The Pharisee and the Tax Collector – Week 6

Guiding principles to keep in mind while studying parables

- Parables teach primarily a singule, lesson or truth - *not an allegory*
- There were 2 sets of original authors and audiences: Jesus' and the Gospel writers.
    - *Needs to make sense to the original author.*
- Need to interpret scripture with other scripture
    - *Our interpretation of the parable cannot contradict other more clear scripture.*

What prompted the parable?

<u>Where does the context for this parable begin?</u>

- Luke 17:20: Jesus replies to the Pharisees' question of when the kingdom of God would come.
- Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed, nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There!' for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."
- Jesus then proceeds to answer the Pharisees question of WHEN?
- *Jesus then proceeds to expound on "not in ways that can be observed, and in the midst of you.*
- Then Jesus provides several illustrations of those esteemed by the Father in His Kingdom:
    - The **faith of the persistent widow** which Stephen taught on.
    - And today we will look at the parable of the **Pharisee and the Tax Collector**
    - **Let the little children come unto me**
    - *Rich Young ruler –*
        - *contrast to let the little children come to me.*
        - *as if he did not hear a thing, he says, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"*
    - *Foretells his death*
    - *Heals a beggar*

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

Natural Meaning

A Pharisee and Tax collector went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee commended himself to God but the Tax collector could barely look upward and pleaded for mercy. Jesus commended the Tax Collector – and pointed out his humility.

Characters

Pharisee

- **Pharisee reputation in Jewish culture**
    - The separated ones (politics and religion); the people's party.
    - They emphasized strict adherence to the Torah and Temple worship during and following the Maccabean revolt.
    - *The Maccabean revolt (160 – 167BC) occurred in response to the political ambitions of the priests and the forced Hellenization of the Jewish people.*
    - Highly esteemed; It was an honor to be compared to a Pharisee.

- **Pharisee as revealed by Jesus**
    - **Matt 23: 1-15** Itemization of their hypocrisy
    - In our Parable, the Pharisee expects to be heard because of the righteousness he has achieved.
    - And in his pride, he looks down on others: i.e. the tax collector

Tax Collector

- Tax Collector in Jewish culture: Traitor, Thief
    - He worked with the enemy, the Romans and extorted as much money as possible from his fellow Israelites.
- This particular tax collector according to Jesus
    - Justified, humble, exalted

Audience:

- **Luke 18:9:** Those who trusted in themselves, that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt.
    - **Isaiah 65:**5: who say, "Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am too holy for you." These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all the day.

The Main truth being illustrated in the Parable

- **Luke 18:14a: I tell you, this man went down to his house justified**
- **Luke 18:14b: For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.**

These statements would have been considered scandalous to the Jewish audience:

- **Cultural scandal:** How can Jesus commend a Tax collector, (traitor) over a Pharisee (hero).
- **Genesis 12:3**: "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse.
    - The Tax collector would fall into the category of those deserving to be cursed because of his alliance with Rome, an enemy of Israel.

- **Religious scandal:** How can someone completely lacking righteousness be declared righteous (justified)?
    - The one who excelled in good works commended himself as righteous.
    - While the one who knew he lacked righteousness was commended as righteous by Jesus.
- Truly, **the Pharisee** *was* more righteous than the Tax collector
    - He did more than was required of the law…
    - Whereas the tax collector failed to do what the law required.
    - **Rom 9:32** Paul noted that Israel did not pursue (righteousness) by faith but by works.
    - **Rom 10:3:** Israel sought to establish their own righteousness and thus the comparison.
        - Though the Pharisee was more righteous, he fell far short of the righteousness of God, which God was willing to give him.
- The **tax collector** was declared to be Justified (righteous) because he cast himself upon the mercy of God (faith)
    - The Tax Collector has no problem acknowledging his lack of righteousness.
        - He humbled himself and confessed his sinfulness to God.
        - And the Lord declared him righteous (justified) without any works on the part of the tax collector.

- **Repentance > Justification**
    - This parable provides a picture of repentance via the tax collector.
    - **Note** - there are no acts of obedience or good works. The Lord declares him justified solely based upon his confession.
    - Obedience and good works are not repentance, they are the result of repentance.
        - Works will follow but works are not factored into his justification.
    - Repentance - a change in orientation of the heart towards the person you have offended - G. Bradford.

God's priority – Our Heart

God's priority is not to get us to stop sinning…

- He could have done that – why didn't he?

- The Father's plan is more than saving us from sin, it is to reconcile us to himself and to make us sons and daughters - to conform us to the image of his Son.
    - To replicate the humility/heart that made the obedience of the cross possible.

- Similarly, why didn't God have the Israelites conquer all the Canaanite peoples at one time?
    - **Judges 2: 21-22:** I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations that Joshua left when he died, in order to test Israel by them, **whether they will take care to walk in the way of the Lord** as their fathers did, or not.
    - This is a process - To cure us of our Adamic pride, to teach us dependance.
        - We have been saved (Justified)
        - We are being saved (Sanctification)
            - Don't grow weary – even your sin is being used for good.
        - We will be saved (Glorified)

- The goal is obedience that proceeds from a heart submitted to and loves the Father.

Philippians 2: 4-8

- **This** points to the King of the Kingdom of God, who provides the greatest contrast between what was expected of the Kingdom of God and the reality of the Kingdom of God.
    - Note what pleased the Father about Jesus - his humility which led to obedience

Luke 18:15-17: Let the Little Children Come unto Me

Another account showing who is commended in the Kingdom of God vs that of fallen man is the account of little children.

- When people were brining even infants to Jesus.
- What was the disciples response? Rebuked the parents
- What was Jesus response? Rebuked the disciples
- Point: the disciples illustrated the greatest misunderstanding of who was most qualified to enter the kingdom of heaven.