

Sermon Notes

Eleventh Sunday after Trinity
19 August 2012, Anno Domini



The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

The Collect.

O GOD, who declarest thy almighty power chiefly in showing mercy and pity; Mercifully grant unto us such a measure of thy grace, that we, running the way of thy commandments, may obtain thy gracious promises, and be made partakers of thy heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

9 And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: 10 Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12 I fast

twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. (Luke 18:9-14)

Though this text has been recently covered, it is being addressed today again in sermon form. The amazing beauty of Holy Scripture is its multi-dimensional meaning when held up to the light. This parable given by Jesus conveys the disdain that God has for exalted pride, and the favor He holds for humble faith. Pride is only about SELF; humility puts self down and lifts up the object of its affection and awe. One object of the Parable is to rebuke self-righteousness; but another would be to exalt the hope of the poor in spirit – the meek and humble of heart.

We read of how proudly the Pharisee prayed “with himself” – not to God. He prayed that others might hear his boastful words. The contrary is true of the publican who felt himself unworthy to come so near the Temple. He did not lay claim to ANY GOODNESS, or righteous deeds, in his life but only sought mercy upon himself as a sinner.

Please observe the manner in which God looks upon the heart and not the outward appearance. The Pharisees dressed in lavish robes and commanded the respect of the people for his position; but the publican was despised by the people and had no office to commend him for respect. Unlike the self-righteous heart of the Pharisee, the publican had a heart that KNEW it needed mercy as a sinner. God can get entrance into a heart that admits its own worthlessness. But the proud, self-righteous heart bars the way for amendment.

We see also that the boastful works of the Pharisee gained him no favor at all with God, but rather God’s disdain. The Pharisee cannot be justified by his own righteousness. The publican KNEW this, but the publican went away lost and ignorant despite his learning.

We see, too, that justification can only be gained through the mercy of God. If we do not know that we need mercy, how shall we be justified? Justification comes as an act of Grace (from God) and not acts of righteousness by us.

Let us examine the characteristics, first, of the Pharisee:

- 1) He was a liar! Though he claimed otherwise, he was precisely as other men are – a sinner. (Romans 3:23)
- 2) He was an extortioner. (Matthew 23:14, Mark 12:40)
- 3) He was unjust. His very attitude and self-opinion of himself proved this.
- 4) He was a worse man than the publican for the publican realized his need to which the Pharisee was blinded of his own.
- 5) He did not fast to satisfy a Godly purpose but only for the purpose of show and boasting.
- 6) He did not tithe of all he had for he kept his heart from God by not surrendering it to Him. (Luke 20:25)
- 7) He had a religious zeal, but not according to the Bible. “...they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. (Romans 10:2-3)

Now the Publican:

- 1) The publican knew who he was – a lost sinner and condemned.
- 2) The publican knew his place with God without mercy – at a distance!
- 3) The publican knew how he felt – guilty, ashamed and needing mercy.
- 4) He knew WHAT he needed – MERCY.
- 5) He knew how to attain mercy – repent, confess, and call upon the Lord.
- 6) He knew of his salvation – went down to his house justified.

There is a great secret revealed, too, in this Parable – sin causes a great separation from man and God. The only means to bridge that separation is repentance and confession of sins. When we have betrayed or hurt a close friend, do we not avoid looking them in the eye until we have reconciled ourselves to that friend? We may not speak to that friend for months due to our guilt. The friend may not even be aware of our guilt, BUT WE ARE! When we forget God, we live according to our own prerogatives. This free will always leads to sin. That sin raises a wall between us and God. Suddenly, we are ashamed as was Adam in the Garden. We cannot tear down that wall with our good deeds, but only by our tearful cries for mercy!

Do we mark our offering envelopes at church with large letters to show our great tithing? Do we embellish our prayers with beautiful words that do not come from the heart, but from a proud mind? Do we attempt to seem so close to God that publicans cannot approach Him? Do we admit our unworthiness apart from God's grace? Have we known that the very moment we feel that we are "good enough" is the very moment that we are NOT? Do not be a pharisaical hypocrite, but be a humble sinner who lays claim to grace and mercy in God.