



THE PARABLE OF
THE PUBLICAN and PHARISEE

A LESSON ON PRAYER

Prayer is important to our religious life. In general, there are two forms of prayer - Private and Public, that is alone or together in community.

During the course of His earthly life, Jesus taught us about both forms. He Himself went up to a mount and prayed alone with His Heavenly Father, as He did also in Gethsemane. He taught people to pray "in secret," to close the door and commune with God. But He also urged people to pray publicly, especially at worship. "Where two or three are together in My Name, there am I amongst them." Christ went regularly to the temple in sanctification of the Sabbath. And so we, too, gather each Lord's Day, to pray together as the Family of God.

But there are ingredients to TRUE prayer, whether private or public. The parable of the Publican and the Pharisee points to a factor that, on the one hand, kills effective prayer; and a factor, on the other hand, that facilitates true communion with the Lord.

We see the pride, the hypocrisy, the failure of love in the example of the Pharisee, who stood before the crowd in the temple and bragged about his righteousness. We also see the true humility, the need for God and forgiveness on the part of the Publican who stood back and beat his breast praying "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"

Christ ended his teaching with this: "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." May we heed this warning against hypocrisy.