

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Luke 18:9-14

⁹ And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: ¹⁰ "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' ¹³ But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

"To believe in Jesus' God, the God of unconditional accessibility and even-handed compassion, to believe in an anarchic mercy that ignores order, rank and merit, is to accept that our projects and patterns are the mark of failure, of illusion, of the infantile belief that we can dictate truth and reality.

Because it is menacing and painful to be confronted with the knowledge that our constructions of controlled sense are liable to be empty self-serving, we readily turn to violence against the bearers of such knowledge...

And the New Testament suggests that only when such a naked collision of interest occurs can the uncompromising reality of God over against our patterns of "religious control" become dear.

God provokes crisis to destroy our self-deceiving reliance on "Law;" our dependence on what we as individuals can make and sustain, or what we as societies can administer for our own unchallenged interest. Self-dependence is revealed as a mechanism of self-destruction; to cling to it in the face of God's invitation to trust is a thinly veiled self-hatred."

Rowan Williams

Philippians 3:3-9

³For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—