

Pharisees of Our Day

by A.W. Tozer

The main conflict of Jesus and the world today is not with communism or secularism, but with the self-righteous religionist who cares not for the poor and the needy.

Duration: 38:30

Scripture: Luke 14

Topics: "Pharisaism"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the freedom that comes from being a Christian. He explains that through redemption, believers are bought and set free by God, no longer for sale in the market. The preacher contrasts the limited freedom offered by religion with the true freedom found in Jesus Christ. He highlights the story of Jesus raising a dead man to life, showing that Christ offers more than just a grave, but a long and happy life. The sermon concludes with a call to choose Christ over religion and to humble oneself under God's hand.

Transcript

In the book of Luke, 14th chapter, Luke, the first six verses, And I asked, as I went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, and behold, there was a certain man before him, And Jesus answering, spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Go to heal on the sabbath day, and they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go. And answered them, saying, Who shall have an ass, or an ox, fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out day? And they could not answer him again to these things.

Now, we have here, in this brief passage, a scenic, real-life drama of redemption. And the person is seen, as in the other scenes, the self-righteous religionist, the poor, needy man, and the Lord of glory. Circumstances are about the same.

The man who was marked with death. Luke, who wrote this story, was a physician, trained in the finest schools of his day. And the commentators point out that when Luke says that a man had a disease, that he names the disease.

And this man had a disease with a specific name, which in our English they've called dropsy, that marked with death. And here, alongside him, callous to his need, were the self-righteous text-quoters, who cared not for him, and who could not help him. And here is the heaviest thought to bear, to be the orthodox

people of their day.

They were right. They could quote you scriptures that were right. They were not cultists.

They were not fanatics. They were not wild, unorganized, unauthorized religionists. They sat in Moses' seat.

They taught the scriptures. They were orthodox. They could show Luke books, proving they were right.

And he grew well-hearted and arrogant and unbelieving. Can it be so that a man can be orthodox, sound in his creed, faithful to his denomination, loyal to the church of his fathers, and still be blind and cruel and bigoted and wicked? It would seem so of Christ in the home of the chief Pharisees. And then we have, in addition, the strong son of God present, toward their blindness and their cruelties, not that he in any wise condoned them, for he would die for them but not compromise with them.

But he was tolerant nevertheless. And he was eager to help the man marked with death, the man who had the swelling disease, the disease that refuses to allow the body to discharge its excess liquid contents and piles it into the cells until the body swells, and finally the poor heart can't take it and dies. And here, being marked with death, and the strong son of God is present to help.

Now, even here in this story we get an accurate picture of the conflict, the conflict of Jesus and the world today. And could it be, brothers and sisters, could it be that we have failed as we've looked out upon the world and have tried to identify ourselves and our times? Could it be that we have placed the battle where the battle is not? Could it be that we've located where the conflict is not? Could it be that we have looked to communism and said, and it is an enemy undoubtedly, the devil's religion. Could it be that we've looked to the gamblers and horse racers and said, there's the enemy? And certainly they're no friends of God.

Could it be that we have looked at peddlers and the marijuana pushers and said, there's the enemy? Could it be that we have looked at the much abused American businessman with his care for heaven and his absorption with earth and said, secularism, there's the enemy? And could it be that we've placed the battle where the battle is not and found the conflict where God doesn't find it? Could it be that the conflict is not today with the harlot and the gambler and the worldly businessman but with the religionist? And could it be that the trouble with the world is the type and kind of religion that we have? I believe that it is. And I believe that the conflict of Jesus did not with the sinner for he came to die for sinners, but with the correct and proper religion who can look at need and not care, who can behold men and not feel the tremor of sympathy, who can look of their respectability around them and congratulate themselves once a day on their soundness, their creedal correctness and yet have no heart for the poor, no love for the harlot and no sympathy for the ignorant. But here they were, confusion, opposition to goodness.

It seemed the only strong hand was the one that was soon to be pierced by a nail. And the only pure heart was the one that was soon to beat itself out and stop on a golden gray. And the only clear head was the one that was soon to bow in shame.

And the only significant voice was the one that was soon to be silent in the thickness of death. It came to pass that Jesus as he went went into the Pharisees' house and I have let my imagination roam and I have thought of the wonderings of God, the Odyssey of the Redeemer, the wide travels of Almighty God over the regions of the earth. If the Gospels had been written by man's mind, if Shakespeare, Goethe, or Eugene O'Neill had written the story of the Gospels, how different they would have been.

For they would have placed the Prince in the halls and palaces and they would have had him walking among the great and they would have had him surround the mighty and the important and the significant Potentates and kings would have been his companions. But how sweetly common was the real God-man. For he had inhabited all, he had come down and was obeying the rising and the setting of the sun.

And up in the sound of the cock's crow he rose and stretched and yawned and smiled and said, it's time for breakfast. In the setting of the sun and the sound of the birdsong heard no more. He looked around for a place to lie down.

The Son of Man hath not where to lay his head. And though he had inhabited eternity and dwelt in the palaces beyond the power of the human mind to describe, to understand, yet now he is in the house of a Pharisee. And though he was the author of all, yet here he is eating bread like any other man.

And though he was so holy that angels veiled their faces before him, now he mingles with sinners. And glad he mingles with sinners. Because to him sin was not contagious.

Sin was a disease of the soul and could not be passed on by contact and that's what contagious means. It was not contagious. And Jesus knew that a pure heart needed no protector.

Pharisees thought that sin was contagious and so from their houses these common people that know not the law, these pilots from the red light areas, publicans and tax gatherers, these common masses that cross the streets of the city, they ruled them all out. They were the elite, the elect, the religious, the friends of God, the chosen ones. God, they were indeed.

So they thought, to make religion pure by keeping it insular and away from the crowds, the poor of our day, the poor church of the century, has had to seal up its pitiful little purity and take its tiny mite of godliness to a monastery and cut it off from the marketplace to keep it pure. The poor pitiful handliness we've had to clothe it in black robes and hide it in a cave to keep it pure. And even in Protestant circles we've had to clothe the clergyman so that he wouldn't lose his godliness on the way to the pulpit.

And some of the stricter sects have shut themselves off completely from the world in southern Indiana and Ohio and Pennsylvania won't yet ride an automobile. They drive buggies. Less likelihood of springing a moral leak and losing your spirituality flows behind a horse than if you ride fast behind a wheel.

If the fountain of spirituality flows out you can't contaminate a fountain because the fountain from within him shall flow says the Lord Christ. Out from within him shall flow. And any contagion or infection that comes from the outside is automatically rendered nil.

If it were from the world it could bring its pollution with it. But because it's the outflow carries it. Out from within him shall flow.

So there is no real godliness that can hide him. And here where they were religious this dying man and the Lord of Glory and they watched. They watched and suspected this radical Jesus and all their splitting minds they watched him.

But remember one thing he is now on trial. He was then but he is not now. Then he stood before their proof.

Now God has raised him to his own right hand and the message now it is an offer of life and a sentence of doom. And the Son of God is no standing before the watchful judges of earth. Since the Holy Spirit has and has confirmed his deity and declared him to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead there is no trial and no criminal and no He who stood and was watched by the religionists of his day has risen beyond their power and has been declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead and God made the evil Pharisees approve it.

I preached a sermon one time I'm going to resurrect it and preach it again because I heard of here on Jesus Christ approved by And I will mention it only here that God made the evil Pharisees approve it because they were ready and they had the power instantly to arrest him and if he had stepped aside one inch like a pack of hungry wolves they'd have had him in prison in one hour's time but he outmatched them all and stood in their midst by their silence to admit that in this man they found no guilt then he turned on them and asked them I want to ask you your Lord Jesus on this Sabbath day and that question had in it a whole world of iron and accusation he was saying by that question I know you Pharisees I know you're strict I know you bring your children to the temple when they're eight days old and circumcised I know what you do to them and cut off and I know what you are he was saying by that question I know you're religious I know your cold hard hearts you care nothing for the blind and for the poor that hobble by and then to rub in the salt into the trembling jerking he said if you had an ox and you fell into a ditch would you get him out on this Sabbath day and they knew they would for they had so manipulated the law as to permit them to save money on this Sabbath but their hearts couldn't rise to believe that you could save a human life and we knew that and so we pressed it home on them and they looked at each other until they couldn't bear the sight of each down and were still and he said if you had a common donkey an ass, a burrow first fell into a pit on the Sabbath day to save him would you not get him out of there and he knew they would and they knew they would break the Sabbath for three dollars but they wouldn't break the Sabbath to save a dying man one of the southern states I've forgotten which one has come forth with some statistics to my mind one of the most terrible indictments of human nature possible to a man is this perhaps it was a New England state I'm not sure but I believe it might have been Vermont instead of a southern state and here is what the findings of the law are they had very were traffic violators and speeders but they didn't cut down the deaths accidentally they didn't cut down the number of pedestrians that were killed they fined them but it didn't help then they said now we'll change it and it read that any man guilty of driving a car in a manner to endanger human life is license taken from him for six months and instantly the death toll dropped magically do you see the horrible significance of it to say don't kill a man they went on and killed a man you will take your driver's license away and they stopped it you believe in the total depravity of it what is C.

G. W. Talmadge told this story thought it was kind of funny said a universalist went into a certain neighborhood thought he'd start a universalist church so he looked around inquired if the neighborhoods of any universalist lived in that neighborhood they said yes there was one universalist so the minister went to visit this man and said I understand you the man was trying to establish a church of that denomination in this area and I think I'll start with you would you support it he said I'm a universalist alright but I'm a little bit you believe in the universal salvation of everybody he said I've been out in the world a while I've lived a while and he said I have been betrayed and lied to and cheated and abused and injured until I've come to believe that people take if that doesn't argue my brethren they watched him there and he knew and he knew how bad they were and he knew they loved the ox and the ass more than nature now do you know my fear for this church do I have any church which will go liberal it'll take one generation at least I will have been dead 35 to 40 years liberal do I fear that this church will have in the movies I'd roll over in my grave

then do I fear that this will have money dress well have good educations speak good English read good books but have no heart for the flow of humanity or half-damned humanity that flows everywhere care not for the white care not care not for the poor and the distressed I'm afraid I'm a aloof godly man you lovely women I'm the very woman that needs you you respectable men with your money you hold yourself aloof from a man that needs you the worst I'm afraid you will, that's all I don't say you do yet but now pray for the man marked with death and it says he took him and he healed him and he left him he took him, I don't know what he did to him what do you think he did to him he walked over there and took him how did he take him his eyes bulging his cells dispendent with water legs heavy and swollen if he could stand at all it was only with grace perhaps couldn't stand now a great round duck torn lying there they knew no way to help the man but he took him that's what we call conviction for sin conviction he took him he took him the sheep froze he took Elisha from the plow he took Peter Fisher he took Saul from the Supreme Court he took Augustine from the evil religion he took Bunyan and Newton and Finney and Trotter and Billy Sunday he took them and he has a way of doing that you and I can't explain people write into me and say Mr.

Tordy you speak in generalizations tell us exactly how God does it exactly how God does anything all you can do is say to a man here look look I can help you when I go places and preach people come up to me heard you talk and I read your books now tell me say how is it done that very fact rules them out that very fact rules them out just as soon as you start to making a little trick out of them he rules out I don't know how he does it I only know that a worldly sexy young woman will come to church somewhere trying hard to be Lana Turner and the devil's grandmother and she'll go in and sit down and look at the place and then during the sermon or during the song he takes and the mighty Holy Ghost lays hold of her and he goes clear and grabs her deep down further down than anybody will ever

know it clear deeply he lays hold of her don't ask me to tell you how he took him I don't know how he took him case where faith must leap into the dark brethren there is a point where no preacher can help you and a personal worker himself there is a place where the soul sees the black of this and God beyond and leaps into the black of magic there is a place a leap into the dark the light because it's toward God who is light makes the dark he took him and he requires that that man under that conviction be taken God takes I have met them and I have seen them taken and he healed him and that's conversion beat back death and gave deliverance and whoever will confine this to mere physical healing is a million miles that it was and he does heal physically sometimes and he will beat back death

and gave deliverance and he gave him the help he needed that's conversion I don't know how he does it I only know he does do it and I can only point and say that's the one to go to after that you're on your own and he'll take you and if it's drink he'll deliver you and if it's pride he'll deliver you and if it's greed it's self-righteousness he'll deliver you he healed him that's conversion and he'll let him go notice it he'll let him go there's a saying I've read it religion is a change of prison that is all you're in prison and then you become religious worldly prison for religious prison it's just a change of prison well I won't even answer that I'll just you'll find anybody here get up and say I was in the world's prison and now I'm in Christ's prison see it on you brother shake your

hand see if there's any manacle on it kick your foot a bit and see if there's any ball and chain there look up and see if you see a concrete road look down and see if you see flagstones walk out somebody will challenge you and say who goes there you're free as a bird that swings and sings in yonder blue heavens now my brother the best answer to the charge religion is a change of prisons is to ask the people who know God whether they're that way or not the only freedom I've ever known years of life is the freedom Jesus Christ gives me and if I would give him up and turn away from it all I'd be the victim of my luck and

my pride and my sulky disposition and my bestiality and my hatefulness and my fear surrounded by bars that I could not in a thousand years saw me but when he took me he

healed me he also said now go I found a bird one time not so long ago and we ran him down took him and I put him on my hand and took him outside and away he went I was afraid he was hurt but boy he wasn't soon as I opened my palm he soared off picked up a butterfly up at Highland Lake big, big moth rather than a butterfly lovely thing and people gathered around to look at it and I said I wonder if it's injured and then we took it out and I let my hand go and it beat its great awkward wings a couple of times and then cut the air and sailed away as graceful as an arrow among the leaves and God took him and healed him and then said he said it's free and the Christian is the freest man in all the wide world free to be good generous free to be free free from fear and free from revenge he's

free now everybody that ever had a Scofield Bible knows the meaning of the word redemption is threefold to buy in the market and to buy out of the market and to sell you can get a lot of good thoughts in Scofield definitions and that's one of them buy in the market he came in where he was and bought him bought him with his own blood he could only cause later he was to die for and took him out he sold the market he's not for sale anymore you're not for sale anymore there's no tag on you say mark down soil no tag on you say today no tag on you no price tag God doesn't allow any price tag you had a price tag on you once and nobody nobody could meet it nobody could meet it there's a price tag no nobody didn't have the wings spread broad enough the seraphim didn't have fire enough the cherubim

didn't have purity enough the angels and principalities and the watchers and holy they had a price tag on you for as much as you were not redeemed with corruption the lamb of God who could take this man potentially and if you act in the love of Christ constraineth me tonight and how about you Bert have you ever had the wonder of suddenly being taken have you been captured by the Lord Jesus have you been converted and set free if you have not been then you may be the victim just a church member a formal church member surrounded by gifts who make you feel alright when you're not alright and so don't blame the baby he'll get over it he's a honey friends how about you have you ever had the experience of being taken and delivered and set free but don't ask me to give you the trick I have no

trick in it you'll go to Jesus Christ as you are weary and worn and sad you'll find in him a resting place and he will make you glad you'll come to Jesus which makes you see you'll come with your deafness and he makes you hear you'll come in your bondage and he sets you free thank God for the strong strong man who walked among us strong man who walked among us those textualists those Pharisees would have lugged that great swollen body out and lowered it down in a hole and said some Hebrew words wiped their hands clean and walked away shrugged and said that's done that's all they had they were the religious leaders of their day and all they had to offer was a grave but Jesus Christ pushed the grave years into the future and gave him a long happy life to live to live in the sweet knowledge

that the Messiah had come and he delivered brothers and sisters shall it be religion or shall it be Christ shall it be christianity or shall it be Jesus Christ shall it be pride or shall it be humility in Jesus Christ humble yourself therefore under the mighty hand of God Jesus will not walk with the proud nor the scornful so humble yourself to walk with God shall we pray the one person here tonight that would have said he prayed for me I want your prayer he prayed for me I won't come down to you and I won't embarrass you by pushing you just want to know that somebody here fears a fear or has a manacle where is change Lord of life I walkest among men healing and delivering thee oh Lord Jesus thank you thank you for the thousands of twisted heaps of bars that lie useless the victims have

flown and fled like a bird from its nest and are involved and they sing and they write and they work and they testify and they teach all up and down the world the prisoners we thank thee tonight Lord and pray now for these friends God bless them turn their eyes may they look once more in his wonderful face may his light shine upon them and bless these friends we thank thee for every one of them and pray that we may go out in safety to have a good week and back in time in the spirit and in the fullness of the gospel of Christ

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