



## **Balance is the Key**

The Rev. Liz Williams

Luke 18:9-14 | Proper 25 Year C

The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost | October 27, 2019

Jesus told the parable we heard today “to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt.

Two men went to the temple to pray. Holy ground.

One was a Pharisee, “so glad I am NOT like ‘other people’, including ‘this’ tax collector and I give a tenth of all my income.

One was a Tax Collector, “who stood far off and would not look to heaven. Beating his breast, he said, “God, be merciful, to me, a sinner.”  
We are told that this man went home justified.

Wait.

We are supposed to pray always

AND

We are supposed to give a tenth of all our income.

So Wait.

Let’s think about what Jesus has been teaching while journeying throughout Jerusalem:

- to accept hospitality when it is offered
- to be generous with all that we have
- to treat others with compassion
- to care for God’s creation including humans
- to be faithful in all that we do on behalf of God’s children
- to pray always
- to give thanks to God

To be righteous means to be acceptable to God because the law has been observed  
The law that Jesus has taught; Love God, with all your mind, all your soul, with all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

The Pharisee apparently missed this teaching.

How could he say, 'I'm so glad I am NOT like 'other people' when we are supposed to love our neighbor as ourselves?

or maybe that's the point of this parable.

As I was driving home from Yucaipa after cleaning out more 'stuff' and while traveling through Pasadena and the valley, I knew that I was the Tax Collector.

Prone to speaking 'bad' words, and delighting that a new program has taught me a new way to say it, and shouting at the person who stopped suddenly, and having unkind thought about my neighbor, I, like the tax collector, needed to stop and throw myself at God's mercy.

"God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

Now, this doesn't mean that I don't work to keep things right with God. It means that I understand that I must turn to God, like the tax collector, and say the words.

And I was the Pharisee. Having given away 15 bags of clothing, shoes, bedding, etc. from the closets, again I realized that I felt good about giving it away to someone who 'could use it', BUT I had still accumulated those things.

Balance is the key.

Honesty is the key.

Arianne Rice in her blog, "Displacing Anxiety" says,

*"This parable could be about an individual (or an institution or a system) who does not want to wrestle, let alone expose, the dark stuff inside. Richard Rohr calls this "shadowboxing" from the teachings on 'shadows' that Jung brought to light. Our shadows are murky and messy parts of our self that we don't want to see, but see with utter clarity in others. Why do certain behaviors, of certain people push our buttons? Because they are behaviors we want to deny, they trigger shame around our own stuff. The Pharisee in this story chooses to believe he is exceptional, not like everyone else. Certainly not like the people he judges and condemns."*

She goes on to say, "the thing in our shadow sides are actually good news if we choose to see them..." and asks "When have I wanted to turn away from aligning myself with someone who was struggling?" and wondering "What shared shadows do we have in our communities that keep us from reaching out and running towards our neighbors?"

What are the shadows we might be afraid to show God?

Another key word in this gospel is “justified”

The Doctrine of justification asks, “how do we reach a status of righteousness in God’s eyes.”

The Pharisee trusted in his own righteousness and the Tax Collector trusted in God for righteousness, doing nothing to earn or receive mercy. God’s mercy was freely given.

Paul reminds us of this idea in Romans (5:8)

“God proves his love for us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us.”

and in Ephesians (2:8)

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God.

Our justification is not found by doing things, it is in ‘knowing’ God as a merciful and loving so we can be affirmed and leave behind relying on our works.

That doesn’t mean leaving doing things in the name of Christ behind.

Baptismal theology

Stewardship

Time, Talent and Treasure

There are many ways to share your time and talent and perhaps learn some new things:

There are many people who work tirelessly to bring church to you, every day and especially on Sunday:

- ✓ There are 13 ministries on St. Paul’s Ministry Schedule on a 5 week rotating schedule during the year for Sundays.
  - Alta Guild
  - Flower Guild
  - Ushers 8am and 10:15
  - Readers 8am and 10:15
  - Lay Eucharistic Ministers at 8 and 10:15
  - Welcome Ministry
  - Acolytes at 8 and 10:15
  - Eucharistic Prayer Ministry
  - Counters
  - Pastoral Care Team – taking Eucharist to shut-ins and the sick
- ✓ There are members that provide sack lunches on Tuesdays and Thursdays from the office.

- ✓ There are members who provide lunch to the hungry in Ventura on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays of the month at Family to Family.
- ✓ There are members who provide hospitality every Sunday after each service.
- ✓ There is a team of people who take care of the congregation garden.
- ✓ There is a team of people who take care of the roses.
- ✓ There is a team of people who look after the care and maintenance of our facilities and grounds. (Building and Grounds)
- ✓ There is a team of people who talk about how to present and promote St. Paul's on social media. (Digital Disciples)
- ✓ There is a team of people who take care of the money given to St. Paul's each week.
- ✓ There is a team of people in the office who create and print the bulletin and announcements
- ✓ We have a Sign Language Interpreter so that we live into what we say we are; Welcoming to All people.
- ✓ There is a Music Ministry which provides beautiful, relevant music for services and now has added Compline
- ✓ There is a team of people each Sunday to teach our children and youth about God; sharing themselves and their faith. (Sunday School)
- ✓ Each month a team of people meet to talk about the Finances of St. Paul's and the Vestry meets to take care of decisions needed.
- ✓ And for every special event, there are teams of people to provide hospitality and leadership.
- ✓ And there is a landscaper, and a cleaning service, an accountant, an auditor and a security team.

O God, have mercy on me because I have probably forgotten someone or some group.

All of these things happen because of the generosity of the members of St. Paul's. Time, Talent, and Treasure.

And we have talked of our treasure. That all we have and all we do and all we are given to us by God. That God wishes us to live abundantly.

We are in the midst of our budget process and it is important to know what funds we have available to support our Operating budget; to support the ministries of St. Paul's, to continue the growth that came from the Comprehensive Growth Project and to extend our outreach to the Diocese, to the world and to our community.

Next week we will present the pledge cards at the altar and give thanks to God for the generosity of all who have given. If you are still thinking and praying about your pledge, or

need to talk to someone, or if you are interested in a ministry at St. Paul's, call Rev. Susan or me.

Let us pray...

A Prayer for Stewardship from A Steward's Book of Prayers

Lord, I put my all before you  
    All you've given me.  
I want to learn to let go  
    And trust what I can't see.

Remembering that all I have  
    Is all you've given me.  
What else can I learn to do  
    To use these gifts for you?

My home, a haven  
    Of warmth and peace  
A model for the nations  
    We long to reach.

My heart for love  
    To trust and teach,  
Learning to share  
    And not just preach.

My health for the missions  
    You're calling me to,  
Opening doors  
    With faith brand new.

My wealth for your church  
    And the work we're called to do  
(It's all yours already  
    but it'll teach me to be true!)

Lord, this is a challenge  
    That I'm called to.  
But you cause the harvest—  
    It's great but the workers too few.  
Humble me please, Lord  
    And bring me to you.  
AMEN.

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