

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Luke 18:10-14

Characters

Narrator (Nar)

Pharisee (Phar)

Tax Collector (TC)

Scene and props

There needs to be a chair to one side for the tax collector to sit on and the Pharisee needs some sort of flamboyant prayer shawl with tassels.

Nar: Jesus told this story. Two men once went to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee. He was a very rich and powerful and influential man. The other was a Tax Collector. He was dishonest and a bully, a man who had done many things wrong and had no friends.

(Phar and TC enter from opposite sides as they begin to speak. Phar is confident and self-important. TC is hesitant and nervous)

Phar: Ah, the temple. What a lovely place. So nice of them to keep it so clean and tidy for me when I visit.

TC: I'm not sure I should be here really you know. I mean, I know I'm not a very nice person. I've done lots of bad things. None of these nice 'religious' people would really want to see me here.

Phar: (Making his way to centre stage) I think I'll stand here, right in the middle where everyone can see me. After all I've got a very nice and very expensive prayer shawl with me today, one with extra tassels, and I don't want it to go unnoticed do I. O yes, and if I stand here God will be able to see me clearly as well. I'm sure he'll be pleased with that.

TC: (backing away to the side and sitting on a chair) I think I'll just sit over here, in the corner. I'll keep out of sight and make sure I'm not in anyone's way. I don't really want anyone to see me, and I don't want God to see me!

Phar: Well God, I'm sure you are pleased to see me! You must look forward to my visits so much. After all, I'm not sure that anyone else could really please you as much as me!

TC: Look here God, I don't really know why I'm here. It's not the sort of thing I usually do you know. Well yes, you would know wouldn't you - you know everything don't you - and I suppose that means you know everything about me.

Phar: Well God let me tell you what I've been doing recently. I've given lots of money to charity. I helped those poor starving children and a home for stray dogs and I started sponsoring a Panda. I'm sure you will be pleased with me for doing all of that.

TC: I know I don't need to tell you this God, but I'm pretty selfish really. I've got plenty of money but I keep it all for myself. In fact I keep plenty of other people's money for myself as well - all the money I steal as I hoik people's taxes and slip the extra in my pocket! Yes of course, sometimes I feel bad about it - when I see children starving because I've stolen their parents money - but what about me? I need to look after myself so I can't worry about others!

Phar: Well God, I pray every day, I read my Bible, I go to church every Sunday. People respect me, they know I'm a good person so I hope you are very pleased with me.

TC: I'm not sure I know what praying is really God. I'm not sure I've ever done it before! Am I doing it now? I haven't got a bible and I've certainly never read one. People know I'm bad – they know I steal and cheat and swindle and take anything I can for myself. No one respects me, in fact most people wish I was dead!

Phar: Well God, I've really got to get going now, sorry I can't spare you any more time. But thank you God for making me such a wonderful person. Thank you that I am not like that err... like that tax collector trying to hide in the corner over there. I don't know why he is here, he's a lying, cheating thief! In fact I don't know why you don't just strike him dead now – the world would be a better place without him!

TC: Is it alright if I just sit here God? I won't get in the way, I won't disturb you. It's just that I really want to be a better person so I wondered if you might be able to help me - just a little?

Nar: So who of the two men do you think God was pleased with? (pause) "I tell you, said Jesus, "that the tax collector, rather than the Pharisee, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

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