**The Remedy for Cloudy Vision – Touchpoint for October 22, 2025**

**Luke 18:9-14 (NRSVUE)**

**9** He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: **10** “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. **11** The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.**12** I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.’ **13**But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ **14**I tell you; this man went down to his home justified rather than the other, for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

**Grace to you from the Mystery in whom we live and breathe and have our being.**

*“He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves…”*

I sought help to understand this parable of the pharisee and the tax collector. I looked at a few different theologians I consider mentors. Mentors are those individuals whose voices resonate within you. They speak and write with words of wisdom and insight creating a virtual community of deep understanding.

I am not speaking of provocateurs of our present divisive culture who rattle cages and affirm all our preconceptions and biases.

Mentors are people like Jesus who reveal how they observe God, themselves and others. Modeling how to engage the world with wonder and humility and cultivate joy each time humility beckons.

In the parable, two different temperaments were entering the temple. One was a Pharisee whose bias was centered on religious perfectionism and obedience. The other was a tax collector who cheated and extorted his own people.

This is where mentors like Rabbi Amy Jill-Levine suggest the modern interpretation of a Pharisee being a bad person is unfair. After all, Jesus was engaging Pharisees by eating meals with them and presenting the God of grace in ways that might shake their biases.

Jesus did not cast off those who listened. He displayed both fearless grace that either seared their conscience or brought them humbly to their knees. One doesn’t do this for intrinsically bad people.

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The tax collector says, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” Jesus says, “I tell you; this man went down to his home justified rather than the other.”

The word “rather” is a preposition and in Greek is the word para. The word para translates not as rather, but as “alongside.” So, it then could read, “I tell you, this man went down to his home justified, alongside the other.” They went home justified together!

The Pharisee views himself through the clouded lens of religious accomplishment. The tax collector sees himself through the shame of his past. What they have in common is that both are going into the temple. Both had distorted views of themselves.

Luke opens this parable by saying Jesus was talking to some who trusted themselves. The ego can appear either as better than others or worse than others. Luke like a psychologist says, they were “those who trusted themselves.”

What does this parable stir up for us as a community walking alongside together?

I’ll turn to mentor Walter Bruggeman for his interpretation of this parable.

“The lifeworld offered here is a world other than the Western imperial world of control, security, and affluence. It is a world of exile in which many voices compete, in which God’s presence is an open question, in which the poor are visible and vocal, in which the cynical must be heeded, in which the commandments may prevail. It is a world in which Presence may be true — or a terrible self-deception. New decisions are possible for Western Christians in this lifeworld, but they will be possible only if widows and janitors are included in the conversation. The text, set in Exile, dreams of a homecoming and restored well-being, only if there is obedience. Such obedience is only possible, however, when the question of presence is honestly faced the God disclosed here commands. This God also cares but will not be our ally in the things of the world. Imagine that widows and orphans have access to the very God whom the heavens cannot contain! Much less can our impotent ideologies contain this God.”

The paranoid Pharisee in me is rattled. Cold water is tossed on my imposter syndrome, and self-loathing tax collector. I am not to trust either of those parts of myself.

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Here is what another mentor tells us about this parable.

Theologian William Barclay says, “No man who is proud can pray. The gate of heaven is so low that no one can enter it save upon his knees. No man who despises his fellowmen can pray. In prayer we do not lift ourselves above our fellowmen. We remember that we are one of a great army of sinning, suffering, sorrowing humanity, all kneeling before the throne of God’s mercy. True prayer comes from setting our lives beside the life of God. No doubt all that the Pharisee said was true. He did fast; he did meticulously give tithes; he was not as other men are; still less was he like that tax-collector. But the question is not, “Am I as good as my fellowmen?” The question is, “Am I as good as God?”

*Amen*

***Spirit* in the Desert**

**Opening Song**

***Be Still***

(London Fox Taize Choir)

Be Still, know that I am God.

**Bible Passage**

*(A passage takes us from one place to another)*

**Touchpoint**

*(Where God’s story touches our life story)*

***In the Arms of God***

(Tony Alonso, Marty Haugen, Michael Joncas)

*Refrain:* Come and rest in the arms of God. Leave your worry and fear. Make your home in the heart of God. God will dry every tear. For the burden you carry will fade within God’s care. Come and rest in the arms of God.

1) Gentle is God’s way and humble is God’s heart. God’s love will light the way that leads to peace. Surely you shall see God’s goodness and God’s grace. Rest now in God’s embrace. *Refrain*

2) Do not be afraid. God heals the broken heart. Through grief and disbelief God still remains. God and God alone will be your souls true rest. Fall in the arms of God.

*Refrain*

3) You are not alone, for God is always near. Come place your doubt and fear within God’s care. God will give you rest, and soothe your weary soul. Dwell in the heart of God.

*Refrain*

**The Meal**

***The Lord’s Prayer***

(Robert Stone, The Cambridge Singers, John Rutter)

**Benediction**

***Create in Me a Clean Heart***

Create in me a clean heart, oh God

And renew a right spirit within me

Create in me a clean heart, oh God

And renew a right spirit within me

*AMEN*