

The Lakeview Lamp

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." – Psalm 119:105

Jan 29

2012

How Do We Go Home From Worship?

David Holder

How do you leave the place of worship? I do not mean do you leave casually or hurried, in a car or walking? I mean what is the state of your soul before God when you leave? Jesus tells of two men who went into the temple to worship. Afterwards, they both went home, but one man ***“went down to his house justified rather the other”*** (Luke 18:9-14). We will do well to learn why.

Here is the parable Jesus told to ***“certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt”***:

“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, ‘God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’”

The Similarities and Differences

There are obvious similarities between the Pharisee and tax-gatherer: both went to the temple to pray, both stood and addressed God in prayer, both left the temple and went home. There are also conspicuous differences: one talked to himself about his piety, the other talked to God about his sin; one rehearsed his righteousness so God could hear, the other agonized before God pleading for mercy; one was thankful he was not like other people, the other felt it was not his place to stand near others. The most crucial difference is that one went home satisfied with himself, while the other went home justified before God.

How do we go home from worship? With a sense of appreciation and forgiveness? Joyous, motivated, and determined? Or do we go home unfazed and unchanged? Do we go home satisfied with ourselves or justified before God? The answer depends on **what we do in worship**. Jesus’ caricature of the Pharisee and tax-gatherer will help us evaluate ourselves.

The Pharisee and the Tax-Gatherer

The Pharisee came to the place of worship with no consciousness of sin or need. **This man “thanked” God, if you can call it that, not for what God had done for him, but for what he had done for himself. He reviewed his righteousness, mentioning his “extra” merits without asking God for anything. He confirmed his good standing in comparison to other people, certain that God was impressed with how he was doing. The Pharisee proudly came without any sense of need, and did you notice he went home the same way – a proud man, satisfied with his achievements? He was unchanged by worship because he thought he was already as good as anybody could be.**

The tax-gatherer came to the place of worship disturbed and with a consciousness of sin. He stood at a distance, presumably aware of the extreme danger of being in **God's presence. It would be dangerous to get too close. He admitted he had no rightful place before God, or even alongside other worshipers.** Knowing his unworthiness, this man dared not look up toward God. He agonized over his condition, but had very little to say – nothing about himself or about anyone else. The tax-gatherer humbly begged for mercy. **“Be merciful” is a word that means to be propitiated: “Let your anger be removed.” He was not only “a” sinner, but “the” sinner. He knew God was justly angry about his sin and begged for help.**

Jesus identified the critical difference both in the men's attitudes and their resulting conditions. One exalted himself, while the other humbled himself. One, while satisfied with himself, would be humbled. The other, while disturbed about himself, would be exalted by God. What about you and me?

How Do We Go Home From Worship?

We can go to worship to do our duty and reaffirm our right doctrines, practices, and standing with God – **we've been immersed, we are members of the Church of Christ, we do the right acts of worship three times a week, we don't use an instrument, and we're a part of a sound church.** We can compare ourselves to denominationalists and liberals and come off looking pretty good. The worship period can consist mostly of such **thoughts and affirmations, and we may feel “it was good for us to be here.” But beware.** If this is our worship, we will come and go the same people we are – satisfied, unmoved, unchanged.

Or, we can go to worship to seek God, conscious of our sin and terrified of His holiness. We can spend the hour focusing on God who is both holy and merciful, begging for His forgiveness and help. We can admit we have no right to be children of God, being deeply grateful that by His grace we are. As a result of such awareness and gratitude, we humbly seek God as He directs in His word, not as we presume for ourselves. But beware. If this is our worship, we will go home alive to God, joyful in our hearts, and motivated to serve Him better and seek Him more.

How do you go home from worship?

A Well-Defined Life

Alan Adams

Paul was *“separated unto the Gospel”* (Romans 1:1). Jesus foretells the gathering of all nations *“before him,”* saying further that *“he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats”* (Matthew 25:32). The Greek word that translates as *“separate(d)”* is a form of the verb *aphoridzo*. The *-horidzo* part of the word is the source of our word *horizon*. The *ap-* part of the word means *from*. Altogether, the fundamental idea of *aphoridzo* is to *“mark off by boundaries.”* The noun form of this word is *aphorismos*, which is the Greek word for *“definition.”* When we define words, we show how they are distinct, or separated from others in a similar class. A Christian life is a separated life; it is a well-defined life.

News and Notes

The bulletin for next Sunday will be printed Friday, so please have any news for it to Troy by Friday morning.

Members:

- * Michael C. is doing better after a respiratory infection and hopes to be here today.
- * To find an article about Estelle H. that was in *The Hendersonville Star News*, go to www.tennessean.com/section/HENDERSONVILLE.
- * Earl L. plans to be out with us today.
- * Jennifer N. will have her second chemo treatment Tuesday. She and Troy leave on Friday for a week at the FC lectures.
- * Ame W. goes back to the hip doctor in two weeks.

Friends and Family:

- * Mitchell Alexander, **Chris G's uncle, moved last week to a nursing home in Dresden** but then had to be rush to the ER and back to Memphis. He is suffering from dehydration and other issues.
- * Alana Jackson, **friend of the Moore's, is scheduled for a double mastectomy on February 14th.**
- * Carol Roy fell recently and broke her knee cap and wrist. She had a second surgery on both of them Friday.

Absent: None known.

New Reports: Arrigo Corrazza (Italy – We no longer support him but still get reports.), Robert Nichols (Japan).

That definition will be most distinct at the judgment when Jesus *“shall separate ... the sheep from the goats”* (Matthew 25:32). We control the precision of that definition when we obey the Lord's command to *“come ye out from among them, and be ye separate”* (2 Corinthians 6: 17). The definition is clear, too, when we live as we ought and *“men ... separate [us] from their company”* (Luke 6:22). If you live your life as you ought, this world will vomit you out like the fish did Jonah.

Coincidentally, these Greek words are also the source of our word “aphorism,” a proverb; or, what my Papa used to call “an ol' ettered saying.”



“Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.” – **Psalm 136:1**