

Scripture Reference: John 18:9-14

Date: August 30, 2014

Title: "A Tale of Two Men"

Focus: "Am I Alright?"

Jesus brings heavenly truths to our level that it may be applied to life. His tool for doing this during His earthly ministry was the parable. This is an earthly story, that for Jesus, had a Kingdom lesson.

Verses 9 through 14 of Luke 18 recount a time of teaching where Jesus uses a parable to address the issue of being "*righteous*." Jesus knows humanity has an innate sense of wanting to be morally right and okay with himself and others, including, to some sense, God.

v. 9; "[Jesus] . . . told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt"

Jesus shared this parable because people are mindful of being righteous.

People, to varying degrees, are concerned with doing what is *right* and being *okay* with others, including God.

Solomon declared, "*There is a way which seems right to a man (people are looking), But its end is the way of death.*" (Proverbs 14:12)

Those who aren't concerned with being right tend to be diagnosed a "sociopath," a person who manifests extreme antisocial attitudes and behavior and a lack of conscience.

The problem with humanity, though we want to be right, because of sin, we're impaired in this pursuit.

In the Effort to be "Right," Some "*trust in themselves*" for their rightness. (vv. 11-12)

What does it mean to trust in one's self for personal rightness? Take a look at the Pharisee:

a. He measured his righteousness by what he valued.

When people trust in themselves for righteousness, they consider things which are important to them.

The Pharisee valued integrity. Therefore, he believed he was "righteous" because he didn't swindle or cheat others. He considered himself alright because he was not unfaithful to his wife.

But, how did he stand in areas he did not value?

b. Personal Acts of Piety Matter

The Pharisee mentions his external religious activity. What he did or did not do was supposed to be proof of his righteousness/rightness.

Action always matters more to humanity than intent. That's why we remind ourselves, "*Don't judge a book by its cover.*" Or, "*It's the thought that counts.*"

However, "*Appearances can be deceiving.*" Just because a person doesn't lie, cheat or steal says nothing more than they do not lie, cheat and steal. Merely because a person helps the poor says nothing about why the person behaves the way he does.

1 Cor. 13:1-3; "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all

knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.”

c. In the end, those who “trust in themselves” compare themselves to others.

The Pharisee called out tax collector as proof of his own personal rightness. i.e. “I’m not *that* bad,” or “I’m better than so-and-so.”

When people trust in themselves to determine whether they are right, based that on what they value and how they act, it will inevitably lead to comparison with others.

Though judgmental and arrogant, the *better* behavior of the Pharisee would have received an “amen” from some.

v. 13; “But the Tax Collector . . .”

There is nothing in this parable to indicate what the Pharisee implied about the tax collector wasn’t true. If he was the typical tax collector, he was unjust, a swindler and he may not have been a good temple attender.

However, since the tax collector knew he wasn’t “right” with God, you’ll notice he wasn’t “trusting in himself.” He owned up to the fact he was a sinner.

The tax collector accepted his brokenness. With nothing to rely on, he sought God’s mercy.

In touting his good deed, The Pharisee reveals his blindness to his own sin.

The deeds of a person, no matter how virtuous, are tainted and stained by sin. All of us are not right right! It is just a matter of degrees.

Romans 7:21-25; "I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God’s law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God’s law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.” (NLT)

v. 14; The Tax Collector Went Home Justified, the Pharisee Didn’t.

Those who look to themselves to determine if they are okay, will be disappointed.

Rightness is not evident in how good people act, talk or how kind they are to others. Righteousness is determined by who you are. It is possible to act right, but be wrong.

Trusting in myself, I am not able to be right with man or God.

The sooner the lesson of the tax collector is learned, to humbly come before God seeking His mercy, the sooner people will find the peace they are seeking.

The Last 18 Inches

Those who want to trust in themselves to determine whether they’re right or not must beware.

What if the things valued, really aren’t of value?

What happens when you are measured by the things you are not mindful of?

What happens when someone comes along who is better in a given area?

Every individual will ultimately have to stand before God and justify their lives. Apart from His grace, there is no hope for justification.