

"JUST LOOK AT ME, LORD!"

Luke 18:9-14

INTRODUCTION:

The story of Samuel Brengle goes way back to 1883. He was a brilliant orator, he was ambitious as a young preacher. But he was just ordinary. And then he had an unusual experience in prayer. Lord, if you will only sanctify me, I will take the meanest little appointment there is. And then he described his answer to prayer. I awoke that morning hungry and thirsty - just to live this life in fellowship with God. Never again to sin in thought, word, or deed against God. With an unmeasureable desire, to be a holy man, acceptable unto God. Getting out of bed about 6:00 - with that desire I opened my Bible. I began reading some of the words of Jesus - he gave me such a blessing. I never dreamed a man could have this side of Heaven.

It was an unutterable revelation. It was a Heaven of love that came into my heart. My soul melted like wax before the fire. I sobbed and sobbed. I hated myself that I had ever sinned against God. Or doubted God or lived for myself. And not for his glory. Every ambition for self was now gone. The pure flame of love burned and it blazed like a fire. I walked out over Boston Commons, before breakfast, weeping for joy and praise. Oh how I loved God. In that hour I knew Jesus. I loved him until it seemed that my heart would break with love. I was filled with love for all of his creatures. I heard the little sparrows - I loved them. I saw a little worm wiggling across my path. I stepped over it. I didn't want to hurt anything alive. I loved the dogs, I loved the horses, I loved the

dirty children on the street. I loved the strangers who hurried past me. I loved the whole world.

Brengle said - before this happened, preaching meant honors. Now it meant glory for Christ. Before, preaching meant exaltation of self. Now, exaltation of a Saviour. Before, preaching meant to please. Now my preaching meant to disturb. His sermons changed. And men began to exclaim - how black are my sins.

He turned down a church built by the millionaire Clement Studebaker in South Bend, Indiana in 1886 - and he journeyed to London to train and serve as a lowly missionary. This was indeed a record of answered prayer that would be comparable to what we would find in this passage of Scripture about the Pharisee.

Too many the members like Noodles - No individuality of their own. Must be mixed with something - so like chicken & " - Noodles This & That - you can never eat a bowl full of Noodles. They can't stand on their feet: I would hate to be a Noodle!

The story of the Pharisee is a story of a great sinner. He knew not that he was a sinner and he boasted of his righteousness. This is the story of a good man who went to Hell. And of course, the Publican, the good man, went to Heaven.

In this parable, Jesus tells about the villain, and he tells about the hero.

If we say to ourselves, Lord, I thank Thee that I am not as that Pharisee. We will have missed the point completely that Jesus is talking

about. We will be guilty of blindness - just as that man. Rather, we ought to put ourselves in his place.

Now actually, the Pharisee was a man who was admired by men. In the religious circles, everyone looked up to them. They were the champions of faith. The Sadducees were very liberal. They were called skeptics. Why they didn't even believe in the resurrection.

But here was a man who was in the temple. We might admire him - why he believes in the (letter of the law).

This man was well (disciplined). He did not live in a loose way. He was high on the standard of virtues. Why, he denounced some of the worldliness. Why he wouldn't (compromise) with some of these things.

Another thing, he was (generous). He tithed his income and that is much more than you can say about some Christians even today. He tithed on what he produced - as well as his income. Now this man learned this principle, and he gave the maximum instead of the minimum.

Does the Lord want us to give the least or to do our best.

Another thing, this man was a (super saint). He was noted for his fasting and his prayers. He was dedicated and devoted to the work of

God, in his own way.

I agree with what Clodus Chappell once said. He was a (decent devil). Everything about him was decent - he was dressed neatly. His standing in the community was excellent, he was respectable in every way. He only gives and gave himself away when he began to pray.

Now perhaps, that may be true with most of us. As we look about what he had to pray for.

V. 14 Now Moffett gave a translation to this in these words -- "I assure you that he was the man, in speaking of the Publican, the tax collector; who went down home, accepted by God rather than the other man. For everyone that sets himself up as somebody will become a nobody. And the man who makes himself nobody, will become somebody."

I wonder sometimes if you could just (visualize yourself) in the place of this Pharisee. Now we have the same two types of people today. We meet them on every side. Here is one man who says I am a good man. Look at all of the fine things about me. But look over yonder at that person - what a shame. I am so glad that I am better than he is. There are other people today who say, Lord, I am a sinner. I need help. I am guilty. And I need mercy.

So these two men were in church - but the time came when church was out.

And these two men went down to their homes. One of them walked in a very noble way of pride. Wrapped up in his own importance and self-righteousness. Now the other man went home thanking God for the forgiveness of sins and the peace that he had in his heart.

Now as you come to church, think about it. There are some people just like this. As you think about their speech and their actions, and the way they carry on.

1 With what spirit do you come to church? Here is a mother who sinks down in the pew, and she sighs "I made it." I got all of the children here clothed, if not in their right minds.

1 Here is another pair conversing, here is someone else, and whose minds are not on the songs being used in the worship service. Look, over here is a man who is asleep.

1 4- But yet in another pew here is a person who says I hope the sermon is just 15-20 minutes today.

1 5- And someone else whispers, did I turn the stove off.

1 6- Oh yes, I have seen everything - that old sinner is in church today.

Here are some interested - worshipping. Some are praying, help me to do better. Some are praying - bless him or her, bless my sick friend. Heal that one that needs healed, oh God. Give the preacher a message for our souls. Words of praise are being offered up for those who serve. And there are words that are offered to visitors.

You know, if we had a wide-angle lens and we covered our church, and that's the thing that Jesus did in this parable. Here was a place of worship. And Jesus focused in on these two men. These two men went to the temple to pray. Luke reports this. There were four hours or time for prayer, in the temple courts. 9:00 A. M., 12:00 Noon, 3:00 P. M., and 6:00 P. M.

We - now let us think for a few moments about this Pharisee at church who said, just look at me. Now Jesus is preparing to teach something remarkable and wonderful about prayer. People go to church for many reasons.

Matt. 21:13 - the founder of the church said, my house shall be called the house of prayer. But prayer apart from humility is no prayer at all.

I. A DESPISED PRAYER

The man made a mistake here in his praying.

First, he prayed with himself and not to God.

As the little girl prayed, Our Father, who art in Heaven, how does he know my name. "

Now that was unconscious - but this man's prayer was (self-centered). He was very close to the altar of God. He was standing too close to the holy place, but he wanted the attention turned upon himself.

v. 9 - Says, that he also, while here - (taunted in himself) prayed with himself. Simply boasting to others and letting them know of the goodness that he had done. Now Jesus said the Pharisees loved to stand, praying in the market-place, that they might be seen of men.

It is not the purpose of prayer to show off before men. But to pour out the heart to God.

This was the thing that (Dr. Jeff Raye) used to teach preachers - he was hard on the judgement of self-seeking spirit. Any of those who sought to parade, and say - since I came. Or even who walked around with a Bible under his arm all of the time, or talked loud when he was on a street car.

He had three or four things about a minister. There ought to be (intellectual sincerity, personal honor, financial integrity, and moral purity). He said these things should be so normal and so natural, that a stranger would not suspect him being a preacher - nor be surprised when

he learns that he is one.

However, pious a man may be on the inside, Dr. Raye said, let not a man brag about it and put it out for show on the outside. He said it was very dangerous for men to emphasize managing and talking organization and budget, or else a man will begin to think - this is the way we produce spiritual results. We talk sacrifice, not making sacrifice. We talk loyalty, and not showing loyalty. What he was saying was - there is too much salute and not enough shoot.

9B

This Pharisee (despised others). He counted others as nothing. Their opinions they valued little. Their lives were worthless, he felt that God could not possibly love them as God loved him. Pride caused him to elevate others by belittling them.

I read of the prayer of rabi Simon Ben Jochai. ("Lord, if there are only two righteous men in the world - I and my son, are these two." If there is only one - I am he."

The Pharisee lifted himself up and put others down. Lord, I thank thee that I am not as other men.

Now there is quite a difference in that prayer and the other man's prayer - who said, God I thank thee that I am not as others. So he despised others and he prayed with himself.

When old Simon Peter was sinking beneath the waves - he cried, "Lord, save me." It was a short prayer. He did not pray for the benefit of himself - nor for the benefit of the Disciples. Instead of showing off, he needed help.

I read a story of a man who dreamed that he went to church just as the janitor was closing up the building. It was almost dark in the building. Up near the roof, the man saw some birds fluttering about. They were trying to get out of the church but could not find an opening. He said to the janitor - what are these. They are some of the prayers which were offered here today. Only a few prayers get up to God. These will never reach him for they are mere words. The prayer of the Pharisee was like this. And I am afraid that many such prayers are offered today also.

The thing that this man prays with himself - the Pharisee was a man who was a separate one. He lived by rules that covered every movement and every action each day. They separated themselves from the ordinary business of life. They cut themselves off from their fellowmen as well.

Now they were not bad men as we think of bad. They knew they were good. And they believed everyone else to be bad. At least morally and spiritually inferior.

Jesus said, that none were so far from God as the self-righteous.
As little Jack Horner sat in the corner, eating his Christmas pie,
he pushed in his thumb and pulled out a plumb, and said - what a good
boy am I.

11 A
He prayed with himself.

There was snobbishness. Here was self-worship. He put self at the
center of his world. And pride like this is dangerous because it
cuts off growth. Self congratulations.

Pride cuts off a man from his fellowmen. When we draw a circle
and cut off anyone because of his background or economic status,
social rating, we impoverish ourselves. We hate people.

Pride cuts off from God. And this is a supreme tragedy. I thank
Thee I am not - and he goes on, he listed them.

Listen, the manger in Bethlehem in that building where we visited,
according to tradition, is a very low door. And the only way that one
could enter was to stoop down. And it is called the door of humility.
Even a child must bow down to enter. And this is what this man failed
to do. He found outside the church - I thank thee that I am not like
this hypocrite. Who cheats on the weekdays and says prayers on Sunday
and parades.

His appraisal of his own character was I have not.

II. IT WAS A DECEPTIVE PRAYER

V. 11 B

I John 1:8 says - "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves." The Pharisee didn't feel guilty of any sin. There was no sense of the need to confess.

A layman once said that he hated to hear a certain person pray in public. Because he never asked God to forgive him of any sin. Nor did he ever lead the congregation to seek forgiveness. He never felt the need because he never felt that he had done anything morally wrong. Now surely this man deceived himself - for we all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. No prayer is acceptable unless we seek forgiveness.

There was no confession in the Pharisees prayer. On the contrary, he praised his own merits of being weighed in the balances and found wanting. And he saw himself measuring up and that he had goodness to spare.

The thing about it was - he compared himself with others. He chose the worst of men. Thieves, adulterers, and especially a Publican. He did not see any vice in himself. He had a number of virtues. He had many that he could spare some.

Just a moment, aren't we all guilty of this. Don't we all make ourselves look good by comparing ourselves with others. Yet, we are careful whom we chose for the comparison.

It is easy to find someone who compares unfavorably and seems worse than we are. But other men are not to be our standard. We are to be compared by the ultimate life of Jesus Christ. How do we stack up. Be ye perfect, even as your father which is in Heaven is perfect. Matt. 5:48.

William Barclay tells about a train from Scotland down to England. As the train passed through Yorkshire, he saw a little cottage whose whiteness seemed to shine out against the countryside. On his return to Scotland, snow had fallen. And had blanketed the countryside. The little cottage seemed drab, soiled, and almost gray. In comparison to the whiteness of the snow.

Now we could use that illustration as we compare our lives with other men. We may appear as white as that little cottage. But when we measure against the purity and goodness of Christ, we fall so short of whiteness - we are all soiled.

Another thing, he (boasted of his morality) He could say, my life is clean. I never stoop to a lot of immoral things. It is good to be able to say this. It is a pity that some cannot say it. And yet this alone will not save a man. Jesus said, blessed are the pure in heart, for they

shall see God. We cannot see him if we are not pure. Now there are many mysteries in this. In your eye, if there is a speck of dust, the image is blurred. You cannot see a star. The soul is like that. When some impurities come in - the sight of God slips away. It is only the pure eye that can see God. May God help us in this age of loose morals to keep ourselves pure and unspotted.

There are many today who are building their hopes of Heaven, on personal purity. They say I am pure, I am good, and I am going to base my hope of Heaven upon this.

~~VII B~~ *Extortion*

Another thing, he boasted over his (business honesty) I have paid my bills, I am honest in all of my dealings, and there are many who drive hard bargains to make a few dollars. They run up debts. Which they cannot pay. They employ men who they do not give a living wage. Men ought to be honest in business. And honest as well about their soul.

Why do not men take God into their business today! It is only hypocrisy when a man's religion makes him prominent in the church on Sunday - and it does not influence him in his business each day of the week.

There are some businessmen who begin their day with prayer. Why not? God is interested in every phase of life. And since our work is such a big part of life, He ought to have a place in it.

V. 121

Another thing, this man boasted of his religious life. Why he prayed, he read the Bible, he fasted. He kept the ceremonies. These things are not enough to get a man's heart right with God. His heart was as black with hatred and emnity, jealousy, and malice.

A woodpecker was hammering away on an old hickory tree in the woods. He was making the bark fly when a bolt of lightning out of sky shattered the tree into splinters. The woodpecker said thinking he had done it!

There are some who feel that they are all right with God. And at the same time they can hate certain people, they are jealous of other people, they gossip and lie about people. They try every conceivable way to hurt them. Many repent of the sins of the flesh. But few feel penitence about the souls of their disposition.

We need to as someone has said - he made a display of his religion. And this is what Dr. Raye was saying about preachers. About walking down the street in a big city with a big Bible under his arm, because he wanted everybody to know that he was a preacher.

I think there is something else about this man - he sounds very much like some people that you meet today. He was saying, I am too religious for my church. And if my church doesn't get more religion, I am going to have to get out!

Here was a man who was standing up saying - look at me, give me the once over. How could the Kingdom of God ever get along without me! He was thanking God he was not like other men. He never danced, or played cards, or attended theatres. And he was sure that he kept his pledge up. And here was a man talking about these sinners.

Poor, living in the cesspool of sin.

Do you know sometimes it makes you sick, that there are people who are (so religious). There is such a thing as not having enough religion. That is, (real) religion, I mean. Religion that lives upon God and not upon creeds. Religion that seeks to glorify God and not to glorify self. And a religion of love, a religion for a sinner. A religion that will make us new creatures in Christ Jesus.

What we want to listen to is what do ye more than others. It must be outward. It must be positive. But it must be in service. But it is not how respectable am I in the eyes of the Pharisees. But it is how obedient I am to Christ's commands.

A (Sunday School teacher) one time was teaching a class, about this parable. He expanded upon it and closed by saying this - (now children, let us thank God we are not like that nasty Pharisee.)

There are some other things that I need to touch on.

V. 12 B
He boasted of (his generosity) He said, I pay my tithe. How many of you are tithers. I mean, for your own sake, the sake of your church, the sake of the lost world - and for Christianity sake, you ought to give this to God. But you say we are not of the law - we are under grace.

This is one of the big reasons for doing it. God has blessed you more under grace, than anyone was ever blessed under the law. To whom much is given, much shall be required. The Jew was under the law, and that was in the twilight, and we are under grace and we have moonshine.

Should we be stingy just because God is good to us. Shall we give less - God forbid. We ought to give more. You will never be the Christian you ought to be until you learn to rightly relate your money to Christ. However, if you are trusting in your generosity for salvation you are going to be lost forever.

There is another thing, he saw (no flaw in himself.) He said, I thank God that (I am not as others) He divided society up into two groups. One group made up of one person. And the other group, made up of everyone else.

He was no doubt saying, if everybody lived as he lived in the world, it would be a better place. But do you see the splinter in the eye of someone else. Do you see the plank in your own eye. They are cousins to the Pharisee. There are people who come to church and say, well, Preacher, you are not preaching to me. I do not need to repent. Why I am not a drunkard, I am not a great sinner.

But I'll tell you - unless you need the Saviour, you are lost.

Another thing, he despised others. You may despise a criminal, but yet in God's sight you are no different. In Rom. 3:22-23, there is no difference. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Your love for God is measured by your love for men. When you despise others, you do not have the love for the Lord.

William Borden had millions of dollars. He had every reason to be satisfied, and live a life of ease, but his love for Christ became a love for others. He worked in the slums of America. He even went abroad as a missionary. And died on the foreign field. Someone asked an English visitor - what thing impressed him most. And he said, this young millionaire kneeling in a mission station with his arm around a drunken bum, impressed me more than anything else in your country. Can you imagine the Pharisee doing that? No, and there are many others who would not do it. They are like the Pharisee. They do not have Jesus in their heart.

How often have you said - look how lucky I am. This man went to church and he said, look how lucky I am. God and I are here today. Bragging and boasting.

I want you to see this, there was no petition in the Pharisee's prayer. There was no need, he asked for nothing because he is not aware that he needs any help. God has nothing to give him - he is self-sufficient. He certainly wouldn't ask anybody else to help him. He is too wrapped up in his own work.

I wonder sometimes, is this the way we come to church. Do we come because we feel the need of it. Or do we come because we want to impress others with our holiness. Or do we come without a burden of sin or any desire to pray for our fellowmen who are suffering or are lost.

III. A DANGEROUS PRAYER - V. 14

V. 14

It was not on deceptive and a defiling prayer - but it was a dangerous prayer.

Because we will see the Pharisee as he leaves church.

Did you know the first step toward improvement is the recognition of a need. And unless we admit our inability, we cannot be helped. God cannot save a peacock.

There is another thing that is dangerous is - it hides over the blemishes, it white-washes things, and it covers up things that are worse in the sight of God.

It is dangerous in the third place, because of trust in the wrong place. He trusted in himself. His good works, his righteousness. He is hiding under his own shadow. He is an imperfect human.

A woman had a picture made one day, and when it came back - she told the photographer that the picture didn't do her justice. And he told her, "it isn't justice that you need, but mercy."

The Pharisee wanted to plead his own case with God, not looking for justice but saying - (look at me.) Look what I have done. And I thank God that I am (better than the rest.) What did the Pharisee need. To recognize that he ought to have some mercy.

Did you know that everything you have and everything that Pharisee possessed, he got it in three ways. First, it was either given to him. Second, he earned it. Third, he stole it. And do you know that righteousness is something that you cannot steal. You cannot earn. And it can only be given to you as a gift of God.

Look at this man as he goes out of church. And he goes away lost.

First, he (trusted) in himself. He added up all of his goods that was in himself and he trusted in him. There is no one whom we trust - we are to look away from self.

Now quite often, we hear somebody at a funeral say - I know this man went to Heaven. Because he was a good citizen. Or a good this or that. But that is not enough.

✓ He went away from church. Second he did not acknowledge himself a sinner. Do you hear any confession in his prayer. Not one word.

A man will never get to God until he acknowledges that he is a sinner.

D. L. Moody said - I can always tell when a man is a great way from God. That is when he is always talking about himself and how good he is. Prov. 28:13 - He that covereth his sins shall not prosper. But who so confesseth and forsaketh, to them shall have mercy.

✓ Third, he did not cry to God for mercy. He told God how good he was and he wanted God to admire him. He did not tell God how sinful he was, and how much he needed God's mercy.

✓ One final thing - this man did not see the urgency of the situation. He returned from the house of God just as he was. Nothing about him was changed.

How can you expect the mercy of God when you do nothing but scorn God. And here was a man who needed to be justified. To be changed, but he went home just as he was.

✓ In conclusion - just let us take a glance at the other man. Just look at me. The Pharisee said.

The other man had a different view. And this, I want to tell you is not the first or the last time, that two men have gone down to a church to pray and one has gone away despised and the other has gone away changed.

V.13

First, he (came to God humbly.) He stood a far off. He boasted not of his goodness. A man must learn to kneal very low as he enters the kingdom of Heaven. God receives a man with a right spirit.

Second, he (came to God with repentance.) He felt the weight of his sin. He was sorry for his sin. And why did he beat his breast. Because there was sin there in his heart. He needed to be cleansed. Give me a clean heart, oh God, and take away my heart of stone. And give me a heart of flesh.

Here is a man going toward the temple - and somebody says, well, I did not think that you ever went to church. And you reply, I haven't been to church in years. But I am in trouble now and I must have help. Now he does not look around to see who is there. He does not talk about his own goodness. He does not think about the old hypocrites, there on the front row. He thought only of his own sin and his own need. To him there were only two persons in the world at that time. His needy self and a forgiving God.

He came to God confessing his sin. Like the prodigal son, I have

sinned. No man can get to Heaven until he confesses his sin. There are some who will spend eternity in Hell because they won't admit that they are sinners.

Here is a man who went down and was leaving the church.

He left the church, a justified man. And that means that he was saved. And anybody in the world can receive that mercy and be saved. He puts all of his pride aside. And there is one thing here - he kept Jesus constantly in sight. He was a beggar and he kept his heart open for help.

There is another thing about this man - he set an example for all sinners. Can a sinner pray? Yes, here is his prayer.

God be merciful to me a sinner After you have prayed that prayer and come into the right relationship with God, you are ready to claim all of the promises of God. If you pray this prayer tonight, God will hear you. And God will meet you and transform your life, and bless you forever.

*Armistice Day just yesterday -
60 yrs ago -*

It is said that in the military cemeteries of France, the graves were marked by simple crosses. The women of France volunteered to care for those graves. As a record of their willingness to assume the responsibility, they write two simple words - I accept, on the cross and then sign their names.

It would be good today, if we could look at another cross. And on that cross is the very dying form of the one who gave himself for us. Won't you say today (I accept.) I take him as my Saviour. Why not follow the Publican and make this the cry of your heart. And you'll go to your house justified this hour.

*God saves Sinners Not Because Deserve. Or Can Repay -
He Loves Them So -*