

Luke 18:9-14 Also read Job 40:1-14.

I want to look today at this parable of Christ's, about the Pharisee and the publican. It only occurs here, in Luke's gospel. But it's a very important parable, because it shows us the kind of mindset we ought to have before God. What attitude the Lord finds acceptable in His sight. I fear this attitude's missing in most churches today. So we can learn a lot from this parable.

Normally, when Christ spoke in parables, He told the story to the multitudes, but only gave the explanation to the disciples afterwards. Why do you think He did that? Well, many people were following Him just for what they could get out of Him. They maybe wanted to see Him perform a miracle, or to get something for nothing from Him, like a free meal. They weren't really bothered about His teaching, His teaching meant nothing to them, so after He'd finished speaking, Christ just lets them walk away.

But if the parable created a desire in someone's heart to want to know more, what could they do? They could approach Christ to ask Him about it, and they'd become His disciple. Christ was approachable. And He's approachable today. If you don't understand a Bible passage, or what He's doing in your life, ask Him. Talk to Him. He's approachable and answers prayer.

But this parable is slightly different from the others, in that the explanation comes together with the parable. And we find that Christ wasn't speaking to a general multitude here, but He had a target audience:

9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

耶稣向那些仗着自己是义人，藐视别人的，设一个比喻，

There are plenty of people in the world who "*trust in themselves.*" You only have to switch on television to see all sorts of people with opinions. Reporters ask people for their "opinions." Everybody seems to have got an opinion, not just politicians. And they've all come to their opinion for themselves. They "*trust in themselves*" that their opinion's the right one.

But we also see that these people were "*trusting in themselves that they were righteous.*" Now, a lot of us would say, "I'm righteous. I do the best I can, and try my best to live a good life." And it's good to be righteous. It's good to want to do the best you can to live a good life. That's not the issue. We're all agreed on that. But the thing is that these people were "*trusting in themselves*" that they were righteous. And that's where they went wrong. As we'll hopefully see.

And they "*despised others.*" We know we shouldn't despise others. Most of us would at least try to get on with people different from ourselves, people with different opinions. But really, just by our having an opinion at all, by definition we think everybody else is wrong. We at least look down on others. We'd never admit to despising them, but when we judge people for their opinions, that's what we're doing.

So, if we're trusting in ourselves, if we think we're doing our best to do what's right, and certainly, if we're despising or looking down on others, then this parable is for us.

10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.

说，有两个人上殿里去祷告。一个是法利赛人，一个是税吏。

The first thing to notice is that both these men were religious. They both went up to the temple to pray. We're not talking here about a Christian and an atheist, or two people of different religions. We're talking about churchgoers. They're in the same church. They profess to know the same God.

The Pharisee was outwardly, a highly moral man. In fact, he was the most morally upright person you could have come across in Christ's day. When Christ spoke of the righteousness that we should have, He said:

Matthew 5:20

"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

我告诉你们，你们的义，若不胜于文士和法利赛人的义，断不能进天国。

So, when Christ wanted to give the best possible example of outward morality, He chose that of the scribes and Pharisees.

And not only were they extremely moral, but they were Bible-believers too. In Christ's day, the church had two main factions: Pharisees and Sadducees:

Acts 23:8

"For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both."

因为撒都该人说，没有复活，也没有天使，和鬼魂，法利赛人却说，两样都有。

The Sadducees were liberals. They didn't believe a word of the Bible. And there are plenty of people in the church today who disbelieve the plain teachings of Scripture. But the Pharisees believed every word of the Bible.

And then we have the publican, or "tax-collector," as it is in other translations. The Pharisees were respectable upright members of the community, but the publican was the opposite. He was a despised member of the community. He went to the Temple just like the Pharisee, so he was a Jew. But his day job was to collect the taxes for the Roman authorities. The Romans were seen by the Jews as the occupying force, just like the Palestinians see the Israelis of today.

The publican was despised because he was seen to be sucking up to the occupying power. And not only that, but most publicans also asked for more taxes than were necessary to make a bit of money for themselves on the side.

So the publican was a despised member of the community, and the Pharisee was a respected member of the community. That's the difference.

And we now see a complete difference in the way they both prayed. The way we pray is always very revealing about our spiritual state.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself,

法利赛人站着，自言自语的祷告说，神阿

The Pharisee (and the publican) stood for prayer. Actually, that's the Biblical posture we should adopt for public prayer. There are three postures mentioned in the Bible for prayer: standing, kneeling and falling prostrate. Sitting isn't mentioned in the Bible. Slouching certainly isn't. I think sitting must be a lazy, Western phenomenon, because in every other church I've been to or heard about, it's been normal to stand for public prayer. It's only respectful to the Lord. If we wanted to petition the Queen, we wouldn't sit.

Anyway, the Pharisee prayed "*with himself*." This is variously translated as "*standing by himself*," or "*said to himself*." Either way, this is a private prayer between the Pharisee and God. This is a prayer that shows from the heart what he was really thinking. This prayer definitely wasn't for public ears.

The Pharisees loved to pray in public. Christ warns us not to be like them:

Matthew 6:5

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."

你们祷告的时候，不可像那假冒为善的人，爱站在会堂里和十字路口上祷告，故意叫人看见。我实在告诉你们，他们已经得了他们的赏赐。

The Pharisees just wanted to be seen of men, so they'd get the respect of men. The approval of God wasn't even in their minds.

But this prayer of the Pharisee here, wasn't meant to be the eloquent type of prayer he'd normally give in public to impress people. No. He'd never want the public to know that this was what he was really thinking in his heart.

"God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican."

我感谢你，我不像别人，勒索，不义，奸淫，也不像这个税吏

Well, he does thank God. That's a good thing. We should be thankful for everything the Lord gives us. But he's thanking God for himself. He's so proud of the fact that he's different from others.

As far as he's concerned, the publican can be labelled with the evil men of this world, the extortioners, the unjust and the adulterers. The Pharisee thinks himself above all of these because he's so moral, so righteous, and proud of it. And he then goes on to boast, to God, about what he does:

12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.

我一个礼拜禁食两次，凡我所得的，都捐上十分之一。

He "*fasts twice in the week.*" I was surprised when I found this out the other week, but fasting isn't in the Mosaic law at all, although it's always mentioned in the Bible as a good, profitable thing to do, especially in conjunction with prayer. But, the Pharisee obviously thinks he's obeying God by fasting twice a week, whereas there's no real Biblical warrant for it. Maybe some tradition had crept in, which involved fasting on certain days, or maybe he decided to fast himself, we don't know for sure. The Bible doesn't tell us.

He also "*gave tithes of all that he possessed.*" Tithing is in the Mosaic law, so there is a Biblical warrant for it. In fact, Christ commends the Pharisees for tithing. But they were omitting more important things:

Matthew 23:23

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

你们这假冒为善的文士和法利赛人有祸了。因为你们将薄荷，茴香，芹菜，献上十分之一。那律法上更重的事，就是公义，怜悯，信实，反倒不行了。这更重的是你们当行的；那也是不可不行的。

I'm sure the Pharisee was very content with his prayer. He must have gone away with his head held high, thinking he'd done his duty for another day, feeling so proud of himself. But was God happy with it? Well, I don't think so.

Let's now compare and contrast the Pharisee with Job. Job lived about 2,000 years earlier. It was said of him:

Job 1:1

"There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil."

乌斯地有一个人名叫约伯。那人完全正直，敬畏神，远离恶事

Both the Pharisee and Job were impeccable in their outward conduct. They were the best, most morally upright men that you could find anywhere. But that's just about where the similarity ends.

The Pharisee behaved the way he did to impress men. All his supposed good works were only for show. Christ actually gave a warning about the Pharisees:

Matthew 23:3-5

“do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men”

但不要效法他们的行为。因为他们能说不能行。他们把难担的重担，捆起来搁在人的肩上。但自己一个指头也不肯动。他们一切所作的事，都是要叫人看见。

On the other hand, Job's good works came from a genuine heart. And as a result, the Lord had blessed him with a large family and plenty of stuff.

Briefly, the story of the book of Job is that Satan comes along and suggests to God that Job was only being morally upright because God was blessing him for it. So, the Lord, for no real reason, took everything away from him. That was a test of Job's faith. Yet Job didn't complain, and still worshipped God:

Job 1:21

“And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”

说，我赤身出于母胎，也必赤身归回。赏赐的是耶和华，收取的也是耶和华。耶和华的名是应当称颂的。

And we're told that:

Job 1:22

“In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.”

在这一切的事上约伯并不犯罪，也不以神为愚妄（或作也不妄评神）。

After that, Satan had another go, and now even Job's health was taken away from him. The only thing he had left was a grumpy wife, who told him:

Job 2:9

“Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.”

你仍然持守你的纯正吗？你弃掉神，死了吧。

But, even then, Job still clung to his faith in God:

Job 2:10

“But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.”

约伯却对她说，你说话像愚顽的妇人一样。噫，难道我们从神手里得福，不也受祸吗？在这一切的事上约伯并不以口犯罪。

But when three of his friends came to him to try to comfort him, he made a mistake. He opened his mouth. And most of the rest of the book of Job is the conversation Job had with these three so-called comforters.

Throughout the conversation, Job couldn't understand why the Lord had brought all this disaster upon him. He knew from his heart he'd always tried to do his best, to do what was right. Yet the Lord was treating him like this. He cries to the Lord, but God doesn't seem to answer him any more. It seemed that He was no longer there. What would you have done in that situation? I'm sure by that point, many people would have abandoned what little faith they had in God altogether. But Job never did that.

Even though he was in this situation, and God seemed not to be there any more, he still stuck to the fact that one day, after his death, he'd be redeemed:

Job 19:25-27

“I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.”

我知道我的救赎主活着，末了必站立在地上。我这皮肉灭绝之后，我必在肉体之外得见神。我自己要见他，亲眼要看他，并不像外人。我的心肠在我里面消灭了。

The Pharisees on the other hand, never had any assurance like that in their hearts at all. They knew jolly well they were only doing what they did for show, to impress men. They knew they weren't being genuine in their hearts. But Job knew absolutely that he'd been genuine. And he knew that the Lord knew that. That's why he was so perplexed when all this trouble came on him.

Well, Job's so-called comforters finished speaking, they'd been absolutely no use whatsoever. And then we're told something very interesting:

Job 32:1

“So these three men ceased to answer Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.”

于是这三个人，因约伯自以为义就，不再回答他。

Even though Job had genuinely been upright in everything he'd done, his mistake came when he started to see himself as righteous in his own eyes. Job had begun to think along the lines of the Pharisee who had *"trusted in himself that he was righteous."*

Job 32:2

"Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God."

那时有布西人，兰族巴拉迦的儿子，以利户向约伯发怒。因约伯自以为义，不以神为义。

This young man Elihu comes along, and, unlike Job's three useless comforters, he immediately puts his finger on the problem. In Job's own mind, he had declared himself to be just rather than God. So Elihu, rather than continuing to look at the problem from Job's perspective, starts to look from God's perspective. And that's what changes Job's thinking completely. After Elihu's speech, God Himself then finally speaks:

Job 38:1-5

"Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?"

那时，耶和华从旋风中回答约伯说，谁用无知的言语，使我的旨意暗昧不明。你要如勇士束腰。我问你，你可以指示我。我立大地根基的时候，你在哪里呢？你若有聪明，只管说吧。你若晓得就说，是谁定地的尺度？是谁把准绳拉在其上？

And what's the result of God finally answering Job? We saw it in the passage we read earlier: Job saw his own wretchedness, and he was speechless:

Job 40:3-5

"Then Job answered the LORD, and said, Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further."

于是，约伯回答耶和华说，我是卑贱的。我用什么回答你呢？只好用手捂口。我说了一次，再不回答。说了两次，就不再说

And do you know who else was speechless? Christ told a parable about a king who made a wedding for his son:

Matthew 22:11,12

“And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.”

王进来观看宾客，见那里有一个没有穿礼服的。就对他说，朋友，你到这里来，怎么不穿礼服呢？那人无言可答。

When we come before the one true God Lord of heaven and earth on Judgment Day, we too will be speechless. We won't be trying to justify ourselves then. We couldn't even begin to do that.

Can you imagine what heaven would be like, if entrance was granted on the basis of what we've done? It'd be awful. It'd be full of people boasting about themselves. “I got to heaven by doing this, or that.” They'd be like the Pharisee: *“I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.”*

– “I prayed five times a day, fasted during Ramadan and went on the Hajj.”

– “I walked round and round the temple with my prayer wheel, chanting the same prayer a million times.”

– “I went to confession, took the Mass and obeyed the pope.”

– “I chose Jesus as my personal Saviour.”

Is that the right one? No! That's just as much boasting in a work as all the others are! What you're effectively saying is, “I'm better than my unbelieving neighbour because I chose Jesus as my Saviour and he didn't.” None of those is the way to heaven.

A heaven full of people boasting about their achievements would be terrible. No. The only way to heaven is by penitence. Bringing ourselves down.

Let's go back to the parable, and look at the prayer of the publican.

13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.

那税吏远远地站着，连举目望天也不敢，只捶着胸说，神阿，开恩可怜我这个罪人。

This is an altogether different attitude from that of the Pharisee. The publican didn't strut into the Temple and thank God for how wonderful he was, for all the good works he'd been able to do, and how faithful he'd been. Rather, he just crept inside the door, he was *“standing afar off.”* When you go to a church, where do you sit? Do you apply the Biblical principle?

Luke 14:8-10

“When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; and he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.”

你被人请去赴婚姻的筵席，不要坐在首位上。恐怕有比你尊贵的客，被他请来。那请你们的人前来对你说，让座给这一位吧。你就羞羞惭惭地退到末位上去了。你被请的时候，就去坐在末位上，好叫那请你的人来，对你说，朋友，请上坐，那时你在同席的人面前，就有光彩了。

And not only did the publican stand at the back, but he *“would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven.”* When we come before the judgment seat of Christ, we’ll not only be speechless, but we’ll be humbled to the dust as well.

So, what should be our general attitude of mind? It should be one of humility, not pride. Plenty of people go to church, who quite like their status in the church, their position, their knowledge, their ability to debate theology, or whatever they fancy themselves doing. But we shouldn’t be like that:

Ecclesiastes 5:1,2

“Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.”

你到神的殿，要谨慎脚步。因为近前听，胜过愚昧人献祭，（或作胜过献愚昧人的祭）他们本不知道所作的是恶。你在神面前不可冒失开口，也不可心急发言。因为神在天上，你在地下，所以你的言语要寡少。

And the publican smote upon his breast, as a sign of mourning, repentance, and humiliation for his sins. And all he could say was *“God be merciful to me a sinner.”* That’s all we can ever say before a holy God. A sinner is all we are, compared to God. Job excelled in righteousness compared to others, and genuinely and honestly was one of the most righteous men that ever lived. Yet even he eventually had to acknowledge that the righteousness of God far exceeds any righteousness we can ever attempt to produce by ourselves.

Isaiah 64:6

“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”

我们都像不洁净的人，所有的义都像污秽的衣服。我们都像叶子渐渐枯干。我们的罪孽好像风把我们吹去。

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other:

我告诉你们，这人回家去，比那人倒算为义了，

If all we looked at was outward appearance, this conclusion should surprise us. Outwardly, the Pharisee was seen to be the most upright, moral person on the face of the earth, and the publican was the most despised. But:

1 Samuel 16:7

“the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.”

因为，耶和华不像人看人，人是看外貌。耶和华是看内心。

It was the publican, not the Pharisee that God declared righteous, because God saw his heart. He wasn't proud, full of himself. He was humble and genuine. He didn't boast of his achievements, but recognised his need.

Do you want to know what God's plan is for us all? What God's overarching intention for the whole world is? His ultimate purpose? It's here:

for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

因为凡自高的，必降为卑，自卑的，必升为高。

That's the overall plan of God. And we find it throughout the Bible. In the passage that we read earlier, God challenges Job to:

Job 40:12

“Look on every one that is proud, and bring him low”

见一切骄傲的人，将他制伏

And of course, Job couldn't do that, and neither can we. We can't even bring ourselves down, we're all so proud by nature. We need God to do it for us.

Isaiah tells us of this overall plan of God:

Isaiah 2:17

“And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.”

骄傲的必屈膝，狂妄的必降卑。在那日，惟独耶和华被尊崇。

Even wicked king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon got it, eventually:

Daniel 4:37

“Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.”

现在我尼布甲尼撒赞美，尊崇，恭敬天上的王。因为他所作的全都诚实，他所行的也都公平。那行动骄傲的，他能降为卑。

The apostle Paul tells us:

Ephesians 2:8,9

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

你们得救是本乎恩，也因着信，这并不是出于自己，乃是神所赐的。也不是出于行为，免得有人自夸。

And Paul concludes that the whole reason God works this way, is:

1 Corinthians 1:29

“That no flesh should glory in his presence.”

使一切有血气的，在神面前一个也不能自夸。

Do you want to be made right with God? Don't even attempt to do it by your own efforts, because you can't. Realise that. Cry to Him for mercy. Cry to Him. Cry, *“God be merciful to me a sinner.”* Not just saying it as an empty chant like the Eastern Orthodox churches do, but meaning it. And the God of heaven will hear, and change your heart. The only way to heaven is the way of the cross. The way of humility. The way of self-abasement. Boasting is excluded.

1 Peter 5:5,6

“God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time”

因为神阻挡骄傲的人，赐恩给谦卑的人。你们要将一切的忧虑卸给神，因为他顾念你们。

And that's why God's way of salvation is altogether different from every other religion in the world. Salvation can only come by putting our trust in a Saviour outside of ourselves. A Saviour who died in our place to turn away God's wrath. A Saviour who took upon Himself the sins of all those who would come to Him. That's what we need. And that's what we can have freely, in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He is the only Saviour.

May we all come to know Him truly, for ourselves.