

Accidental Pharisees – When Comparison Becomes Arrogance

We took a 2-week break in our *Accidental Pharisees* series, but the last 2 Sunday sermons have actually served as a great lead into today's message!

- As Christians we're called to share our faith... plant seeds... gospel mission
- As the Church, we're called to transformation... It's what the love of Jesus does!

But how do we know if we are doing well in these areas or not?
How do we measure effectiveness in our lives as Christians?

Sadly, we tend to look around us at others, and compare ourselves to them!

- "I may not share my faith that often, but I do it more than that person!"
- "I may not be involved in many inward, upward & outward transformation opportunities, but I check more boxes than most of the people at church!"
- "No, I'm not perfect, but compared to the person next to me I'm doing OK!"

We learned this well in grade school – when we got graded on a curve!
We learned this well in gym class – when teams were picked for dodgeball!
We learned this well at work - when job security was based on production!

But is this how God measures us... How God decides who He is going to choose, & use, for His Kingdom purposes?

Too often we think that God operates like the rest of the world...

- The NFL draft – The most athletic... intelligent... best fit... greatest need...
- Movies – Based on box office sales... critics reviews... Rotten Tomatoes...
- GOAT talks - Lebron vs. Jordan – points... championships... MVP's...

If this was the way God & His Kingdom functioned there would be no Moses... David... Peter... Paul... They all would've been disqualified... & so would we!

And for those who did make the cut, it must have been based upon their extraordinary abilities or performance, in comparison to the rest of us!

The comparison game always produces either arrogance or despair!

And this is what turned the Pharisees into Pharisees! Even with the most Godly intentions, they slipped into the trap of self-indulgence!

Have you ever heard statements like these from well-intentioned believers...

- "Look how many souls I've won for Christ!"
- "Look at how many transformational opportunities I'm involved in!"
- "Look how big our church... our budget... our ministries are!"

Do you hear the arrogance & self-centeredness taking root in these statements?
This is what Jesus warned us about in the parable He tells in Luke 18:9-14.

The comparison game is a trap, and the Pharisees fell into it! We too must beware of this in our faith expressions & transformational pursuits as well!

If we are to compare ourselves to anyone, the only comparison that leads to true Godliness is in comparing ourselves to Christ! Such a comparison puts us all in the same camp - we are all sinners in need of saving!

And that's where the gospel shines brightest... We all have hope in a Savior!
For what is needed for all of us, has been freely, and fully, provided in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ!

My works merit me nothing when it comes to my salvation! I need the gospel just as much as every one of you! The only room we have for boasting in faith is boasting in Christ! For all our merits are a result of His!

So in God's economy, the pastor is not greater than the nursery worker... the person in 3 Bible studies is not greater than the stay-at-home mom caring for her family... The ministry leader is not greater than the silent prayer warrior... The senior saint is not greater than the new teenage convert!

The Pharisees, & we too, can easily forget this gospel! We need to be reminded of the *2nd Q&A of the Heidelberg Catechism* - the true measurables of Godliness!

If we aren't careful, faith can become religion! The gospel can get lost in the law! Comparison of one-another can overshadow grace! And arrogance in the church can destroy the unity that Jesus prayed for & died for!

No one intentionally falls into this pharisaical trap, but it can happen to any of us! How we answer these questions are a good indicator of where we are:

- 1) How do you measure yourself as a Christian?
- 2) How do you view success and failure in the Christian life?
- 3) Do you ever see yourself as better than, or worse than, other believers?
- 4) Is your goal pleasing God, or checking off religious boxes!

The Gideon's mission is a good one, but only if God is the one who gets the glory! The mission of BRC is a good one, so too are our strategies, but only if they remain pathways for true transformation & not badges on our uniform!

Luke 18:14 - "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted!"

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