

Tuesday

Two Men Prayed, Only One Is Honored

Today's Scripture Luke 18:9-14

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

After a parable about the need to pray when we get discouraged at the delay of the second coming, Jesus notices some people who were confident of their own righteousness. He then tells a parable well known by any student of the Bible.

Luke does not identify the "some," but in 16:14-15 Jesus identifies the Pharisees as those who "justify yourselves in the eyes of men."

The parable begins with two men who went up to the temple to pray. The first man was a Pharisee. The phrase "he stood by himself" may well be misplaced in the ESV. The NASB translates the verse as "The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself." The NIV Readers Version translates it "[He] stood up and prayed about himself." He offers no petition, not thinking he needed God.

The Pharisee begins "I am not like other men," not like robbers, evil doers, adulterers and most of all not like this tax collector. Praying out loud, the Pharisee would have been heard by the tax collector.

The Pharisee fasted twice a week, required by the Law only on the Day of Atonement. Good Jews fasted on Monday and Thursday. He gave a tenth of all he got, required of only the major crops. He was convinced he did more than God required of him.

"Tax collector" was often used in combination with "sinners," and even "prostitutes." The tax collector stood at a distance, seeing himself as unworthy in need of the grace of God. Not even to look up to heaven, he beat his breast, a sign of contrition.

Jesus concludes that "this man (the tax collector) rather than the other (the Pharisee)" went home justified, a reversal: the honored is shamed; the shamed is honored.

Today, I will...recognize that I have no room to boasting and that I need God's grace.