK FOR BEING SUCH A RIGHTEOUS PERSON. TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, HE WAS SO IMPRESSED WITH HIMSELF, HE EXPECTED NOT ONLY HIS FELLOW JEWS, BUT ALSO THE LORD GOD TO BE EQUALLY IMPRESSED.

SADLY, THE PHARISEE THOUGHT WHAT HE VIEWED AS HIS STATUS BEFORE GOD, WAS DUE TO HIS OWN ACTIONS AND LIFE STYLE. AND IF YOU THINK SELF-RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE ANNOY YOU, IMAGINE HOW MUCH MORE ANNOYING THEY ARE TO GOD.

THIS IS ALSO TRUE CONCERNING CHRISTIANS WHO HAVE NO IDEA THEY ARE NOT AS WONDERFUL IN GOD'S SIGHT AS THEY IMAGINE. TRULY, PRIDE IN AND BOASTING ABOUT HIMSELF, INSTEAD TO ABOUT GOD, WAS THE PHARISEE'S FIRST SIN.

THIS WAS THE POINT JESUS WAS MAKING CONCERNING THE PRAYER OF THE PHARISEE, WHO THOUGHT MORE ABOUT HIMSELF THAN HE DID ABOUT GOD.

CONSEQUENTLY, HIS RELIGIOUS PRIDE GOT IN THE WAY OF HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. HE CLOSED HIMSELF OFF TO GOD'S CORRECTION, AND THE BLESSING THE LORD COULD HAVE GIVEN HIM, IF HE HAD ACKNOWLEDGED HE NEEDED GOD'S GRACE.

PRIDE IS INDEED AN OBSTACLE TO BOTH FAITH IN THE LORD AND REAL PRAYER. IT BLINDS US TO OUR TRUE NATURE AND CUTS US OFF FROM REALLY EXPERIENCING THE DEPTHS OF GOD'S LOVE.

THE SECOND SIN OF THE PHARISEE IN THE PARABLE WAS HE COMPARED HIMSELF TO OTHER PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY OTHER JEWS, AND JUDGED HIMSELF TO BE MORALLY AND RELIGIOUSLY SUPERIOR.

BUT WHENEVER WE COMPARE OURSELVES WITH OTHERS AND SEE OURSELVES AS UPRIGHT- GOD KNOWS SOMEONE ELSE AGAINST WHOM OUR FLAWS WILL BE CLEARLY SEEN.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE QUESTION: WHO DOES THE BIBLE, SPECIFICALLY THE NEW TESTAMENT, SAY WE OUGHT TO COMPARE OURSELVES TO?

THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION IS, OF COURSE, JESUS OUR LORD AND SAVIOR. HE IS THE TRUE ROLE MODEL FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN, AND SO, LET'S THINK ABOUT WHAT IT WOULD MEAN TO COMPARE OURSELVES WITH CHRIST.

THIS CAN BE DISCOURAGING TO REALIZE THAT NO MATTER HOW SINCERE WE ARE, OR HOW HARD WE TRY, WE WILL STILL SIN AND OTHERWISE FALL SHORT. NONE OF US WILL CATCH UP TO HIM, LET ALONE SURPASS THE LORD. WE CAN NEVER BE GOOD ENOUGH TO STEP ALONGSIDE OF JESUS AS HIS EQUAL.

SO, WHERE DOES IT LEAVE US? IT LEAVES US, LIKE THE TAX COLLECTOR, RECOGNIZING OUR SINFULNESS, AND CALLING FOR GOD'S MERCY. THE MERCY OF GOD SHOWN THROUGH JESUS HIS SON WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US, IS GREAT INDEED.

IT IS SO GREAT, THAT EVEN THOUGH WE CANNOT HOPE TO PLACE OURSELVES NEXT TO CHRIST, HE IN FACT WILL PLACE HIMSELF ALONG SIDE US. REMEMBER, THE LORD HAS PROMISED TO NEVER LEAVE OR FORSAKE US.

AND THE GREATEST FULFILLMENT OF THAT PROMISE WILL BE EXPERIENCED WHEN WE STAND IN JUDGMENT BEFORE THE THRONE OF ALMIGHTY GOD.

JESUS, OUR SAVIOR WILL COME DOWN OFF OF HIS THRONE TO STAND BESIDE US. HIS LIGHT AND RIGHTEOUSNESS WILL OVERSHADOW US. SO THAT WHAT IS SEEN IN US WILL BE PLEASING TO GOD.

PRIDE WILL NOT GET US TO THAT PLACE, WHERE JESUS STANDS ALONGSIDE US. HUMILITY IS A KEY FACTOR IN BEING OPEN TO GOD'S GRACE AND MERCY, AND BEING SAVED AND JUSTIFIED BY CHRIST. LET US REMEMBER THIS AND REJOICE IN GOD'S GRACE AND MERCY. AMEN