

A Good Shepherd Parable

The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

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INTRODUCTION TO LENT

The season of Lent is another "waiting time". The Good Shepherd program makes it easy for children to see the time pass as they prepare to experience Easter.

The stage is set for Lent by using a series of seven cards. The first six cards are purple with one side showing a blackened silhouette and the seventh card is white with one side showing a blackened silhouette. Each week the cards are removed from the Lent basket and laid out in a straight line to your left with the solid side facing upward. As each week's story is shared, the card is turned over. The first week the purple card with the silhouette symbolizing the story of "Waving Palms" is revealed. The second week that card and the one with the silhouette symbolizing the story of "The Tax Collector and the Pharisee" are revealed. And so on. Each week we begin with card one, asking the children to mentally recall each part of the Lent story, before telling the current week's story.

During the story response time, the children are encouraged to take the Lent basket and the story basket from the shelf and see if they can tell the story each week. By using the Lent cards and the story figures the children look ahead with great anticipation to the joy and wonder of Easter.

Each lesson in the Lent series tells you which story, story figures and Lent cards are to be used. During the "circle of light" be sure to place the appropriate bookmark representing each week's story in the Good Shepherd classroom Bible. This allows the children, non-readers as well as readers, to become familiar with where the Lent stories are found in the Bible.

During this time called Lent we learn a lot about Jesus, the stories he told and the things he did. We learn about his relationships with his friends and the people who followed him. The message of Lent is heard as we gradually begin to understand that Jesus showed himself to be the Messiah.

MATERIALS USED DURING LENT---YEAR THREE

The medium Lent basket on the shelf contains:

- a set of 7 cards are used each week in the following order:
 - a purple card with a palm branch silhouette
 - a purple card with a praying hands silhouette
 - a purple card with chalice and paten silhouette
 - a purple card with a gavel silhouette
 - a purple card with a robe silhouette
 - a purple card with a pitcher and basin silhouette
 - a white card with an empty tomb and cross silhouette

The story sets are used in the following order:

- Waving Palms basket
- The Tax Collector and the Pharisee basket
- The Last Supper basket
- Jesus is Put on Trial basket
- Herod, Meet Jesus basket
- Jesus Before Pilate basket
- Crucifixion and Resurrection basket

Items needed from the worship shelf for Lent:

- chalice (for use with the Last Supper basket)*
- paten (for use with the Last Supper basket)*

If communion is served during the "circle of light" the week The Last Supper story is presented you will need to purchase bread and grape juice.

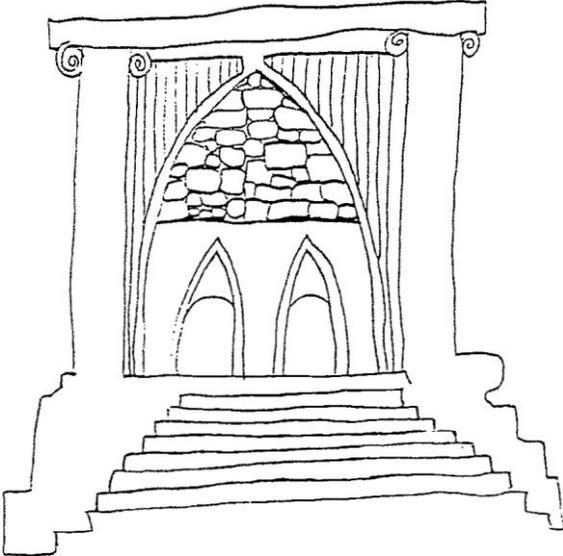
*These items are not furnished for you. We recommend their use and hope you can acquire them locally.

A PHARISEE AND A TAX COLLECTOR ... MATERIALS

- parable box containing:
 - purple felt rectangle underlay
 - laminated backdrop of the temple
 - laminated Pharisee figure
 - laminated tax collector :figure

- from worship shelf
 - Lent basket containing 7 cards

Pharisee



Temple



Tax Collector

A PHARISEE AND A TAX
COLLECTOR ... Luke 18: 6-14

ACTIONS

After speaking, walk slowly to the shelf and pick up the parable box with two hands. Return to your place in the circle and sit down.

After speaking, sit in silence as you gently trace the outline of the parable box with your finger and gather your words for the story.

Remove the six purple cards from the Lent-3 basket and lay them out with the plain purple side showing in a straight line starting to your outer left.

Remove the white card from the Lent-3 basket and lay it next to the purple card closest to you with the plain white side showing.

Turn the first purple card over so the silhouette of the palm branch shows. Touch it reverently.

Turn the second purple card over so the silhouette of the praying hands shows. Touch it reverently.

Rest your hands lightly on the box, touching it reverently.

Slowly shake your head and smile.

Nod your head confidently.

WORDS

Children of God, watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

All of the words to this story are inside of me. Will you make silence with me, please, so I can find all of the words to this story?

These are Lent cards.

They will help us understand the stories we hear during Lent and make us ready for the time for which we are waiting Easter.

The first week of Lent we learned about Jesus coming into the city of Jerusalem while the people waved palms.

This, the second week of Lent, we will hear the parable of A Tax Collector And A Pharisee.

This is a parable box. I wonder if there is really a parable inside this box?

You see, parables are very precious.

This box looks a bit like a gift.

Parables are like gifts. We can't go buy one, or even rent one, like we do a movie.

Parables already belong to us.

Raise your eyebrows and shake your head.

And like gifts, we don't always know what's inside by looking at the box.

Lift the lid just slightly.

We have to take the lid off. If we take the lid off our box, maybe we will discover a parable.

Lean forward as you speak softly.

Once there was a man who said amazing things and did wonderful things. Some of the people thought they were better than other people.

Unfold and smooth the purple underlay.

So the man who said amazing things and did wonderful things told them this story.

Place the temple backdrop on the felt, facing the children, or away from yourself

"There were two men who went to the temple to say their prayers.

Place the Pharisee in the crowded area of the temple, and place the tax collector in the nearly empty part of the temple.

One man was a Pharisee, a leader in the church, and the other man was a tax collector, a person many people didn't like.

Hold out your hands and raise your voice slightly as you pray the prayer of the Pharisee. Be sure to emphasize, with your voice, each of the good deeds.

The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed so that all could hear him, 'Thank you God that I am not greedy, dishonest and unfaithful to my family, like some other people. And I am really glad that I am not like that tax collector over there. You know I go for two days without eating each week, and I give you one tenth of all the money I earn.'

Gently touch the tax collector and move him even farther away from the Pharisee.

The tax collector stood away from the Pharisee.

Touch the face of the tax collector, to point out that he is looking down.

He didn't even think he was good enough to look up toward heaven.

Cross your arms in front of yourself, and speak: quietly as you pray the tax collector's prayer.

He was so sad about what he had done that he pounded on his chest and prayed, 'God, I am such a sinner. Please have sympathy for me.' u

Lean forward as you speak softly.

Move the two figures away from the temple in opposite directions and rest your hand gently on the tax collector.

Indicate the Pharisee with your hand extended toward him, palm up.

Indicate the tax collector with your hand extended toward him, palm up.

Then the man who said amazing things and did wonderful things spoke to the people who listened.

"When the two men left the temple it was the tax collector whose words made God happy.

If you think you are better than someone else, you will be put down.

But if you remember that no one, including you, is perfect, you will be honored."

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

I wonder how the Pharisee felt about the tax collector when he saw him in the temple?

I wonder why the Pharisee thought he was better than someone else?

I wonder what God thought when the prayers of the two men came to God's ear?

Place the laminated figures in the box one at a time. For the very young children, walk them through the process of folding the felt, placing straight edges together, until it fits in the box.

Without speaking, stand and return the parable box to its shelf.

Return to the circle and sit down. Be certain all the children have had an opportunity to choose their work before dismissing the entire group.

Children of God, watch carefully as I put this story away. That way you will know how to handle it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

Watch carefully where I return this story. That way you will know where to find it if you choose to make this story your work today or another day.

I wonder what you will choose for your work today? Let's go around the circle and decide what each of us will do.

A PHARISEE AND A TAX COLLECTOR. .. TEACHER HELPS

The only clue we have to the setting for this story is found in verse 9. It simply says that there were some people who thought they were better than others and who looked down on everyone else. That situation prompted Jesus to tell the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector. This parable is found only in the gospel of Luke.

It was the custom of faithful Jewish men to go the temple once or twice a day, at 9 AM and 3 PM, and offer up their prayers. Both men went at the same time, but that is the end of their similarities. The Pharisee spoke with pride about his lifestyle and all that he did and did not do. He spoke loudly with his face lifted up so that all could hear him. He fasted more than was required by Jewish law and he tithed of everything he had, when he was only required to tithe of the produce that he had. The Pharisee especially pointed out that he was glad he was not like the tax collector.

Indeed tax collectors were hated. They were Jewish men who worked for the Roman government. While they collected the taxes for Rome, they also often took more than they needed to put in their own pockets. So they were hated for two reasons. First because they worked for the Roman government and second because they cheated their own people.

When the tax collector prayed, he didn't even look up toward God. He was very aware of the sins he had committed and knew that there was no way he could really make them right. So he did the only thing he knew. He confessed his sin and threw himself at the mercy of God.

€ *Interpreter's One Volume Commentary on the Bible*, page 697.)

And God was pleased. The parable is intended to help the reader and listener understand that we are never able to take care of everything by ourselves. God must always be part of the equation. The Pharisee was unable to see that his attitude came between himself and God, as well as himself and another person in his community of faith. But the tax collector left, knowing that he was the creature God had created, always needing to be brought back into right relationship with the Creator God. And I have to believe he was committed to living a more faithful life in his profession after that time of confession and forgiveness.

But the lesson is not really about being forgiven, it's about how we come to God. The bottom line is that none of us is any better than any of God's other creatures. If our life is wonderful, it's because we have received that as a marvelous gift of grace from God, not because we are somehow better than another person. This topic is especially important for middle and upper elementary children, who begin dealing with peer pressure and cliques in school and church.

In our first wondering question we wonder how the Pharisee felt about the tax collector when he saw him in the temple. I believe the children will say that the Pharisee thought that the tax collector was no good, or a bad man. Some may even say that he thought the tax collector was dirty and a cheater.

In the second question we wonder why the Pharisee thought he was better than someone else. The children will probably respond that he thought because he did good things that he was a better person than the tax collector. Or perhaps they will turn that around and say that because he didn't do the bad things the tax collector did, he thought he was good. He may even have believed that God loved him more because he obeyed all the laws.

The third question is tough for the children. We have all been so programmed to believe that God loves us because we do good things that this reversal is difficult. It will be so for the children as well. We have to help them remember that God loves us and BECAUSE of that love we choose to live in a certain way. God was probably pleased with the tax collector's prayer because he realized that he didn't live out the love God gave him. He abused that love. Children will probably simply say that God didn't like the one who bragged, and liked the one who said he was sorry. .

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN:

Think of someone you know who, according to you, thinks they are better than other people. How do you feel about them? Do you like to be around them? How do you treat them?

Have you ever felt that you are better than another person? What made you think that? If not, why not?

Now think about a person who has done something terrible, like murdering another person. Do you think you are better than that person? Why or why not? How does God feel about the murderer?