

# Pharisee and the Tax Collector

by Ken Bailey

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*The parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector teaches that humility is essential in prayer and that self-righteousness is a danger that can lead to spiritual blindness.*

**Duration:** 46:20

**Scripture:** Isaiah 66:1-3, Isaiah 66:5, Matthew 6:33, Luke 18:35-38

**Topics:** "Pharisee"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector in the temple. He highlights nine points of comparison between the two characters, emphasizing their choices and attitudes towards God. The preacher also explores the theme of ritual without personal faith and obedience, criticizing those who perform sacraments without a genuine response to God's call. He concludes by suggesting that Jesus has softened the original passage and turned it into a story to challenge the Pharisees and their lack of shepherding the lost sheep of Israel.

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## Transcript

Okay, last week with my apologies for the fact that we didn't have time for discussion. I think my problem was that I'm geared to lecturing for an hour, and so all of a sudden, zap, 45 minutes, and we were only about two-thirds of the way through, so we kind of very quickly finished up, and I'll try not to do that today. We'll try and get done so that we'll have at least time for any major questions that you major and minor.

All questions are major because they're important to you. The text we want to look at is the one that you have before you, not the Isaiah text. There are two passages before you.

The Isaiah text we will look at second, but first the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, which I've got a variety of sheets I passed out. There may be a number 30 up in the corner. If not, never mind.

It's Luke 18, 9 to 14. Now, there has been, in New Testament studies over the past hundred years roughly, less than that, maybe 70 years, a very important methodological theory that relates to them, and that is that the early church put the parables into their own context and reused them, and so this is sort of the parable in the setting of the early church, and that thereby, if you really want to see the parable as Jesus taught it, you have to lift it out of that early church setting in order to let the parable shine in and of itself. Well, I have no objection to this as a principle.

For example, when you look at the parable of the lost sheep in Luke, you find Jesus says, What if a man has a hundred sheep and if he loses one of them? Is this a story about a good shepherd or a bad shepherd? If he loses one of them, who is responsible? Shepherd is responsible. So, is he a good shepherd or a bad shepherd? Well, the story starts off with what kind of an assumption? He's a bad shepherd. Now, he becomes a good shepherd as he spends the energy to go after them, but he starts off as a bad shepherd, and Jesus' audience are Pharisees, and the Pharisees, of course, were the shepherds of Israel, and so what you have is a very intense debate between Jesus and his opponents, and they are complaining because Jesus is going after lost sheep, and his response is, You people are the shepherds of Israel, and you have lost your sheep, and I take the trouble to go after them, and you come griping, and this is outrageous.

I can't believe it. You see, it's a very sophisticated conversation, again, theologian with theologian, and not Sunday school teacher with a bunch of children. Now, when you get the same story in Matthew, you have the same account, but it's an account of how the leadership of the church should care about the little ones in the fellowship, mainly little ones, not children, but little ones and new believers, and so it says, If one of them is lost, passive, and you don't know whether the sheep wandered off or whether the shepherd was responsible, you have sort of, in a sense, protected the shepherd by not making the shepherd blameworthy.

Now, you can read this two ways. You can say Jesus told the same parable two ways. Once when he's talking to his disciples and the leadership of the church, and so he used the image in one sense, and then another case, he's faced with the Pharisees, and so he uses it another sense.

In one sense, we start off with the bad shepherd. In another sense, we start off with the good shepherd. Or you can take this theory, which came out of Germany about 60, 70 years ago, that this setting in the early church, namely Jesus and his confrontation with the Pharisees, which would be the historical Jesus, and then you get 70 years later.

Now the same material is being used for teaching purposes in the life of the church, and now you have the same story. It has a little different thrust to it. It has, you know, please you, the leadership of the church, take care of young believers in your midst.

You can see it either way. Either way is perfectly legitimate and perfectly appropriate. Now, the theory, as I say, here's a case of it, I have no objection to in principle.

However, I'm very, very nervous about it because, we got any pictures around here? Yeah, well, here's a picture. Whoever hung it up sure will let me pick it up. Supposing we have this thing hung like this against the wall, and we decide, no, this frame really isn't appropriate.

We're going to remove it. Now, what is the picture going to be framed by as it hangs there? The wall. Is it the cupboard? Well, all right, so we remove the early church frames, the frames that the early church put on the parable, and then what do we end up with? Our own.

Well, the early church were much closer to the scene than we are, and I'm, you know, I'm very, very nervous about us taking off a first century setting to the parable, which the apostles gave to it in the first century, and then substituting our own as though this was somehow an improvement. I really don't think it is. I think we must take these early church settings very, very seriously and try to deal with them as they are.

Now, curiously, this particular parable, without any theory like this in our minds, we have in fact removed traditionally this parable from its setting. We've ignored the frame in which Luke sets it. Here's the sheet before you.

And he said to certain people who considered in slash by. The word is en in Greek, which does translate en, but the word en is a Greek equivalent to the Semitic ba. And many of you know some Semitic language and know that biidi, biedi, by my hand, means by the agency of my hand.

The ba, the Semitic ba, means an agency. So we can translate this in or by if we're dealing with people whose first language is a Semitic language, which I think we are. By themselves, that they were righteous and despised others.

Okay. Jesus didn't say that phrase. That phrase is either from Luke or from his source, probably his source.

I think it's earlier than the composition of the book of Luke. And so, what this very early church setting tells us that the subject of the parable is how are we made righteous before God? The subject is not humility in prayer. It is addressed to those who think that by themselves they are righteous.

Now, the word righteous, of course, means accepted. It means saved. It means justified.

So, the subject of the parable, as we are told by the introductory phrase, is how is a person saved, made righteous, accepted in the presence of God. This is the subject. All right.

Now, keeping that in mind, let's go through it and see what we have going on here. We're told, first of all, two men went up into the temple to pray. Now, in English, we've got two phrases.

One phrase is to pray, and that means private devotions. And the second phrase is to go to worship, and that means a public service. Semitic languages don't have two words.

They have one word. And so, the word to pray means both private devotions and public worship. The Arab Christian says, on Sunday, ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■■■■■ ■■■■ I'm going to the church to pray.

Now, because he's mentioned a church and it's Sunday, you know this is the time of a public service. You know he's going to attend the mass. If your Muslim says to you on Friday, ■■■■ ■■■■ ■■■■■■■■ ■■■■ I'm going to the mosque to pray.

It's Friday morning. He is not going to the mosque to have some private devotions. He's going to the mosque to attend the public prayers.

Now, how did you know? You knew because he mentioned the mosque and he mentioned a time in which there were public prayers. So, whenever we get a text in which we have the word to pray, we, the readers, have to decide are we talking about private devotions or are we talking about public worship? Now, in this particular case, we see that two people are going at the same time and they are going to a place of public worship, the temple. Thereby, the weight of the text would lead us to say, of course, they're going to attend a service.

Now, you can answer and say, ah, but each of them offers a private prayer. Fair enough. Everybody, please open, if you have New Testaments with you, to Luke chapter 1. And here we have the story of Elizabeth and Zechariah.

And in verse 8 of chapter 1, we're told, While he, Zechariah, was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, according to the custom of the priesthood, it fell to him by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And the whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. All right? In the text of Luke, mind you.

What are we talking about? Here is the temple area. Here is the building, the Holy of Holies, the holy place, the altar of sacrifice outside, the court of Israel, which only the men can go in, the court of the women, and the court of Gentiles. Now, what happens is the only service that they had in the temple every day was the temit, the daily sacrifice of a lamb, the atonement sacrifice of the lamb twice a day for the sins of Israel.

This happened at dawn, and it happened at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. You had to have a congregation, or it didn't take. It wasn't any good.

There had to be some people there. And the service took place with the congregation standing around the altar. The lamb is sacrificed.

There is a group of Levites there who are the musicians. There are a few prayers. And in the middle of the service, the priest disappears into the holy place.

He doesn't enter the Holy of Holies. He goes into the holy place in order to offer up the incense to God and to trim the lamps that are always burning before the Holy of Holies. This is perpetuated in the altar screen of the Eastern Orthodox churches, and in the middle of the Mass, the priest disappears.

This comes right out of the worship of the temple. So what are the people supposed to do when the priest disappears? Well, first century tradition said that they are supposed to, at that point, say their private prayers. And indeed, the faithful of Judea and Samaria and Galilee, at that time of day, 3 o'clock in the afternoon, you stop plowing.

You stand there. You offer your private prayers to God knowing this is the hour at which in the Great High Temple the priest is offering up the incense before God and all the people stand around offering their private prayers. So here we have a service of worship in the middle of which there is the opportunity for your own private devotions.

Now, with this in mind, we then ask the question about the next phrase, which is, the Pharisee stood by himself thus praying. This is not our traditional translation. In fact, in the last 10 years, I think every translation that has come out has it right now.

They've got who stood thus praying to himself. Sorry, he stood by himself thus praying. I like to think that my published essay on this parable may have made some difference and that this is maybe why that that change has come about in translations in the past 10 years.

In any case, this is the order of the Greek words. The Pharisee stood by himself thus praying. Now, why have we for centuries translated it the Pharisee stood praying thus to himself? Even though the idiom to himself is not the same Greek idiom as the judge who prays to him, who talks to himself in the previous parable.

It's not the same phrase. Still, we've decided he was talking to himself. Why? Because we decided right way up at the beginning that this is private devotions, not public worship.

Why didn't we figure out that it was public worship? It's because we spent all of these centuries totally ignoring the Jewish sources that are a background to the New Testament. All right, finally, since the Second World War and the Holocaust, we have gotten over that sort of inner prejudice against all things Jewish and we're willing to look at these sources and so it's possible for us now to come up with a reevaluation of this kind of a story, which is what I'm trying to do now with you this morning. Now, before we proceed any further, ah yes, notice that the Pharisee is not praying to himself.

He is standing by himself. A little bit later on we will be told about how the Pharisee stood. At this point, we're told about how this man stood.

Now, why is he standing by himself? Here is the congregation standing around the altar and our friend is standing over here at the side some distance away. Why? Well, because he is a very holy man and one of the forms of ceremonial defilement is if your clothes touch the clothes of somebody who is ceremonially defiled. And so he wants to be very sure that this doesn't happen and he's not quite sure about the ceremonial status of all of this unwashed over here to the side.

And to be very sure he doesn't get too close, he stands off some distance away. And then he gives the speech which we will look at in a minute. Now, before we go any further, let's talk about Pharisees and tax collectors.

Last week, we talked about the Pharisees who were the *haburim*, the companions, the religious specialists, lay people, but spent all of their spare time trying to examine the tradition and examine precisely what the tradition required of them. And then the *am-haritz*, the people of the land, who were those folks who said, look, I really don't have time for all of this stuff. And so, okay, we're good Jews, fine, we'll go to the synagogue once a week.

Yes, we'll make a pilgrimage once a year, but the ceremonial purification laws and all of that bit about the Shabbat, about Sabbath, it's too much. We can't follow all of that. So they become one of the people of the land.

Now, these two people, crowds, did not like each other. As a matter of fact, the bitterness between them was rather intense. There's a well-known page of a list of the way that the *haburim*, the companions, felt about the *am-haritz*, which is available in the Babylonian Talmud in the tractate *Pesachim*, Passover, in folio 49b.

And here are some of the things it has to say. Our rabbis taught, let a man always sell all that he has and marry the daughter of a scholar. If he does not find the daughter of a scholar, let him marry the daughter of one of the great men of the generation.

If he does not find the daughter of one of the great men of the generation, let him marry the daughter of the head of synagogues. If he does not find the daughter of the head of synagogues, let him marry the daughter of a charity treasurer. If he does not find the daughter of a charity treasurer, let him marry the daughter of an elementary school teacher.

But let him not marry the daughter of an *amharitz*, because they are detestable, and their wives are vermin, and of their daughters, it is said, cursed be he who lies with any manner of beast." Don't think they liked each other. It was taught *rabbi*, just without a title, is a very famous *rabbi* at the end of the first century. An *amharitz*, oh I'm sorry, let's skip that one.

Rabbi Eliezer, this was a very famous rabbi at the end of the first century with a photographic mind. Concerning an amharitz, it is permissible to stab him on the day of atonement which falls on Shabbat. Now you see, Sabbath is so holy that you can't make fire and you can't do all sorts of things, and the day of atonement is the most holy day of the entire year.

In the state of Israel, it is so holy, I, a Christian gentile, can't drive my car down the street. After two o'clock in the afternoon, all cars are forbidden to move on all streets, because if you drive a car, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, you're making fire. And so you're working, and thereby you're violating the rules of Shabbat, and so no one Jew or non-Jew is allowed to drive, the day is so holy.

And so once every seven years, the day of atonement falls on Shabbat. Okay, now you've figured out how holy this day is, all right? So if you want to stab an amharitz on the day of atonement which falls on Shabbat, please proceed. His disciple said to him, Master, say slaughter him ritually.

He replied, no, because ritual slaughter requires a benediction, whereas stabbing does not require a benediction. If I slaughter him, I'll have to say a prayer, but, you know, if I just stab him, then I don't have to say a prayer, and that's better. One may tear an amharitz like a fish.

This means along his back. Rabbi Meir taught, used to say, whoever marries his daughter to an amharitz is as though he bound and laid her before a lion, because just as a lion tears his prey and devours it and has no shame, so an amharitz strikes and cohabits and has no shame. Rabbi Hayyeh taught, whoever studies the Torah in the presence of an amharitz, it is as though he cohabited with his betrothed in his presence.

And it goes on. I mean, you know, you just can't imagine. I mean, you can if you read this kind of stuff, how bitter the feeling between these two communities was.

There's another place here in the same literature which says that you can, whenever, if you want, there's three kinds of people you can tell lies to, murderers and thieves and tax collectors. You can tell lies to them and make pledges to them which you don't have to keep. I thought about including this reference in my income tax last year, but then I thought maybe it really wasn't in my interest to do so.

Okay, now this is the way the religious professionals, the haborim, the rabbis and the other lay people who interpret the law, thought about these other folk, these people of the land who don't keep the law. Now how is one of these folk, one of these good guys, as he sees himself, going to react if he sees someone known to be a tax collector walking in the back door? He sees him standing over here in the corner at some distance. He is not going to be pleased, obviously.

It's going to be who let him in, and he shouldn't even be allowed in the temple area, let alone in to watch the great sacred feast of the offering of the Lamb without blemish for the wiping away of the sins of Israel. So, the Pharisee stood by himself, thus praying, God, now, ah yes, when we find out that he is not praying to himself, then we have to ask the question, how is he praying? The answer is very simple, and that is that prayer in the temple area was you stood up, eyes opened, you raised your hands like this, you looked up to heaven, and you spoke your prayers. So he's talking out loud.

Now, um, I don't know if, you know, my own Presbyterian tradition has place in it for free prayer in worship services, and I don't know if you folk have ever experienced this grisly scene, but sometimes this free prayer idea breaks down, and then it becomes an opportunity either to show off your piety to your

neighbors, or to get a few licks in at them. Now, I don't know if you've ever watched this grisly scene develop. A few years ago, I was chaplain at a hospital in the south of Egypt, and a very bitter misunderstanding broke out between, in our chaplaincy staff, a young Egyptian woman and a young Egyptian man.

And they were very polite to each other all day long, until we got into the chapel, and then one day Fahegh Effendi would have prayers, and in the prayer he would say, Oh Lord, thou of course will never forgive the sins of those who, and then he'd really give it to her, you see. And then the next day, she would respond in kind, and the staff quickly picked this up, and would say to me, Bishtimu baad basala, they insult one another through their prayers, which is exactly what they were doing. It's a marvelous opportunity to demonstrate to those around you how terribly pious you are, and how much they can learn from such a deeply pious soul.

This becomes one of the sad parts that happens in free prayer, which is exactly what is going on in this parable. The speech is for the benefit of these unwashed over here to the side, who do not always have the opportunity to observe the piety of such a godly man. And really, we should not deprive them of this opportunity, you see.

Okay, so what is the speech? God I thank you. Well, fine. He starts off in good shape.

Prayer was supposed to be either you thank God for God's blessings, or you petition him for your needs, or you confess your sins. Adoration, yes, that's also part of it, but those were the basic four. You adore him, you thank him for what he's done for you, you confess your sins, and you ask his blessing upon you for whatever it is that you need.

And so he starts off, I thank you, ah, because I am not like hoi loipoi, we're told in Greek, but this phrase translates from amharits, I thank you that I am not one of the people of the land. Extortioners, unjust, adulterers, he throws that in for good measure, it's a nice sounding word when you get a list like this, even like this tax collector. Well, yes, we did observe who you were talking about.

He's listening at the back. I fast twice a week. Now the rabbinic principle in the first century was that you were supposed to keep the law, fine, but the law is like a flower garden, and you might accidentally step on one of the flowers.

So what you should do is you should do a little bit more than the law requires, you should put a fence around the law, we're told by the rabbis. That is, do a bit more than the law requires to be very sure you have not done a bit less than the law requires. Fine, the Old Testament says you are supposed to fast one day a year, the day of atonement, that's it.

The Pharisees said, no, we will fast two days before every major feast and two days after every major feast, to be sure we're doing a bit more than the law requires. Fine, how many major feasts? Three. So you're going to fast four days, twelve, you've got twelve days of fasting a year rather than one.

Well, that's a nice wide fence, fine, you're doing more than the law expects of you. Ah, our friend has a fence around the fence. He fasts twice every week.

I mean, surely in all of Israel there has never been such a pious man. Alright, I give tithes of all that I possess, well now the tithes are supposed to, we are told, be given of anything which the earth produces which is edible, ah. But what if I am bringing my grapes in from the vineyard and I'm taking them up on the

roof to lay them out in order that they might dry in the sun and be turned into raisins, and my kids grab a few on the way up? That's alright, they can eat them even though they've not been tithed.

But once you spread them out on the roof, now you have to tithe the raisins after the raisins are dropped. What if I have figs and I live up in Galilee and I'm on my way to Jerusalem and I don't have much else to eat, and so I eat off of these figs on the way to Jerusalem? No problem. But once you get to Jerusalem and you start to sell them, now you must take 10% and give them to the establishment as your tithe.

If you, those which you haven't sold at the end, and you're on your way home, you again can eat from them, you don't have to pay tithes on the stuff that you don't sell, and when you get home, then if you're going to eat them there, you have to tithe. If I'm on my way out to the vineyard in the morning and I've got a fig tree in the backyard and I grab a fig on the way out and chomp, chomp, no problem, you don't have to tithe it, but if you stand there and pig out, then you've got to pay tithes. If you have almond trees and you've got both bitter almonds and sweet almonds, if you tithe the sweet almonds, you don't have to tithe the bitter almonds, and if you tithe the bitter almonds, you don't have to tithe the sweet almonds.

And so we have now a tractate about this thick, telling you the specifics, so that no one is unjustly treated in this matter of the paying of the tithes. Our friend, he tithes everything, everything, a great wide fence around the law. Now, having been told how the man who is so very proud of his self-righteousness and of his stratospheric level of piety, we are now told something about the other man.

However, keep in mind that the prayers are offered at the time of the offering up of the incense. So, the sacrifice has been made, the blood has been sprinkled on the altar, the liturgy has been, the prayers have been read and the psalms have been sung, the priest disappears to offer up incense before the holy high place, and then afterwards he comes out and he lifts up his arms and he says, God has accepted the atonement sacrifice and has washed away the sins of Israel. At that point, everybody prostrates themselves before the great high altar, the great solemn moment in which we discover that God has, the priest has found out back in the holy place that God accepted the sacrifice and has washed away the sins of the people.

There is then the Levites have a great crash of the big silver cymbals and the trumpets are blown and incense again is offered up to God and a few more prayers and the service is over. But the great dramatic point is when the priest comes out and announces that the sins of the people have been washed away and the people prostrate themselves before the altar. The tax collector, we are told, is standing far off, not because he is too good to get close to the rest of the worshipers, but because he's not good enough to stand amongst them.

He will not lift up his eyes unto heaven because he doesn't feel he's worthy to do so. How could he look up to where God dwells? He beats on his chest. This is the gesture.

Now this is a gesture that, generally speaking, women in the Middle East do and men do not do. Women do it on two occasions. One is at very, very tragic funerals and the second is when they are extremely angry and are just about to come, peasant women, to come across the room and start pulling your hair and tearing your face, scratching your face.

They warn you that they're coming so you can get out of the way. Very rare on that occasion, but you do see it at funerals. I have never in my life seen a man in the Middle East do this.

There is no record of it in the Old Testament. The only record we have in the New Testament is in this parable and we are told they went back from the cross beating upon their chests in Luke and this presumes men and women. I found two cases of it in Jewish tradition from the first to the third century.

The first is Josephus, the historian contemporary with Jesus, when he talks about David weeping over the death of Absalom and he says David beat on his chest. It's not in the Old Testament, but it's in Josephus' Wars of the Jews, talking about this scene. And the second one is the case in which we have Rabbi Akiba, a very famous second century rabbi, who on the death of Rabbi Eliezer, whom we quoted here just now, who was his mentor when he died.

At the funeral, Rabbi Akiba said, I am like a man with much money to change and there is no money changer. The money changer is dead. I've got all these coins, but the only person who can change my money was my master who had all of the oral tradition memorized and now I can't figure out how I'm supposed to solve these problems of oral law.

And he was so upset, we're told he beat on his chest. Very, very rare. The only time I have known it to happen in the Middle East is Shiite Islam at the Ashura festival.

This is the festival once a year in which they remember the death of the murder of Hussein, the founder of the community, and they do so by shaving their heads and taking a straight edge razor and slitting the top of their heads and beating on their chests. And it's a great sort of orgy of remembered suffering, which happens when the Shiites celebrate this Ashura ceremony. It happens in southern Lebanon.

It happens in southern Iraq. Of course, it happens in Iran. So, very, very rare.

You have to be enormously upset, particularly as a man, in order to do this. This man is doing it and he's doing it in public. Now, what is it that makes him so terribly upset? Number five on your sheet.

Notice number three and number five are the two prayers. Number two and number four are how the two people stood. And number one and number six are parallel and then the introduction and the conclusion.

So, there's a very simple rhetorical structure to the material, and this structure is found also in the book of John and also in the prophet Isaiah. What does he say? We have traditionally translated this. He says, O Lord, have mercy on me.

Now, in the very same gospel of Luke, in chapter 19, just a few verses along, if you have your New Testaments with you, if you care to, please open with me to Luke 19, 18, sorry. Verse 35, the story of Jericho and the blind man. Verse 38, and he cried, the blind man, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me.

Eleison me. The well-known first century Greek phrase for have mercy on me, which goes right into the mass, Kyrie eleison, and Christe eleison. All right, here it is.

Eleison me. Kyrie eleison me. And eleison, have mercy, it is the common Greek word for to have mercy.

Luke knows this word. He uses it. He uses it in this chapter.

So, in the parable which we are now examining, this word does not occur. We are not told eleison. We are told hilasthomi.

Now, hilasthōmai is a rare Greek word in the New Testament, and it is the equivalent, it is the word which translates the Hebrew kapur, Arabic kaphara, make an atonement. We have it in the third chapter of Romans. It occurs once.

Christ is our atonement. We have it in 1 John chapter 2, I believe it's verse 2, where Christ is an expiation for our sins. We have it in the book of Hebrews once.

I can't think if there's anywhere else. Fairly rare. Very important text when it occurs, and it occurs in this passage.

Now, you see Harnack, the famous German liberal of the late 19th century, decided that Paul was one thing and Jesus was something else. And that Jesus basically said he washed out the entire sacrificial system, threw the whole thing out, and he came along and said, now look, if you want to be reconciled with God, all you have to do is stand alone and say, oh Lord, have mercy on me, and God will have mercy on me, on you, and take away your sins. Harnack didn't say this, but we could paraphrase it by saying Harnack insisted that Jesus was a Muslim and that Paul made a Christian out of him.

Where did Harnack get his argument? He got it from this parable. Why? Because at the end of the parable, we are told this man went down to his house justified. Justified means to be saved.

Okay, so if the parable is all about you stand alone and say, oh Lord, have mercy on me, and you are now justified, then certainly you don't need any sacrifice of any kind to help you out. This was Harnack's view. Well, Harnack is mistaken.

Why? Because first of all, the whole thing is set in the sacrifice of the Lamb to take away the sins of Israel, and second, the key word is this man is at the back watching this magnificent ceremony and this marvelous sacrament of the Old Testament community, and he comes to the high point of it in which everybody rejoices that the sacrament has been accepted, the sacrifice has been accepted, God has washed away the sins of the people, and he is at the back in utter agony beating on his chest saying, oh Lord, make an atonement for me. This one is fine for these good folks standing up around the altar, but I'm a sinner. This is good for the righteous.

I just heard the prayer of this good righteous man. I'm not like that. I'm a sinner.

Who is going to wash away my sin? Answer? This one goes down to his house, having been made righteous. Not that one. Now, this is a very, very interesting turn of phrase, because the rabbis were already discussing what makes the atonement sacrifice invalid, and they came up with things like if the priest has touched anything dead, it's not valid.

If he has gotten within four cubits of anything dead, it's not valid. If he has broken any of the major rules of ceremonial purity, it's not valid. If he had nocturnal emissions the night before, it's not valid.

This was the direction of their conversation. Jesus touches on the same subject, but he is not worried about the ceremonial purity of the priest. He's worried about the spiritual attitude of the worshiper.

This is a new idea. There was a 400-year-old debate in the Latin church, *ex opera operatum*. Do the sacraments take irrespective of the faith of the celebrant and of the worshiper? And it's an amazing debate in the light of this parable.

This parable answers. The answer is no. Only the one who comes with the... If you feel that you are not good enough to receive the holy sacrament, you are the only person there who is worthy, if the others feel that they are good enough.

I don't know whether you've ever run on to people who felt they couldn't receive holy communion because they weren't good enough. Only if you sense you aren't good enough, dare you approach the holy table to receive communion. So, we are told this one, I tell you, he went down to his house having been made righteous, having been justified, rather than that one.

Notice when number one up at the top, the Pharisee is marching on ahead. He's number one. And the other tax collector, at the end, they're turned around.

The Pharisee walks down first and the other one comes after, at least where they're mentioned afterwards. So, everyone who exalts himself, this is the language of salvation, tries to exalt himself in the presence of God will be humbled. And he who humbles himself in the presence of God will be exalted.

All right. So, the major theme is theology. How are we made righteous before God? And the answer? By the atonement sacrifice which God himself makes.

The second theme is ethics. What about humility in prayer? Yes, prayer should be offered with humility and not with pride and arrogance. We have picked up the secondary theme and we have overlooked the major, primary theme.

We've got five minutes left. Do you have any comment or question? Oh, yes. The second sheet that you have, let's look at it just a minute.

Oh, sorry. Okay. Let's pass this out.

Let's pass out the second sheet. Yeah. Let's pass out the second sheet.

Sorry about that, folks. I need one myself, Bob. Here we go.

Thanks. Okay. Now, very quickly, at the top, notice we're talking number one at the top.

We're talking about God rejects the temple. Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool. What is the house which you would have built for me and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, so all these things are mine.

Number six at the bottom, there is a voice from the temple which is specifically mentioned, but it is a voice of judgment. Okay. Let your eyes skip to the top again.

Number two, God is looking for people who are poor in spirit and tremble at the word. Number five at the bottom repeats the same thing. Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at his word.

Your brethren who hate you cast you out for my name's sake. They have said, let the Lord be glorified that we may see your joy. It is they who shall be put to shame.

Notice, somebody is throwing out the people who tremble at the word. And when they do it, they think they're pleasing God. All right.

In the middle, number three, is very, very strong language, which appears to be an open revolt against the entire sacrificial system. Put yourself into a Semitic Jewish context and then read these words. He who slaughters an ox is like him who kills a man.

He who sacrifices a lamb is like him who breaks a dog's neck. He who sacrifices a cereal offering is like him who offers swine's blood. He who makes a memorial offering of frankincense is like him who blesses an idol.

I mean, I can't manage any more sort of aggressive language of rejection than the language which we have here. What is the reason for this tremendous anger on the part of the prophet? Number four. These have chosen their own ways and their soul delights in their abomination.

I will also choose affliction for them and bring their fears upon them because... All right, now we find out why he's angry. When I called, no one answered. When I spoke, they did not listen.

What is this all about? It's sacrament without word. It is ritual without personal faith and obedience. It is people who are able to carry out the sacramental requirements of the sacrificial system, but there is no personal response to the call of God and obedience and holiness in their lives as a result.

Very, very strong. I am convinced Jesus has taken this passage and he has softened it and turned it into a story. Now, what are the points of comparison? Number one.

In both stories are set in the temple. In both cases, we are dealing with someone who is shut out. In both cases, those who shut them out think they are serving God.

Four. Each mentions the sacrifice in the temple. Five.

Each has a pious man in awe, in fear before God. One trembles and the other beats upon his chest. In each case, there is a person who chooses that which he delights rather than choosing that which pleases God.

You can imagine what a tremendous sort of ego trip this Pharisee is getting by making this wonderful speech and is instructing all these poor folk over there, the unwashed beside him, who need all this instruction. Seven. In each, the sacrifice by itself is not enough without a contrite spirit.

Eight. In each, a contrite spirit is praised. And nine.

There is judgment in each. I have a few copies of these nine points here. If you want this for your own interest, I thought I wouldn't pass it all out.

It was getting too much paper, but I do have a few up here. You can have one after class if you care to. These nine points I find striking.

The fact that there are nine places in which these two accounts can be seen to be parallel. I think Jesus has taken this 66th chapter of Isaiah, decided it's too harsh. He has softened the language.

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Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/19/SID19811.mp3>

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