

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

October 27, 2019 • 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time • Luke 18:9-14

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector at Prayer

Once again, Jesus reproves those who believe they are better than others. He tells them a story about a Pharisee whose prayer in the temple gives thanks that he is not like everyone else, especially the despised tax collector he sees praying in the back. Jesus declares that it is the tax collector who is justified in the eyes of God. "...[F]or all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted" (v. 14).

Tax collectors were considered cheats and frauds—Jewish turncoats who worked for the enemy. The Pharisees were well-respected people of learning who were called to keep the people true to their faith and heritage. In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, the Pharisee looks at the tax collector at the back of the temple and thanks God he is not like him. Whenever I hear this reading, I think of the supposedly Christian proverb: "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

I have heard folks quote this phrase when they see someone who is homeless or destitute or storm-ravaged, as if it is God's lack of grace that caused their situation or problem. I have heard others use it when they hear about some convicted felon or murderer. They forget that they undoubtedly have also refused God's grace and failed in some areas of their own lives.

Only someone who can honestly confess no sin could say, "There, but for the grace of God, go I," without exemplifying the pride of the Pharisee. Quite frankly the only proverb truly worthy of a Christian when observing another person is: "There go I."

Christ is in each person I encounter, whatever his faith or lack of faith. Christ is in all creation both on this earth and in this universe. We are all brothers and sisters, all one with God in the family of God. It is only when we can truly see our connection, this oneness that is God's plan, that God's kingdom will come.

FAMILY RESPONSE

Go through newspapers or magazines and cut out pictures of people's faces. Put together a collage for the refrigerator and title it, "We are all God's family."

PERSONAL RESPONSE

What person or types of persons in our society do you find it difficult to accept? How can you overcome this lack of love?