

Luke 18:9-14

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 look up 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."

I was watching TV recently, one of those murder mystery type of programs and the statement was made that there is a dark side in all of us. So, I asked the question to a few people. Is there a dark side in all of us? When it comes to evil criminal things like violent crimes, the answer is no. However, when referring to the hidden self, the answer is yes. We all have negative emotions that we do not reveal to others.

There is a part of us that not everyone gets to see called the dark side, hidden self, or shadow self. Your complete personality includes both the positive and negative aspects of who you are. That which is desirable is your conscious persona and the undesirable is denied and repressed. There is the me that I know about myself, the me that others know and see, and the me that is unknown. In Clinical Pastoral Education they help you get in touch with the unknown part of yourself. We all have qualities that we don't reveal to others. Therapists often encourage people to acknowledge their negative traits and discover these hidden emotions so that you can understand your whole self. This opens the door to enlightenment and fulfillment. This valuable insight makes you more aware of yourself and your unconscious emotions, which is necessary in understanding and accepting others. When you accept all the parts of yourself this gives you better self-control as you recognize, manage, and control your own negative emotions. When you are unaware of your negative emotions, they control you and come out in daily living and impact relationships and often damage your relationships with the people that are the closest to you.

As we dig deep into the motivations of behavior and learn new things about human behavior, Jesus is already there. He already knows what we are trying to learn. He is way ahead of the rest of the world in his knowledge and understanding of human nature and what makes people tick. Not only does he have superior knowledge but he also knows how to present his lesson to people in a way that they can understand and relate to. So, he tells this parable to his followers about people that are self-righteous. He does not label them as evil or bad, he does not condemn them or criticize them, what he does is he educates us. The fault of the self-righteous is their attitude. They view their self as right and they view others as wrong. They regard themselves as worthy and regard others with contempt and view them as being unworthy. They are proud and think that they are better than others. The problem is one of selfishness. It is their gain at the expense of others. The problem is also one of denial. They think that they do not have the

problem; it is the other person with the problem. People that are angry and abusive are in denial of the source of their anger and displace their aggression on the other person. However, when you understand and accept the fact that we all have negative emotions and qualities that we don't reveal to others then this opens the door to enlightenment and fulfillment and acceptance of those that are different.

What Jesus teaches is enlightening and revealing. He educates people with a parable about what is right in the eyes of God which is a contrast to what is right in the eyes of the self-righteous. The example from Jesus is the existing attitudes of the Pharisee and the tax collector. Jesus takes what is commonly acceptable in society and flips it. In the existing society, the Pharisee is thought of as the good guy and the tax collector is thought of as the bad guy. Jesus knows better. Jesus knows that the Pharisee does not repent because he thinks that he is OK with God and he is proud of it. The tax collector is repentant and sees himself as a sinner. God always wants repentance and humility. According to God it is the tax collector that is right.

Jesus teaches a hard lesson. It is not just about who or what is right and wrong, but the results of our attitudes. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled and all who humble themselves will be exalted. It is very important for us to understand this because human nature does not change. What was true then is true today. The self-righteous are wrong and the repentant are right with God.

The lesson encourages reflection and soul searching. Take the time to look at your own hidden self and get through any defensive barriers that may contribute to denial. When you understand your own faults and weakness this enables you to control your emotions instead of your emotions controlling you. To get right with God you have to get right with yourself. The tax collector was repentant because looked inward and saw the disparity between the person that he has been and the person that God desires. The Pharisee was self-righteous and judged others by their faults. We all have faults but he denied his own faults and thought that he did not need repentance.

The lesson also encourages humility. We all want others to accept us in spite of our faults. For others to accept us as we are, we have to accept others as they are. In all fairness, it is quid pro quo, you have to accept others if you want them to accept you. To acknowledge a negative trait is hard to do. They co-exist within all of us and combine with virtues to make us whole. This makes us authentic and enables us to be accepting of others. It is natural to keep parts of your personality hidden even from yourself. Exploring personality traits and acknowledging their existence helps us to develop a more complete sense of self-awareness.

In the realm of Christianity, the world sees a lot of hypocrisy because a lot of Christians are more like the Pharisee than the tax collector. It is when you do the necessary soul searching and reflection that you become repentant. Then you can get right with God and the world sees you as an example of Christ instead of a perception of hypocrisy. Reflect on your relationship with God, repent and you will be in God's favor.