

THE PARABLE OF THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the parable of “the Pharisee and the Tax Collector” from the New American Catholic Bible or a Catholic Bible of your choice. Then read aloud each verse that accompanies a question. Stop and discuss the question and answer.

The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. ⁹ He then addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else.

¹⁰ “Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector.

¹¹ The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, ‘O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity—greedy, dishonest, adulterous—or even like this tax collector.

¹² I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.’

¹³ But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’

¹⁴ I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself

will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14)
(NAB)

1. Read Luke 18:9. What is a parable? A simple story that illustrates a moral or religious lesson.

2. Read Luke 18:9. Who did Jesus direct this parable to? To those who were convinced of their own righteousness, that is, self-righteous people.

3. Read Luke 18:9. People who are self-righteous always reveal an attitude towards others. According to this verse, what is that attitude? They despise others or look down on others.

4. Read Luke 18:10. Two people went to pray, in modern language where did they go to pray? To the temple, we might say, to the church.

5. Read Luke 18:10. Who were these people? A Pharisee, and a tax collector.

6. What is a Pharisee? The Hebrew word means “a separated one.” The word “Pharisee” was originally coined to reflect the separatist tendencies of these people.

7. What do you know about tax collectors of that day? Tax collectors were considered to be very ungodly and evil people. They worked for the Roman government and were usually considered traitors by their Jewish countrymen. The taxes that they collected were usually by pressure, scheming and cheating, making themselves and Rome rich.

8. Read Luke 18:11. According to this verse the Pharisee prayed and even used the words, “O God, ... but in reality who was he speaking this prayer to? To himself, God was not impressed or even listening.

9. Read Luke 18:11. Did this Pharisee express in his prayer that he needed a Savior? No, in fact he thought he was better than others. He wasn't like the rest of humanity - greedy, dishonest, adulterous, sinful—or even like that evil tax collector.

10. Read Luke 18:12; Romans 3:23. The Pharisee never saw his sinfulness before God. Notice how righteous he thought he was (he fasted and even gave money to the church). Truly he thought he was better than others but what does Roman 3:23 tell us? “All have sinned and are deprived of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23) ^(NAB)

11. Read Luke 18:13. Although Luke 18:10 tells us that the tax collector was on his way to the temple area or the church, obviously he didn't get there, for Luke 18:13 tells us where he was standing. Where did he stand and pray? The tax collector stood off and at a distance.

12. Read Luke 18:13. What was the tax collector's facial expression? He hung his head and would not even look up. Why? He was ashamed, probably for his sins.

13. Read Luke 18:13. Why was the tax collector hitting himself? Probably as a sign of sorrow and repentance for what he had done.

14. Read Luke 18:13. What was the tax collector's prayer? "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." Was he requesting God to give him what he deserved? No, he requested mercy. "Both the Old Testament and New Testament illustrate that God desires to show mercy to the sinner. One must humbly accept mercy; it cannot be earned." (Catholic Dictionary, p. 505).

15. Read Luke 18:13; Romans 10:13. Have you ever cried out to God from the depths of your heart for His forgiveness? Yes or No.

16. Read 1 John 1:9 and John 20:21-23. How does the sacrament of Confession correspond to the truths found in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector? Discuss these scriptures.

"If we acknowledge (that is, confess) our sins, he (God) is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing." (1 Jn. 1:9) ^(NAB)

²¹ (Jesus) said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit.

²³ Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." (John 20:21-23) ^(NAB)

17. Read Luke 18:14; Romans 5:17. When the tax collector humbled himself before the Lord, he receive: a. the gift of forgiveness. b. the gift of justification. c. the gift of righteousness (being made right with God.) d. all of the above.

18. If we humble ourselves as the tax collector did, can we receive this gift of justification (being made right with God)? Yes or No

¹⁷ For if, by the transgression of one person (Adam), death came to reign through that one, how much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of justification come to reign in life through the one person Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:17)
(NAB)

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