



*Toxic Faith*

*Eighth in the Fall sermon series "Taking Jesus Seriously"*

*Luke 18:9-14*

*Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost, Sunday, October 27th, 2019*

*First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois*

*The Rev. Dr. Forrest Krummel, Jr.*

*Text: (Jesus) also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt (v. 9)*

Nothing turns off the "unchurched," the "spiritual but not religious," the "nones," and the "dones" than "self righteousness" and "judgmentalism."

Faith becomes toxic when it becomes "self-righteous" and "judgmental."

Jesus' parable is directed toward those who are "confident in their own righteousness," in other words, the self-righteous.

The self-righteous are so sure of themselves that they are convinced that God sees the world as they do.

Rather than being made in the image of God, they made God in their own image.

In the parable the Pharisees looked down upon "those people", thieves and prostitutes, adulterers and tax collectors. And "those people" were the very people Jesus hung out with.

In the parable the Pharisee is a pillar in the community.

The tax collector, on the other hand, was considered to be a sell out, a snitch, a person whom many of Jesus' listeners considered just a little above the scum of the earth, if not the very scum itself.

In the front of the Temple--as close to the holiest place where he could get, e.g. the front row--the Pharisee prayed,

*"God, I am so glad that I am not like other people--thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like that tax collector back there."*

He was quite pious.

He was quite impressed with himself.

And he was confident that God was impressed with him, too.

The truth of the matter, though, is that he was so “full of himself” that there was no room for God in his heart.

As one commentator wrote, the Pharisee’s prayer “reeked of arrogance ....”

I am sad to admit that self-righteousness Christianity is alive and well today.

At a different time Jesus said that God makes the rain to fall upon the just and the unjust alike.

**People who take Jesus seriously recognize the need for humility.**

In the words of an old hymn,

“God is working out his purpose as year follows year ... All we can do is nothing worth unless God blessed the deed.”

**A word to the wise, be careful of self-righteousness. It doesn’t wear well.**

Self-righteousness leads, invariably to being “judgmental,” the very thing that survey after survey says keeps people away from church.

**Self-righteous people love judging of other people.**

In what is called Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, the Lord said,

Judge not, lest ye be judged; for by the judgment that ye judge, so shall ye be judged.

Why do you look at the speck in your neighbor’s eye when there is a log in your own.

*(Matthew 7:1-5, Krummel edit)*

Jesus ended today’s parable by telling his listeners then, Luke’s church, and us today, that of the two worshipers who went to the Temple that day, it was the tax-collector who was justified in the eyes of God that day.

The proper attitude for those who take Jesus seriously is to be humble, realizing that we are not perfect.

And with our own short-comings in mind, we realize that we are in no position to judge another.

That does not mean that people are not accountable, including us, but people who take Jesus seriously are in no position to judge another.

For you see, we are saved, not because of who we are but because of God’s grace.

Truly, to God be the glory. Amen.