

30th Sunday OT – Luke 18:9-14

The Pharisee in his prayer did not take to heart the words of Jesus, "When you have done all that you have been told to do, say, *We are useless servants.*" He spoke his prayer to himself and his topic was his own achievements; he thought that God was in his debt because of his pious practices. Certainly, faith must express itself in service, in ploughing God's fields and tending God's sheep and in keeping the commandments, as Jesus told the rich young man, but not in judgement and condemnation of others.

The Pharisee had not understood Hosea who made it clear that God looked for devout hearts rather than external sacrifices. Like the elder son in the parable, he saw his service of God as a loveless servitude.

The tax collector/s prayer put him in the company of Peter who had realized the power of God in the great catch of fish and said, "Depart from me, Lord, I am a sinful man" and of the disciples who were taught to pray "Forgive us our sins." Like the younger son in the parable, he said, "I have sinned against heaven." His prayer was a model for those who would hear Peter's appeal at Pentecost, "Repent, that your sins may be forgiven." This tax collector was not yet a perfect disciple; he did not yet know God as Father, but he had made a good start on the road of discipleship.