

"Snap Shots ~ REAL" [3.16.08]

Today we begin our study of the 'Parables;' these stories are power -packed & filled with life application!

1/3rd of the recorded sayings of Jesus in Matthew, Mark, & Luke are parables; during this series we will attempt to better understand them!

These life-lessons are unusual; more often than not, the message is caught rather than learned; Jesus uses ordinary pictures from life; to DEFINE the unknown by what is known. Much like this modern day parable

One day 3 boys began bragging about their dads. The 1st boy said, "...my dad is a foreman @ GM w/35 people under him." The 2nd boy said, "...my dad is a supervisor @ Sony; he has 200 people under him." The 3rd boy spoke up, "...well my dad has 4,000 people under him." This really caught the other (2) boys' attention ~ "REALLY" what's he do?
"He cuts the grass @ the county cemetery." ☺

Parables are captivating ~ They not only tell us about God but more importantly they explain to us how God desires us to relate to Him!

(Caution)

Listen intently ~ don't be quick to insert yourself into the protagonist sandals; because Jesus used parables to slip up on the proud & self sufficient!

Let's PRAY [Holy Spirit convict us today on any blind spots we hang on to]

Today's PARABLE = (R) Luke 18: 9 – 14 or p. 800 in pew Bible

MY GOAL TODAY is not to complicate this simple story ~ it's about 2 men w/ 2 approaches, who in the end had 2 outcomes!

1st let's take a better look @ ...

I. Two Men

A. (R) Luke 18: 10

B. Contrast between these 2 men could not be more striking;

- (1) personified good ~ the other (1) personified everything despicable
 - If this parable had been a western (1) would have worn white hat & the other (1) would have worn the black hat!
- Contrast was harsh with Jesus' audience ~ [just like comparing...]
 - Chief Justice [John Roberts] with the most despicable criminal
 - Eyes of Community ~ not remotely comparable

C. The Pharisee's were

- Considered pillars of the community ~ they were among the most honored men in all their cultures; they possessed many positives attributes...

- Moral men - - ethically upright - - most led virtuous lives
- It's interesting to note that when the Pharisee puffed out his chest & boasted about all of his good deeds- -attempts at pleasing God thru righteous acts,
 - Jesus did not correct him, apparently he was not lying; on the outside he was flawless!
 - Kind of men you want on your Board of Trustees - - kind of men you want your family exposed too!

& then, there were the tax collectors

D. Tax Collectors' were

- Considered 'ENEMIES of the STATE' ☹
 - They were viewed as traitors for collaborating w/the Romans in collecting taxes. These tax guys were permitted to keep any excess above what the government required.
 - Not only wealthy thieves [modern day mafia] they cheated their own countrymen ~ fellow Hebrews!
- They were considered corrupt & unclean for their association w/the Gentiles & intentional neglect of the ceremonial kosher laws!
- These were the kind of men that you attempted to avoid ~ if you saw them coming people would cross the streets to pass by them on the other side;
 - P.S. you would have never dreamed of exposing your children to this despicable group of thieves!

These 2 men had...

II. Two Approaches

A. (R) Luke 18: 11 – 12

B. Religiously ~ the Pharisee was above reproach

- Fasted twice a week ~ OT only required a orthodox Jew to fast once a year on the Day of Atonement; he fasted 103 times more than what was required!
- Tither ~ zealous for the Mosaic law
- A proud man...who attempted to impress God by all his good deeds
- His confidence in impressing God was misplaced!
 - He thought God was impressed by his attempts @
 - Living up to a higher moral standard
 - His sincerity & zeal - All GOOD THINGS
 - His strong religious heritage & training

Have you ever tried to impress God by...

- Good deeds - - personal sacrifices - - financially tithing - - church involvement

- I've been there - - @ one point I was conditioned that God could possibly love me more or less [miserable theology] never can do enough!

The Pharisee confused DOING w/BEING ~ leading a miserable life; he did the rights things & got the wrong results

He neglected, God isn't impressed by what we do; if it doesn't translate into a positive life-heart change ~ we've wasted our time

Pharisee had an "I" problem; 7 times you will find the little pronoun "I" in these two verses. His pride had inflated his opinion of his ultimate worth & had unintentionally deflated his view of who God's eternal value.

C.S. Lewis once wrote,

"A proud man is always looking down on things & people; and of course as long as you are looking down, you can't see something that's above you."

C. Are you being addressed in this parable? [consider these questions]

- Do you ever look @ people who hold different political views than yourself with contempt ~ thinking you are possibly better than them; if so, Jesus is talking to you!
- Ever try to justify your sins by comparing yourself to someone more vile than you? If so, Jesus is talking to you.
- Do you ever find yourself looking down your nose @ people who have made mistakes [i.e.] people w/ D.U.I.'s, people who have suffered divorce, people who have been caught w/prostitutes; and you look up & thank God you are not like them? If so, Jesus is talking to you!

Bible says,

"The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart and save such as have a contrite spirit!" [Psalm 34: 18]

SO, WHAT IMPRESSES GOD?

D. (R) Luke 18: 13

- Contrast this prayer with v. 11
 - The original Greek actually says, "...he [Pharisee] stood & prayed to himself."
 - When you approach God with pride ~ you wind up talking to yourself!
 - Once read, "The only person God sends away empty is the person full of themselves!"
- The tax collector could not even look up ~ the Pharisee was too proud to look up!
 - Tax collector was broken ~ genuinely aware of his unworthiness
 - He was AUTHENTICALLY REAL before God; he knew there was no need to lie - - to try an impress - - he had nothing but regrets!

These 2 men had 2 approaches that in the end had...

III. Two Outcomes

- A. (R) Luke 18: 14
- B. JUSTIFIED BEFORE GOD
- C. Justification is God's ACT of declaring us not guilty for our sins; bringing us into a right standing with God!
 - (R) Romans 3: 23 – 28 or p. 859 in pew Bible [made right with God]
 - We are 'justified' set right w/God by Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross;
 - We are justified once forever the moment we confess Jesus as Lord; nothing we could ever do could merit this eternal favor!
 - This is where sanctification comes in ~ the continual process of being shaped into the likeness of Jesus. God sees our value & potential!
 - Over our lifetimes God chips away @ our rough edges to conform us into Jesus' likeness!
 - [insert] The Golden Buddha

Remember the closing words of Jesus in this parable!

Luke 18: 14

This starts with a simple acknowledgement;
"Oh God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner." v. 13

The Bible says over and over that "...God gives grace to the humble"