

1. Vs. 12 of our text reads: "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Christ said that also at Lk. 14:11 and 18:14. It is a constant theme in the Bible. Read Ps. 107. It is the story of Israel's pride and God humbling them. Vss. 6, 13, 19 and 28 tell us how they cried to the Lord and He helped them. See Ezek. 17:24; II Cor. 12:7; Heb. 12:6; Lk. 1:46-55; Js. 4:10; I Pet. 5:6 and especially Php. 2:5. Christ is the great example of humility and exaltation. He was sinless but humbled Himself by becoming the Savior of sinners. God rewarded Him with exaltation. Sinful man is like the Pharisees who are the stereotype in the Bible for sinful pride. Thank God if and when He humbles you! Think how He humbled Job, David, Peter and Paul. He made them see their sin and sinfulness so that they might plead for forgiveness.
2. Jesus told the people to listen to the Pharisees' teaching because they taught the Old Testament (Moses). But they were not to do as did the Pharisees. "They say but they do not do." They had 365 (one for each day in the year) rules for the people but were able to follow none of them. They were men-pleasers. They loved to be watched by people. They wanted the first seats at dinners and synagogues. They wanted to be greeted and to be called "Rabbi". They constantly broke the first commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." They made themselves gods. Like the Pharisee in the temple they said: "God I thank you that I am not like other people." Jesus once asked them: "How can you believe (in Me) while you are seeking glory from one another but the glory which comes from God alone you do not seek?" Self-righteousness is of the devil and cuts us off from God and Christ.
3. Titles of respect which honor peoples' position in life are not wrong. For example: "Father, mother, Mister, Sir, Professor, Pastor, Doctor." Paul says I Tim. 5:17 "Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine." It is not wrong to honor the pastoral office by using titles. But it is wrong for a pastor to covet titles for self-righteous purposes, thinking himself better than others. A child calls its parents "father" and "mother" not because they are better than the children but because the children honor their position in life as says Paul at Eph. 6:2.
4. "He who is greatest among you shall be your servant." See Mt. 20:26: "Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave." And then He says: "Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." **How** do we become humble? By doing as did the Publican in the temple, recognizing and confessing sin and sinfulness and then pleading only the merits of Christ: "God, be merciful to me, the sinner." Jesus' disciples are all equally brethren, none above others, both in justification and sanctification. See Gal. 3:28 and Col. 3:11. Only Christ holds rank of Master.
5. In Concordia Theological Quarterly, 1978, page 185 Henry J. Eggold wrote: "The Pharisees had a passion for honor among men. In public the Pharisees were models of piety. They were actors, hypocrites. They made broad their phylacteries (Dt. 6:8). God commanded the Jews to bind His words for a sign upon the hand and as frontlets between the eyes. Phylacteries, or remembrances, were strips of vellum or parchment, one inch wide and 12 to 18 inches long, on which were written Dt. 11:13-21; 6:4-9; Ex. 13:1-10; 11-16. These strips were placed in tiny boxes, one fastened to the forehead for the mind, one to the left arm for the heart. The Pharisees made these phylacteries large, increasing either the size of the letters or size of the boxes. Num. 15:37-40 commands the Jews to fasten strips as fringes on their garments. Verses from the Law were woven into those strips. The Pharisees made these fringes wide and conspicuous to prove their zeal for the Law."

Jn. 5:44

Theme: THE PRIMARY PRINCIPLE IN GOD'S KINGDOM ON EARTH

Introduction: Prov. 16:18 reads "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." Mary sang: "He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly." Lk. 1:52. Our first parents in their pride wanted to become gods. They were deeply humbled. But God immediately promised them a Savior even though in life they would have to bear their crosses. All people are proud and sinful. Only God can truly humble them and then lift them up. That is the story of the Bible.

I-WHOEVER EXALTS HIMSELF WILL BE ABASED

A-All people are guilty of exalting themselves.

1-Read the lists of sins found at Rom. 1:29-31; 13:13; Mt. 15:19; Lk. 18:11; I Cor. 5:10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:31; Eph. 5:3-5; Col. 3:5.8; I Tim. 1:9.10; I Tim. 6:4.5; II Tim. 3:2-4; Tit. 3:3; I Pet. 4:3; Rev. 9:21; 21:8; 22:15. Sin and death passed on to all men from Adam. It's one long story from Genesis to Revelation. "All have sinned and now come short of the glory of God."

2-Left to himself man cannot help or save himself from these sins which show themselves in pride. God said to Israel: "Oh Israel, you have destroyed yourself but your help is from Me." Hos. 13:9. And Ps. 49:7 reads "No one can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him--for the redemption of their souls is costly."

B-The examples of self-exaltation are found among God's people.

1-The Pharisees were known for their proud self-exaltation.

a-They required extra deeds from people in order to be saved. They could not do them themselves. vss. 2-4. Read Mt. 15:1-11 where Jesus says: "In vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

b-They wanted special honors among men, vss. 5-7, by parading among people, wearing phylacteries, loving the first seats at dinners and synagogues, receiving special greetings and being called "Rabbi". They played god.

2-They continued this even after Jesus ascended into heaven.

Read Acts 3-4. They were envious of the apostles. See Mt. 27:18. They were furious at and envious of Jesus and the apostles. It led to their destruction.

II-HE WHO HUMBLIES HIMSELF WILL BE EXALTED

A-Only the goodness of God leads man to repent of his pride.

1-Read Acts 5:31; 11:18; 26:20; Rom. 2:4; II Tim. 2:25.

Paul says: "By the Law is the knowledge of sin." Rom. 3:20. And "I did not know sin except by the Law." Rom. 7:7. Proud David sinned grievously but Nathan brought him to a knowledge of his sin. Proud Peter promised Jesus never to deny Him but he did it anyway and Jesus had to bring him back. The disciples argued as to who was greatest among them. Lk. 22:24ff. See also Mk. 10:41-45. He told them that among Christians none is master but all are servants. And that's what He tells us in our text: "Let him who is greatest become your servant."

2-After we have been forgiven we begin to fight these sins of pride. Col. 3:5 "Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion evil desire, and covetousness which is idolatry." Think on what Peter said later at I Pet. 5:1-4.

B-Repentance and faith leads to exaltation. We just quoted what Peter said at I Pet. 5:4: "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away." See also Rev. 2:10. The life of the Christian in this life is nothing but servanthood as the Bible says in many places. But, like Jesus, we shall be exalted when we die. In this life we suffer with Him but in that life we shall be glorified.

Sermon Notes on Lk. 18:9-14, Trinity XI

1. This very simple parable teaches great lessons. Jesus compares two classes of people, the self-righteous and those justified by the mercy of Christ. It is summarized in the last verse: "This (tax collector, social outcast) went home justified rather than that (Pharisee) because everyone who lifts himself up will be made low and everyone who humbles himself will be lifted up. Read the Magnificat of Mary (Lk. 1:46-55). History is the story of humbling and exalting both in the church (vss. 46-50) and in the world (vss. 51-55). By the grace of God Christians humble themselves by confessing their sins. Then God exalts them. II Sam. 11-12 and Ps. 51 describe David confessing and forgiven. Php. 3:4-14 describes Paul's righteousness before and after conversion. Vss. 51-55 of the Magnificat picture God humbling the great and mighty among the impenitent in the world. Think of how God humbled Adolph Hitler. He raised himself above other people. God humbled him to the dust.
- 2. All men are righteous, either self-righteous or God righteous. In both cases it is by declaration. The Pharisee declared himself righteous to the exclusion of all other people. It caused him to despise all other people. It caused him to base his acceptance with God on his works, both negative and positive. (I don't do this and this. . . . I do this and this). For this he thanked God. On the other hand, the tax-collector, a social outcast, could find nothing but sin in his life. He summed it up by saying: "God be merciful to me the sinner." The word for "merciful" in Greek clearly indicates that he, a Jew under the OT Covenant, believed that he was reconciled to God through the sacrifices which were a type of Christ's sacrifice. See Heb. 10:14; I Jn. 2:2. The parable says that the tax-collector went home justified. God justified the confessing believer. See I Jn. 1:9. Read Rom. 5:12-21. We summarize: In Adam all human beings (except Christ) sinned and died. They are lost forever. But in Christ Jesus all people are justified. They are acquitted. They are forgiven. Faith accepts what is already so. But first the individual must confess his sin and believe in what Christ did for him. The Gospel brings him the reconciliation and forgiveness of God. Confession is like an appetite. An appetite does not feed a person. But it is a necessary prerequisite for eating. The whole life of the Christian is confession of sin and faith in the righteousness of Christ.
3. At Is. 64:6 we read: "We are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like a filthy garment. We all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." And at Php. 3:9 Paul calls the righteousness of the sinner dung, excrement. But the world brags about its righteousness like the Pharisee in our parable. At Lk. 16:15 Jesus said to the Pharisees: "You are those who justify yourselves before people but God knows your hearts because that which is lofty among people is an abomination before God." In our parable the Pharisee justified himself before God but the tax-collector was justified by God's mercy in Christ Jesus.
4. God has given all Christians the power to forgive sins, to declare repentant sinners righteous. See Mt. 18:18 and Jn. 20:22. When we go to church we confess our sins and the pastor declares us forgiven. By virtue of his office he has this power. All people should leave the church service, like the tax-collector, forgiven and righteous by faith in Christ.
5. The Pharisee compared himself to all others and found himself the best. The tax-collector compared himself to no one but only cried for mercy. Like Paul he called himself the chief of sinners. I Tim. 1:15. But the Christian is both a saint and the sinner. He finds the attitudes of both Pharisee and tax-collector in himself. He grieves over his own pride and self-righteousness. He confesses it and finds forgiveness in Christ, his righteousness.

Sermon Outline on Lk. 18:9-14, Trinity XI

Theme: ARE YOU LIKE THE PHARISEE, THE TAX-COLLECTOR, OR BOTH?

Introduction: Jesus addressed this parable to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and therefore despised all others. Are you perhaps saying that this parable is not talking about you because you are not a Pharisee? Or was Jesus just maybe talking about you too? Let's talk about this.

I-THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE PHARISEE

A-It was of his own making. He thanked God for something that he was without the help of God. First he stated it negatively. He was not like other people: Not a robber, not a bad man, not an adulterer. But, most of all, he was not like the worst social outcast of his day, a tax-collector. Secondly, he stated it positively. He fasted twice in the week although God never said how often Jews should fast. He set apart for the Lord a tenth of everything he acquired. But God required only a tithe of first-fruits of the field.

B-It was according to his own standard. He says nothing about the Word of God. The whole OT said: "Oh give thanks to the Lord for He is good because His mercy endures forever." Nothing like this occurs in what the Pharisee said. According to his standard the Pharisee thought he was already righteous. For that he thanked God.

II-THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE TAX-COLLECTOR

A-It was not of his own making. Vs. 14 of our text says: "This man went home justified rather than the other one." He did not justify himself. He was justified from an outside source. The story of salvation in the whole Bible is summarized in one sentence: "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness." Gen. 15:6. Righteousness comes to sinful man not by his own works or worthiness but by the grace of God through faith. Paul explains this in Rom. 4. The last vs. read: "It was not written for him (Abraham) alone that it was counted to him, but also on account of us, to whom it is counted, to us who believe in the one who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead Who was delivered for our sins and raised for our justification." The suffering and death of Jesus Christ forgive our sins, reckon the righteousness of Christ to our account. That's what the tax-collector believed.

B-It was according to God's standard. All the prophets in the OT told the people to repent of their sins. The Baptist and Jesus came saying: "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is here." When the Baptist baptized the people, they confessed their sins. The tax-collector said: "God be merciful to me, the sinner." He knew the OT. He knew that he must confess his sins. He knew that the sacrifices at the Temple were shadows of the sacrifice of Christ for sin.

III-OR ARE YOU LIKE BOTH THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX-COLLECTOR?

Luther often said that Christians are at one and the same time saints and sinners. That is what the Bible teaches. The great passage on this thought is Rom. 7:14-25. Beginning at vs. 21 Paul says: "I find in me the principle, before me who wants to do the good, there lies the evil. You see, I take pleasure in the Law of God according to my inward man, but I perceive another principle in my members which fights against my renewed man and makes me a captive to the principle of sin in my members. Oh wretched person that I am! Who will deliver me from this dead body? Thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! And so I serve the Law of God with my new man but in my flesh I serve the principle of sin." Oh Lord, forgive the many times when I speak as did the Pharisee. By your grace cause me to confess and believe as did the tax-collector. Thank you Lord for the righteousness of Christ which comes to me by faith!