

LAST WEEK,,, WE HEARD ABOUT THE PERSISTANT WIDOW,,, WHO BY CONSTANTLY PRAYING AND BADGERING AN UNJUST JUDGE,,, RECEIVED THE JUSTICE THAT SHE DESERVED AND WE'RE REMINDED THAT BECAUSE OF GOD'S LOVE FOR US,,, WE CAN PRAY FOR JUSTICE IN OUR OWN LIVES AND IT WILL BE DELIVERED!

TODAYS PARABLE,,, IS ABOUT TWO COMPLETELY DIFFERENT TYPES OF JEWISH MEN,,,

ONE,,, WAS A PHARISEE,,, A MEMBER OF THE PRIESTLY CLASS AND A HIGHLY RESPECTED RELIGIOUS LEADER IN THE COMMUNITY,,,

WHO BELIEVED IN ALL OF THE OLD TESTAMENT. HE WAS CONVINCED OF HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS AND HE DISPISED EVERYONE ELSE!

THE OTHER,,, WAS A TAX COLLECTOR,,, ONE OF THE MOST DESPISED PEOPLE WITHIN THE JEWISH AND ROMAN COMMUNITY,,,

HE KNEW THAT HE WAS A SINNER,,, AND,,, THAT HE WASN'T ANY BETTER THAN ANYBODY ELSE!

BOTH OF THESE MEN BELIEVED IN THE SAME GOD,,,

(*) THEY BELONGED TO THE SAME RELIGION,,,

(*) THEY BOTH WORSHIPPED,,, IN THE SAME TEMPLE.

(*) THEY BOTH WERE ACTIVE BELIEVERS,,, WHO PARTICIPATED IN TEMPLE WORSHIP,,, AND,,,

(*) THEY BOTH SAID THEIR DAILY PRAYERS.

BUT,,, THAT'S WHERE THE SIMILARITIES ENDED.

PICTURE THE PHARISEE;

IN HIS LONG FLOWING ROBES AND WEARING HIS FANCY AND ORNATE PRAYER SHAWL,,, AND STANDING,,, WHERE EVERYONE COULD SEE HIM,,, WITH HIS ARMS RAISED HIGH,,, LOOKING UP TO HEAVEN AND GIVING THANKS TO GOD;

NOT FOR WHAT GOD HAD GIVEN HIM,,, RATHER,,,

FOR NOT MAKING HIM,,, LIKE THE REST OF HUMANITY.

HIS ACTIONS,, WERE A “**PUBLIC PERFORMANCE**” AND HIS BEHAVIOR IN THE TEMPLE,, WAS SCRIPTED!

THEN,, WE HAVE THE TAX COLLECTOR;

HE WAS THERE BECAUSE HE WAS A SINNER!
HE BELIEVED THAT GOD COULD HELP HIM,,
HOWEVER,, HE WAS STANDING AT A DISTANCE WITH HIS HEAD BOWED DOWN.

IN DEEP HUMILITY,, HE PRAYED TO GOD FOR MERCY AND HIS BODY LANGUAGE REVEALED HIS SENSE OF “***UNWORTHINESS***”,, AND HE WAS FOCUSED ON GOD.

IN THIS PARABLE,, ***ONE MAN WENT HOME JUSTIFIED AND AT PEACE WITH GOD***,, THE OTHER,, ***DIDN'T!***

CAN YOU GUESS WHO DIDN'T? NOW,, IT MIGHT HELP US TO APPRECIATE THE POINT OF THIS PARABLE,, IF WE UNDERSTAND,, EXACTLY WHO THE PHARISEES AND THE TAX COLLECTORS WERE.

THE PHARISEES WERE CONSIDERED TO BE THE “***GOOD GUYS***”. THESE MEN WERE ***DISCIPLINED,, DEVOUT RELIGIOUS MEN AND THEY WERE SERIOUS MINDED BELIEVERS IN GOD'S LAW.***

THEY FASTED ***TWO TIMES A WEEK***,, THOUGH THE LAW ONLY REQUIRED IT,, ***ONCE A YEAR***,,
ON THE DAY OF ATTONEMENT!

THEY TITHED... GIVING 10% OF ALL OF THEIR INCOME,, NOT JUST ON THE REQUIRED PARTS,, BUT OF EVERYTHING THAT THEY RECEIVED,, TO GOD!

THIS PHARISEE,, WASN'T KIDDING,, WHEN HE SAID THAT ***I AM NOT LIKE THOSE OTHER PEOPLE:*** THIEVES,, ROGUES,, ADULTERERS,, OR EVEN LIKE “***THIS TAX COLLECTOR***”. I FAST TWICE A WEEK AND GIVE A 10TH OF ALL MY INCOME.

HE BELIEVED IN HIMSELF!

THE TAX COLLECTORS,, WERE GENERALLY REGARDED AS,, “***THE SCUM OF THE EARTH***”. PEOPLE OF LOW MORAL STANDARDS AND
“RITUALLY UNCLEAN”.

AS FAR AS THE RELIGION OF THAT DAY WAS CONCERNED,,, TAX COLLECTORS WERE *PUBLIC SINNERS,,, WHO WERE RIDING THE FAST ROAD TO HELL.*

BUT THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE WAS; THAT THIS TAX COLLECTOR KNEW,,, *THAT HIS ONLY HOPE,,, FOR SALVATION,,, WAS NOT ON THE MERIT,,, OF ANY OF HIS RELIGIOUS ACHIEVEMENTS,,, BUT,,,*

ONLY ON THE MERCY OF GOD!

BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, JUST BELIEVING THAT GOD EXISTS,,, DOESN'T REALLY SAVE ANYONE! IN *JAMES 2:19*,,, ST JAMES TELLS US PLAINLY,,, THAT,,, *THE DEVIL HIMSELF BELIEVES IN GOD AND SHUDDERS WITH FEAR.*

WHAT REALLY MATTERS,,, IS; *WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT GOD,,, AND HOW OUR FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS,,, EFFECTS OUR VIEW,,, OF OURSELVES,,, AND OTHERS.*

THE PHARISEES BELIEVED IN HIMSELF AND HIS WORK TO PLEASE GOD,,, AND LOOKED DOWN ON OTHERS.

BECAUSE OF THIS,,, THE PHARISEES PRIDE,,, MADE THEM LOOK DOWN,,, WITH CONTEMPT,,, ON OTHER PEOPLE,,, AS SINNERS,,, *LIKE THE TAX COLLECTOR.*

JESUS TOLD THIS PARABLE,,, BECAUSE THE PHARISEES

“TRUSTED IN THEMSELVES,,, THAT THEY WERE RIGHEOUS AND THEY REGARDED OTHERS WITH CONTEMPT!”

THE TAX COLLECTOR,,, ON THE OTHER HAND,,, *DID NOT TRUST IN HIMSELF,, OR,,, ANYTHING THAT HE HAD DONE,,, BUT ONLY IN GOD'S MERCY!*

BY THE WAY,,, THIS IS THE SAME MAN THAT WAS SENT HOME,,, ***“JUSTIFIED IN GOD'S SIGHT!”***

AND NOT,,, *THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS PHARISEE.*

SOMETIMES,,, IT'S EASY TO MISS THE OBVIOUS!

EVERYONE THOUGHT THAT THE PHARISEE,,, WAS RIGHTEOUS!

AFTER ALL; HE DID EVERYTHING CORRECT *RIGHT?*
WRONG!

WE KNOW THIS,,, BECAUSE SCRIPTURE TELLS US
THAT *IT WAS THE “TAX COLLECTOR” WHO WALKED
AWAY JUSTIFIED AND RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD,,, NOT
THE PHARISEE.*

THE PROBLEM HERE,,, WAS;

THAT THE PHARISEE WAS TOO SELF-RIGHTEOUS!

HE SAW EVERYONE’S SIN,,, EXCEPT HIS OWN!

HE DIDN’T REALLY GO UP TO THE TEMPLE
TO PRAY TO GOD,,,

HE WENT UP THERE,,,

TO REMIND GOD,,, OF HOW GOOD HE WAS!

SO,,, I ASK YOU,,, DOES YOUR FAITH,,, *MAKE YOU LOOK
GOOD,,, OR,,, DOES IT GLORIFY GOD?*

THE PHARISEE BUILT HIMSELF UP,,, BY TEARING
DOWN OTHERS. HE JUDGED THE TAX COLLECTOR,,,
TO MAKE HIMSELF LOOK,,, AND FEEL,,, BETTER!

PRIDE AND PRAYER DON’T GO WELL TOGETHER!

SOMETIMES,,, IS THERE MAYBE,,, JUST A WEE BIT OF
THE PHARISEE IN US?

HAVE WE EVER SAID,,, *“I’M NOT AS BAD AS THEY ARE!*
OR PERHAPS: *OH BOY,,, I’M REALLY GLAD,,, THAT’S
HAPPENING TO THEM,,, AND NOT ME!*

JUST LIKE THE PHARISEE AND TAX COLLECTOR,,,
*WE TOO,,, HAVE COME HERE,,, TO GOD’S HOUSE,,,
TO OFFER WORSHIP AND PRAYER,,,*

AND JUST LIKE THEM,,,

*DON’T WE ALSO HOPE TO GO HOME TODAY,,,
JUSTIFIED AND AT PEACE WITH GOD?*

THIS PARABLE TEACHES US NOT TO JUDGE OTHERS,,,
AND FREES US,,, FROM TRYING TO ACHIEVE
RIGHTEOUSNESS WITHIN OURSELVES,,, BEFORE GOD!

MY BELOVED,,, DON’T LISTEN TO OTHER PEOPLE,,,
OR TO YOUR OWN FEELINGS,,,

WHEN THEY TELL YOU,,, THAT GOD,,,

CAN'T POSSIBLY FORGIVE YOU,,, BECAUSE HE CAN!

ADMIT YOUR SINFULNESS AND SUBMIT YOURSELF TO
THE GENEROUS MERCY OF GOD,,, WHICH IS BIGGER
THAN ANY SINS,,,

THAT YOU OR I MIGHT HAVE COMITTED.

BROTHERS & SISTERS,,, REMEMBER **NEVER LOOK
DOWN ON OUR FELLOW SINNERS**,,, RATHER,,, HELP
THEM,,, IN THEIR SEARCH,,, FOR THE LOVE AND
FORGIVENESS OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR,,, JESUS
CHRIST!

**GOD ALWAYS OPPOSES THE PROUD,,, BUT GIVES GRACE
TO THE HUMBLE!**

IT'S **NOT OUR GOOD WORKS**,,, OR,,, **OUR PRAYERS**,,,
THAT MAKE US RIGHT BEFORE GOD!

GOD ACCEPTS US,,, "AS WE ARE"- **IMPERFECTIONS AND
ALL**,,, BUT,,, **HE LOVES US ENOUGH**,,, **NOT TO LEAVE US
THERE.**

WE'RE SAVED,,, **BY GOD'S GRACE ALONE**,,, AND,,,
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE,,, **THAT CAN DO THAT FOR
US**,,, **NOTHING ELSE!**

OUR FAITH BROTHERS AND SISTERS,,, **SHOULD NOT
MAKE US FEEL**,,, **THAT WE'RE BETTER THAN ANYONE
ELSE**,,, BUT INSTEAD,,, IT SHOULD MAKE US KNOW,,,
THAT WE'RE ALL SINNERS,,, **JUST LIKE THE TAX
COLLECTOR**,,, AND THAT WE ARE SAVED,,,

BY WHAT JESUS DID FOR US,,, **ON THE CROSS**,,,
THROUGH HIS DEATH,,, **AND**,,, **RESURRECTION!**

THROUGH THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF OUR
LORD JESUS CHRIST,,, THE DOORWAY TO SALVATION,,,
WAS OPENED FOR YOU AND ME,,, AND IT'S A SPECIAL
DOORWAY,,, OF HUMILITY. NO ONE CAN NOT PASS
THROUGH THAT DOORWAY,,, AND APPROACH GOD,,,
ON THE BASIS,,, OF ANYONE ELSE'S SALVATION.

THIS YOU MUST DO ALONE!

**TO RECEIVE HIS MERCY AND FORGIVENESS,, WE
MUST HUMBLE OURSELF,, AND BOW-DOWN BEFORE
HIM IN HUMILITY,,**

**IN ORDER TO RECEIVE WHAT JESUS HAS TO OFFER
US,, WHICH IS: **ETERNAL LIFE!****

***LET'S DO EVERYTHING,, THAT'S POSSIBLE,, TO LIFT
UP OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS,, IN CHRIST,, ALWAYS
REMEMBERING THESE WORDS OF JESUS:***

***“EVERYONE WHO EXALTS HIMSELF,, WILL BE
HUMBLED,, BUT THOSE WHO HUMBLE THEMSELVES,,
SHALL BE EXALTED!”***

***+++ IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER
AND OF THE SON,, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,,
AMEN!***

126 WDS: 6 PGS