

“Stories ~ The Pharisee & Tax Collector” [9.06.09]

Tom Watson former CEO of IBM = a Fortune 500 company

- He told about the time that he & his wife decided to drive their car on vacation, instead of hassling with the crowded airports & delayed flights.
- He said they pulled into a service station ½ way thru their trip & he went inside to pay for the gas; & when he came out he found his wife engaged in a deep discussion with the service station attendant.
- It turns out that she used to date this man back in High School.
- He said that he got back in the car & the 2 drove in silence for a few miles:
- Tom Watson explained, that he was feeling pretty good about himself when he finally broke the silence & said:
- “I bet I know what you are thinking,” ~ what’s that, his wife asked?
- “I bet you’re glad you married me, a successful Fortune 500 CEO, & not to a man who pumps gas for a living?”
- His wife said, “actually NO, I was thinking if I’d married him ~ instead of you, he’d be the CEO of a Fortune 500 company & you would be pumping gas for a living” ☺

When God created us He knew that we would sometimes struggle w/our egos & He knew at times we would over-estimate our self-importance.

So God added this story to the Bible to help us avoid the dangerous trap of being too confident in our own abilities & looking down on others!

(R) Luke 18: 9 – 14 or p. 800 in pew Bible

If you want to know whether or not you are being addressed in this parable;
Quietly answer these questions...

- Do you ever look at people without jobs - - without a lot of outward incentive, & you think you are somehow better than them? If so, Jesus is talking to you.
- Do you ever look at people who don’t go to the same kind of church as us & you think you are somehow superior + somehow more enlightened? If so, Jesus is talking to you.
- Do you ever look at people who are divorced - - single parents & quietly pass judgment upon their circumstances as if somehow, your family is better than them? If so, Jesus is talking to you.
- Do you ever look down your noses at anyone for any reason [tattoos & piercings] [different political views] & quietly think you are better than them? If so, Jesus is talking to you.
- Do you ever find yourself rooting against UK? If so, I understand ☺

This goes without saying - - Jesus’ teaching hit me between the eyes this week!
(for the next few moments, allow God’s Spirit to speak to you)

Today’s parable contains a strong biblical precaution: don’t allow your quiet/unmonitored thoughts to go unchecked!

Bible says in Hebrews 4:13

“Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked & exposed before His eyes, & He is the one to whom we are accountable.”

Pastor Chuck Swindoll says,

“Before I ever know the thought myself, God already knows it & has analyzed it. Before I am thinking a thought, God has intercepted those promptings, those mental, unseen images, & He has analyzed them perfectly.”

How does this strike you? Is it comforting or concerning to you to know that God knows our inner most thoughts & attitudes?

Let's PRAY [reveal any ungodly thoughts that do not honor You today]

I. Pharisee & the Tax Collector

A. (R) Luke 18: 9

- Notice something minor in the story; but major for the health of a church.
 - Luke subtly explains who his intended audience is supposed to be
 - v. 9 does not say that Jesus told this parable about those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous but
 - "...TO those who trusted in themselves that they were right w/God."
- Jesus wasn't making an object lesson about them to the crowds, He was SPEAKING directly to them.
 - Looking them straight in the eyes ☺
 - Proverbs 28: 1 = "...the godly are as bold as lions."

B. (R) Luke 18: 10

1. 2 men that were polar opposites in the 1st century religious community
 - a. The Pharisee belonged to the most pious movement
 - b. The Tax collector was part of the most hated profession
2. A tax collector was as different from a Pharisee from the ancient perspective as comparing Salvation Army to Osama Bin Laden's terrorist.
 - a. Tax collectors were considered traitors to Israel – they were in cahoots with the invading Roman empire; they cheated their fellow countrymen; skimmed money off the top, & would take candy from a baby.
 - b. It's an understatement when Bible refers to them as 'despised.'

C. (R) Luke 18: 11 – 12 = Pharisee's prayer

1. One thing you can say for the Pharisee ~ he didn't blush easily; he was quick to give you his resume; quick to let you know how wonderful he was.
2. I believe his intentions were honorable; but his understanding of God was severely flawed ☹
 - a. The Pharisee worked hard at pleasing God + loved talking about it!
 - b. Jesus explains:
 1. That he fasted twice a week. Please understand that the O.T. only required a Hebrew to fast once a year on the Day of Atonement. But this Pharisee fasted 103 times a year more than he was required.
 2. That he tithed everything he possessed. The O.T. only required that you tithe your income. This Pharisee tithed everything that he earned & everything that he bought; in essence he was a double tither.
3. [Question] What was his inner motivation – what was driving him?

- a. His flawed theology was driving him - - he had developed his ideas about God from man-made traditions instead of scripture.
 - b. The Pharisee thought God operated on a merit system & thus could be put in man's debt by doing good works.
4. The Pharisee's fundamental problem was not that he was cocky [a fact], his main issue was not that he over-estimated his self-worth [a fact]
- a. His main problem was that this man thought what a lot of people think today; he thought his goodness gained him brownie pts w/God.
 - b. He thought that God accepts a person based on what they do for Him. DANGEROUS THEOLOGY
 - c. The Pharisee acted as if God owed Him something for his goodness!
5. Don't miss this if you are trusting anything - - church membership, attendance, baptism, mission trips, how much you tithe, other good works - - other than Jesus Christ to make you right with God & get God to accept you, you are wasting time & fooling yourself.

Good works never justified us before God = Isaiah 64: 6, "When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags."

D. (R) Luke 18: 13 - 14

1. Story takes an odd twist at this moment.
- a. The Pharisee attempted to impress God by his own moral purity & religious piety & failed miserably BUT
 - b. Tax collector DID NOT try to impress God, he just came clean and spoke the truth = "...O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner."
 - c. re(R) v. 14 = 1 thing that impresses God is honesty.

In the Greek language the word "merciful" goes back to the Hebrew word "kippur" which literally means "atonement." The word atonement means to "cover."

Literally the Tax Collector was saying, "I'm exposing my heart for what it is, sinful. God will you cover for me?"

2. Bible says = I John 1: 9
 "If we confess our sins He is faithful & just to forgive us our sins & cleanse us from all wickedness."

There is only 1 thing worse than being a sinner; It's being a sinner and NOT ADMITTING that you are:

Bible says = I John 1: 10

"If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar & showing that His word has no place in our hearts."

II. So, what impresses God?

A. HUMILITY

1. re(R) Luke 18: 14

2. [INSERT] Door of Humility in Bethlehem
3. (Q) Psalm 34: 18 = "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted;
He rescues those who are crushed in spirit."

B. HONESTY

1. [INSERT] story of King Ahab
2. Just COME CLEAN with God this morning - - He already knows...;
"O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner."
3. Isaiah 57: 15 reminds us of WHO GOD is...
"The high & lofty One who inhabits eternity, the Holy One, says this: I live in that high & holy place with those whose spirits are contrite & humble I refresh the humble & give new courage to those with repentant hearts."