

TWO SICK MEN AND ONE IS ASYMPTOMATIC

LUKE 18:9-14

(9) And He spoke this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: (10) Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. (11) The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. (12) I fast twice in the week. I give tithes of all that I possess. (13) And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. (14) I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Introduction

It is amazing how words or phrases can exist for years, decades, and centuries with specialized, limited, or regional use and quickly come in to the main stream vernacular within just a few days. A good example is the phrase, "Who dat?" It was a common saying in New Orleans but only became widely known when the Crescent City became the venue for the Super Bowl. Likewise, the term asymptomatic has been used for years by medical personnel and in the biology classroom, but recently has become a household word. Asymptomatic diseases are called the silent killers. Many of them show no evidence of existence until, barring a miracle, it is too late. Infectious asymptomatic diseases are much more dangerous than symptomatic infectious diseases because the carrier can infect others unaware.

Sin is a disease. Let's tell it like it is. All of us were born with this pre-existing malady. It is genetic; it runs in the human family. The good news is there is a sure remedy. It is the blood of Jesus. In this parable Jesus tells of two men who were trying to get right with God. Both were sin-sick; one was aware of his ailments, the other was not. He was asymptomatic.

Before we go further, I need to point out some bad uses of this parable. I have experienced preachers and teachers who use this parable to "beat-up-on" the good church folk who are sincere and are doing the right things for the right reasons. They make it sound like every church member has the same attitude as this Pharisee and all sinners are like this Publican. This is far from the truth. They themselves have the attitude of the Pharisee in this parable. I even heard a eulogy with the same erroneous approach. In trying to rationalize a life not lived by The Book and put a good spin on it, the eulogist made the deceased person perfect and the entire church membership totally bad. As I sat through the eulogy, I was hoping the deceased person had found Jesus in the nick of time like the thief on the cross. Some people use this parable to justify or rationalize not living a Christian life or for refusing to pay tithe. Of course, "that

dog will not hunt.” The problem was not with what the Pharisee possessed or did; the problem was with his attitude and with what was missing in his life.

Since many of us are quarantined, this would be a great time for all Christians, including myself, to undergo self-examination and see if we have some asymptomatic spiritual ailments. You have a test kit; it is called the Bible. We can start with the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes.

Now let’s get back to this pungent parable. It, like all of them, demonstrates the relevance of God’s Word. God’s Word is both timeless and timely. This parable and the one preceding it, *The Importunate Widow*, are about prayer. Let us not forget that. Let’s see the great contrast of these two men.

Exposition

1. Haughtiness (Hubris) versus Humility
2. A Long Prayer versus a Short Prayer
3. Self-Righteousness versus Savior-Righteousness
4. Religion of Works versus Religion of Grace
5. Proclaiming Personal Merit versus Pleading for Mercy

Closing Thoughts

Jesus teaches that true humility leads to exaltation. We are to look only to Him for our salvation. When we are fully aware of our own unworthiness and ask for mercy, God forgives us and saves us through the blood of His Son. Give God Glory! Give God All the Glory!

End Notes

1. The Pharisee obeyed the letter of the law, but not the spirit of the law. He went above and beyond the requirements of the law. The law required only one day of public fasting per year. This was Yom Kipper, the Day of Atonement. Permission was given for voluntary fasting at any time. The Pharisees instituted Monday and Thursday as days of fasting during which prayer was offered for the nation. It could also be interpreted that he paid tithe not only on his increase, but also on his net worth.
2. Because of their reputations for ruthlessness and dishonesty publicans were barred from attending most temple and synagogue services. They were only allowed to attend during the hours of prayer. The mid-morning hour was 9:00 A.M. and the mid-afternoon hour was 3:00 P.M. The reasoning was that everybody should be allowed to pray. The publicans usually did not take advantage of this privilege because they felt no need, or

they did not want to endure the mean looks and whispers of the Pharisees and other attendees.

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