

LUKE 18 PARABLES, CHILDREN, A RULER, AND A BLIND MAN

The parable of the unrighteous judge (verses 1-8) was spoken in direct connection with the instructions given to the disciples by their Master at the end of the last chapter, in reference to His return. It is not merely a general exhortation to prayer, but to prayer for the coming of Christ; and more specifically, to the confident expectation of this event, and to the blessedness which will result. It does, however, contain a very real encouragement to all prayer from all Christians at all times. The reasoning is this: if an unjust judge – who has regard for neither God nor man – would yield to the persistence of a humble widow, simply because he feared that she would annoy him by her repeated requests; how much more will our just and righteous God be ready to reward the persevering petitions of His own loved ones who cry to Him continually! In this time while we watch and wait for the return of our Savior, what an encouragement this is for us to present our petitions to God with the assurance that He does hear us and will answer us in His own time! But there is a solemn significance in the question which Jesus asked after expounding His parable: “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” The very question is a solemn warning against the peril of being overcome by worldliness and unbelief. However, the answer is not to be given in a spirit of hopelessness and pessimism and despair. As the Church waits for Christ’s return, she will always have her adversaries, and she will always need to be on her guard against the worldly influences by which she is surrounded. However, there will always be those who are true to Him Who has chosen them out of the world! And after long days of weary waiting, their hearts will rejoice in the sudden appearing of the Righteous Judge – Who will bring with Him glories that are brighter than they have dared to ask or expect!

The parable of the Pharisee and the publican (verses 9-14) was designed to teach humility – not only in prayer; but also in every estimate of oneself, and in every approach to God. It further contrasts the religion of formalistic rituals with the religion of the heart. It shows that the way of repentance and faith is the only path to pardon and peace. The parable contains a severe exposure of the hypocrisy and self-deception of Pharisaism of every kind. The Pharisee here described had gone up to the Temple to pray; he stood in a conspicuous place; he addressed God with the words of His mouth, but he uttered no true prayer.

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ *The parables of the persistent widow and of the Pharisee and the publican – verses 1-14*
- ❖ *The Lord Jesus blesses the children that are brought to Him – verses 15-17*
- ❖ *He converses with the rich ruler – verses 18-30*
- ❖ *He speaks to His disciples of His approaching death – verses 31-34*
- ❖ *He restores sight to the eyes of a blind man – verses 35-43*

He rejoiced that – in comparison with other men – he formed a class all by himself. He declared all others to be “extortioners, unjust, adulterers”; and as an example of such sinners, he pointed to the poor publican at whom he was looking, instead of looking to the Lord. He boasted that he had refrained from the sins of other men, and also that he had performed more good deeds than the law required. Moses instituted no obligatory times of fasting, but this man fasted twice a week. The law of Moses exempted certain things from the tithe, but this man had tithed his entire income. In other words, he had been better than God required, and so he had placed God under obligation to him. But alas! How little does such a person understand the real holiness of the Lord, and of the requirements of His law – the essence of which is love, and not merely external rituals and ceremonies!

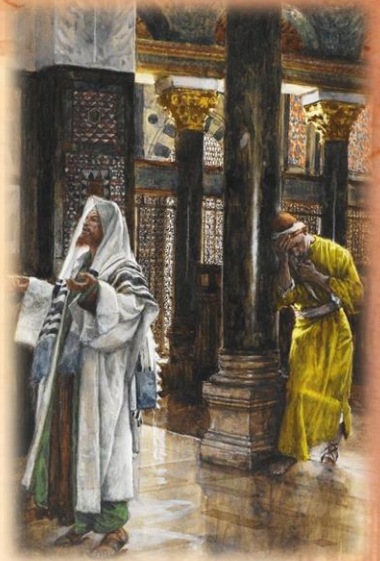
In striking contrast with this man, the publican (a despised and hated tax-collector) was standing at a respectful distance from the supposed saint whose formal piety impressed his fellow Pharisees. This publican did not even venture to look up toward heaven. He beat upon his chest, as a sign of mourning; and he cried out in anguish, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” In the original language, the words seem to imply that this publican also regarded himself as being distinct from all other people; for he felt and confessed himself to be not merely a sinner, but *the* sinner. But as he acknowledged his guilt and turned to the Lord in repentance, he was accepted as righteous in His sight; and he received true pardon and peace.

There can be no misunderstanding as to the lesson which the Master wished to impress here. “This man went down to his house justified rather than the other” (verse 14). A sense of guilt, a longing for pardon, and a cry to God for mercy – this is the very beginning of a new life. And no matter how far one may progress in holiness, there is always a need for this spirit of humility. The nearer one is to God, the more conscious he is of his sinfulness, and the less likely he will be to boast of his own moral attainments. The more one acknowledges his unworthiness, the better he is prepared to serve his Master and his fellow human beings. The pride of Pharisaism – on the part of nations, churches, and individuals – stands in the way of helpfulness, brotherhood, and the favor of God. What is needed today is universal repentance and a manifestation of the humble and contrite heart – “for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (verse 14).

The charming picture of Jesus blessing little children (verses 15-17) is sketched by Matthew and Mark, as well as by Luke. “They were bringing unto him also their babes,” says the text. The parents were probably carrying these children in their arms. They realized that it was not only the lepers and the lame who needed the touch of Christ, for the power of the Master would bring blessing to the children as well. This touch of Jesus very properly pictures that personal relationship and spiritual contact with Christ which, with equal eagerness,

should still be sought for children by all their parents today.

However, “when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them; but Jesus called them unto him.” The disciples seemed to have felt that children were too insignificant to be allowed to interfere with the work of Christ, or to demand His attention. At this present time, there are many things which tend to keep parents from bringing their children to the Master – things such as custom, carelessness, indifference, fear, and diffidence. The Christian discipleship of children is the supreme need of our times. No work is more Christlike or more blessed than the care of these little ones, whom our Lord so truly loves. “To such belongeth the kingdom of God,” Jesus



said. It is theirs by right. It belongs not only to those particular children whom Jesus was then blessing, and not only to all children in general; but to all persons of any age, who are childlike in their trust and dependence and purity. It belongs to all those who are entrusted to the care of the Master, and who accept His saving grace; they will find a place in His Kingdom. As the crowds gazed in wonder and sympathy upon this tender scene, our Lord added this word of warning: “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein.”

In contrast with the repentant publican and the loving trust of little children, which Luke has been depicting; there now steps upon the scene a young man – rich, upright, and morally earnest; but apparently unconscious of the sinful greed which threatened his soul, and of the trust in riches which might prevent his entering the Kingdom of God (verses 18-30). In spite of his riches, his youth, his position, and his power; his heart was not satisfied. He came to Jesus with the question, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” In order to awaken the conscience and disturb the complacent self-righteousness of the youth, Jesus tested him in the light of the commandments, in which God has revealed His holy will; and He applied the deep probe which showed that this young man had never observed the spirit of the Law, even though he believed that he had kept the letter of it. Jesus disclosed the real selfishness of his heart, as He proposed a supreme test: “One thing thou lackest yet: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.” In this sentence, Jesus convicted the man of having broken the Law – the essential requirement of which was to love his neighbor as himself. He promised the young man an eternal recompense for sacrifice; and by His personal companionship, He offered him the influence and power which will make the keeping of the Law more possible and complete. No one can claim to be righteous when they are judged by the commandments as interpreted by Christ. Our only hope is to come to Him for guidance and help! He will lay bare the secret selfishness of our hearts, and He will develop the spirit of love and

service which forms the essence of eternal life. And in heaven, He will ultimately recompense His followers for every loss.

As Jesus moved southward on His last journey to Jerusalem, He was accompanied by admiring multitudes; but His own heart was heavy with the knowledge of the suffering that awaited Him, as He clearly saw before Him the outline of the cross (verses 31-34). Many of His followers today still share in His experience, in part; for even in surroundings which all observers envy, their hearts are crushed by secret sorrows and by the knowledge of approaching pain. Even those who were nearest to Jesus were quite unconscious of His thoughts, or of His need for sympathy. And so, for the third time, Jesus took His twelve Apostles aside and clearly predicted His approaching death. He declared that His sufferings were to be in accordance with written prophecy; and now, more clearly than ever, He described the details of all the suffering which He would endure. Such a clear vision of what awaited Him enhances for us the revelation of His matchless heroism, as He moved forward with unfaltering tread – giving an inspiring example to each one who may be asked to take up the cross and come after Him.

As Jesus was journeying through Jericho for the last time, He healed a blind man – whom Mark, in his record, names Bartimaeus (verses 35-43). This miracle was a proof of Divine power and an expression of human sympathy; but it was also a parable of the power which Jesus alone possesses of giving sight to the spiritually blind. Only He can impart that spiritual vision which is necessary if people are to live in right relationships with one another and with God.

This helpless man was in a pitiful condition. Because of his blindness, he was reduced to beggary; and thus he is a true symbol of the misery to which every person in their natural state is brought, by the lack of spiritual sight. In addition, many rebuked the blind man, and told him that he should “hold his peace.” Many persons long for light and healing; but how often do they hear words which dishearten, and suggestions which lead to hopelessness and despair! But here we also have a picture of eager determination and of unshaken faith. The blind man “cried out the more a great deal, Thou son of David, have mercy on me!” He recognized the Prophet of Nazareth as the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world; and when he was rebuked for crying to Him for mercy, he remained steadfast in his faith and in his confident trust that Jesus would sympathize and heal. And he was not disappointed in his hopes! How many others have likewise found Christ able and willing to give them spiritual vision! Their eyes have been opened to behold things that are unseen and eternal; and they have been enabled to follow the Master with joyful footsteps, as they journey toward the Celestial City – where they will see the King in His beauty; and where they will be like Him, when they “see him even as he is.”

Lord, we repent of times when we have entertained a spirit of pride in our hearts. Have mercy upon us, for we are great and miserable sinners indeed! Amen.