

Sunday Message

30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year C • 26 October 2025 • Psalter Week 2

HUMBLY SPEAKING

LUKE 18:9-14

This story must have been a tremendous shock to Jesus' listeners. In the Christian tradition, Pharisees have received a bad press. They are often portrayed as hypocrites and legalists. But in Jesus' time Pharisees were highly respected.

Jesus' listeners would have known that the Pharisee in this story was telling the truth of his life. This was how Pharisees lived. They lived according to an exacting religious discipline – of fasting, giving alms, paying tithes. Imagine committing one-tenth of one's income to the Church each year! So, the Pharisee is only speaking the truth when he lists all that he has done, and is doing. You could say it is an exemplary life.

And then we meet the tax collector. Tax collectors, or publicans, were not the most popular folks in town. They not only collected taxes on behalf of the hated Roman occupiers, but often extracted extra money from people to line their own pockets. Think of Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, and the promise he made to Jesus: "Lord... if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold" (Luke 19:8). In the Gospels, tax collectors were often bracketed in one breath with sinners. So any mention of a tax collector would have conjured up images of corruption, exploitation and oppression to Jesus' listeners.

Imagine, then, how they must have felt when their understanding of holiness was turned upside down. The Pharisee was a respected part of the religious system, a good and holy man; the tax collector was outside it, a traitor, a crook. Yet Jesus praises the tax collector and condemns the Pharisee.

The explanation lies in the first verse of today's Gospel. Jesus told this parable "to



some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt". These people thought that what made them pleasing in God's sight was their own virtuous activity, a laundry list of good works, and they looked disdainfully down their arrogant noses at the rest of the human race, at sinners and tax collectors and everyone else who did not replicate their good deeds.

The Pharisee was smug. He thought he was a cut above other people, especially sinners like the tax collector. He was so full of his own efforts and achievements that he had little space for the gift of God's mercy.

The tax collector knew he was a sinner. He was aware that he was far from perfect. He is upright before God, he has the stance the Lord applauds, because he trusts not in himself but in God, not in any good work that calls for reward but only in God's goodness and mercy. And in begging for forgiveness, he does not contrast himself with the proud Pharisee or anyone else. He does not dare "lift up his eyes to heaven," and he does not dare to comment on any member of the congregation except himself: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." He knows that God's love and forgiveness are available even to someone like him.

Turns out it is the tax collector, who thought himself far from the Kingdom of God, who is in fact closest to it. ■

REFLECT

The story of the Pharisee and the tax collector offers us both a warning and a consolation. The warning is about judging others. We can all fall prey to the Pharisee's fault. Humans have a natural tendency to compare ourselves with others, to look down on those we think aren't as good-living or hard-working as we think we are. It's why society and Church dealt so harshly in the past with unmarried mothers and their children. Judging ourselves to be socially or morally superior to others, totting up all our good deeds, we can, like the Pharisee, feel a little smug.

But, of course, the fact is that no one is perfect. Rather than making comparisons, we should acknowledge what we have in common – that we all have the same human weaknesses and all need God's forgiveness. The fact that we are Christians shouldn't make us self-satisfied, or complacent, or think we are a cut above others. There is no guarantee that we are better living than the non-believer.

What makes all the difference is knowing we are forgiven sinners, that no matter what we have done or not done or how sinful we think we may be, God loves us and forgives us anyway, and that God's forgiveness is always available to us. That's the consoling message of today's Gospel. We just need to turn to the Lord with sincere and repentant hearts, as the tax collector did. ■

LEARN

The Christian has the same human weakness as everyone else.

The Christian is slow to judge others.

The Christian trusts in God's love and forgiveness and knows that God forgives first.

SAY

"Lord, I know I am far from perfect. Help me to live in a way that is pleasing to you. Amen."

DO

The Pharisee looked down on the tax collector. Is there a person or group of people you look down on? What do you need to do about it?

PRAY

Make the tax collector's prayer of humility your own: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

*Let the hearts that seek the Lord rejoice;
turn to the Lord and his strength;
constantly seek his face.*

COLLECT

Almighty ever-living God,
increase our faith, hope and charity,
and make us love what you command,
so that we may merit what you promise.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

Amen.

FIRST READING Sirach 35:15b-17. 20-22b

A reading from the Book of Sirach.

The LORD is the judge,
and with him is no partiality.
He will not show partiality in the case of a poor man;
and he will listen to the prayer of one who is wronged.
He will not ignore the supplication of the orphan
or the widow when she pours out her story.
He whose service is pleasing to the Lord will be accepted,
and his prayer will reach to the clouds.
The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds,
and he will not be consoled until it reaches the Lord;
he will not desist until the Most High visits him
and does justice for the righteous and executes judgement.
The Lord will not delay.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 34(33):2-3. 17-18. 19, 23. R. 7a

R: *The lowly one called; the LORD heard him.*

1. I will bless the LORD at all times,
praise of him is always in my mouth.
In the LORD my soul shall make its boast;
the humble shall hear and be glad. **R.**
2. The LORD turns his face against the wicked
to cut off their remembrance from the earth.
When the just one cries out, the LORD hears,
and rescues him in all his distress. **R.**
3. The LORD is close to the broken-hearted;
those whose spirit is crushed he will save.
The LORD ransoms the souls of his servants.
All who trust in him shall not be condemned. **R.**

SECOND READING 2 Timothy 4:6-8. 16-18

A reading from the Second Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy.

Beloved: I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and
the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there
is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the
righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me,
but also to all who have loved his appearing.

At my first defence no one came to stand by me, but all deserted
me. May it not be charged against them! But the Lord stood by
me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might
be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was
rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every
evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him
be the glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

ACCLAMATION BEFORE THE GOSPEL 2 Corinthians 5:19

R: *Alleluia, alleluia.*

God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself,
and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

R: *Alleluia.*

GOSPEL Luke 18:9-14

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

At that time: Jesus told this parable to some who trusted in
themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with
contempt: 'Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a
Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by
himself, prayed thus: "God, I thank you that I am not like other men,
extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast
twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get." But the tax collector,
standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat
his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" I tell you,
this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other.
For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who
humbles himself will be exalted.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look, we pray, O Lord,
on the offerings we make to your majesty,
that whatever is done by us in your service
may be directed above all to your glory.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

*We will ring out our joy at your saving help
and exult in the name of our God.*

Or

*Christ loved us and gave himself up for us,
as a fragrant offering to God.*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

May your Sacraments, O Lord, we pray,
perfect in us what lies within them,
that what we now celebrate in signs
we may one day possess in truth.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.