Think About It ...

Find and circle the following words in the puzzle:

FORGIVE

HUMILITY

JUSTIFIED

LENT

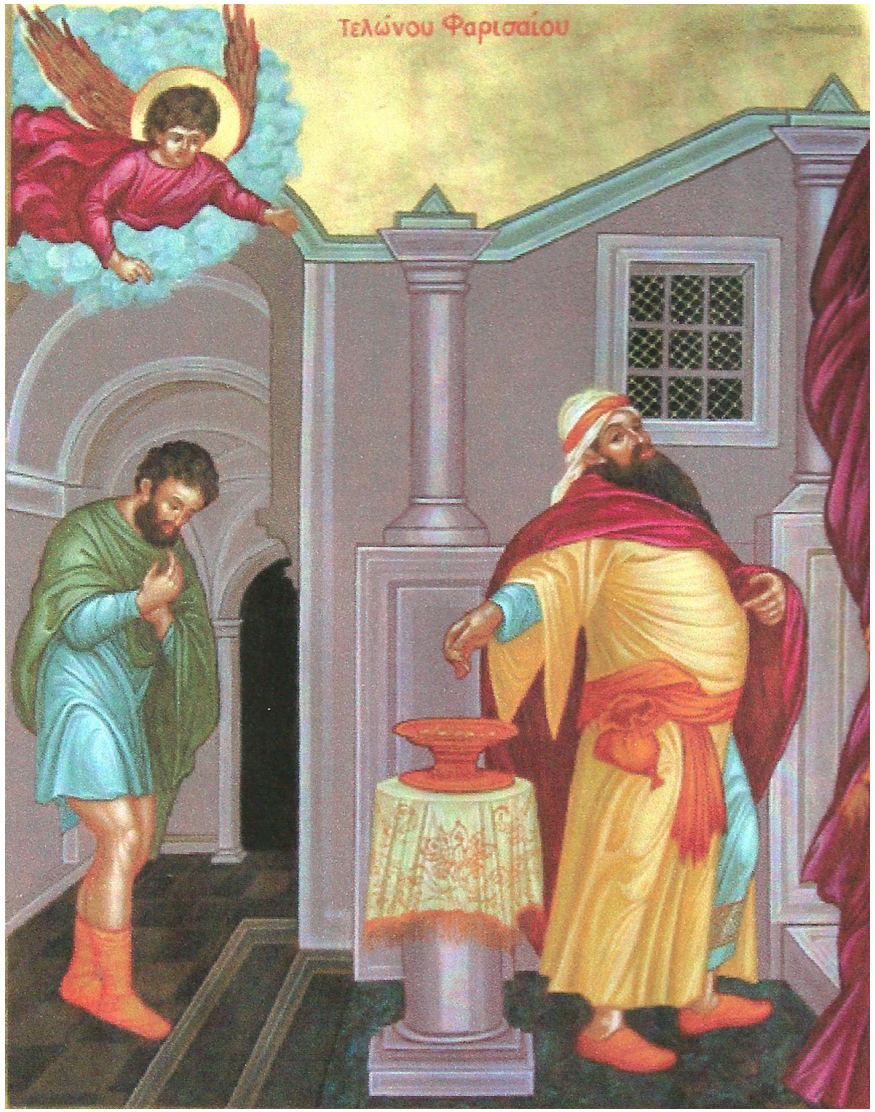
MERCY

PUBLICAN

PHARISEE

Q	W	E	R	T	Y	A	S	D	F	G	Z	X	C	A
H	P	G	J	U	S	T	I	F	I	E	D	F	D	S
J	U	K	L	Z	X	C	V	B	N	M	Q	A	Z	W
J	B	U	N	H	Y	B	G	T	R	C	D	E	X	S
M	L	I	K	O	Q	P	H	A	R	I	S	E	E	W
A	I	P	Q	C	A	Z	L	M	D	T	R	E	W	S
X	C	O	H	V	S	X	K	N	F	D	S	P	W	S
C	A	I	U	B	D	C	J	B	G	S	E	O	Q	X
V	N	U	M	N	F	C	F	O	R	G	I	V	E	C
B	U	Y	I	M	G	V	G	V	H	A	R	I	A	V
N	T	T	L	Y	H	M	F	C	J	L	T	U	L	Z
M	G	T	I	U	J	E	D	X	K	K	Y	Y	E	T
L	B	R	T	I	K	R	S	Z	L	J	U	T	N	Y
K	V	E	Y	O	L	C	A	A	P	B	I	R	T	U
J	R	W	D	P	P	Y	A	S	O	V	O	E	S	I

The Publican and the Pharisee



"... everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

(Gospel of St. Luke 18:14)

The Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee

(from the Gospel of Luke 18:10-14)

Jesus told a **parable** to some people who were very proud of their good works but looked down on others. A "parable" is a story that is told in order to teach a lesson about a spiritual truth.

Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a **Pharisee**, a person of the upper class who was well known in the community. In Biblical times, Pharisees held high positions in the goveernment and also in the Temple. This man did everyting that was expected in his religion. He prayed. He fasted. He geve money to the Temple. These are very good things. But he was **overly proud** of his accomplishments.

The second man was a **Publican** who was a tax-collector and was disliked by many people. Tax-collectors were known to be sometimes dishonest, so they were not trusted. The word "Publican" means "common citizen." He was not a high official and was not a privileged person in society. He **did not think he was special** in any way.

Standing in a prominent place in the Temple, **the Pharisee prayed, "God, I thank You that I am not like other people who commit sins**, or even as this tax collector."

Standing in the back of the Temple and even afraid to look up toward heaven, **the Publican prayed, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"**

Jesus said, *"I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

What do Christ's words mean?

To be **"justified"** means that God accepts a person into His Kingdom as the person's sins are forgiven.

A person who **"exalts himself"** thinks he is very great, expects other people to agree with his high opinion of himself, and does not think he does anything wrong.

But Christ teaches that in order to **receive** forgiveness, a person must first **realize** that he or she is not perfect but has done some wrong things (sin) and **ask** God for forgiveness. Whoever asks God for His forgiveness receives it.

The Publican knew that he had sins, and he admitted that he was sinful. His prayer, **"God, be merciful to me a sinner,"** was a prayer asking for God's forgiveness. He showed that he was sorry for his sins.

Feeling sorry for our mistakes (sins) is what is meant by the word "repentance." When we realize that we have sins and know that we must ask God to forgive them, that is "humility." Christ said that it was **the Publican's humility that justified him to God.**

The Pharisee did not realize that even though he did many good things, he had sins too. He looked down on other people and thought he was better than they were. He did not think it was wrong to do that, but Christ taught that everyone is equal in God's eyes.

The Pharisee also sinned because he thought that he did not have any sins or that his sins were not serious enough to ask for forgiveness.

The lesson to be learned is that God wants us to see ourselves as we really are. No human being is as perfect as the Pharisee thought he was. Everyone makes mistakes. When we realize that is so, then we begin to have **humility.**

That is why the Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee is read **in preparation for Great Lent.** As we learned last week, Great Lent is the time when we examine our lives, repent of our sins, and make an **effort to improve** our spiritual lives.

Last week we learned about Zacchaeus, who was a tax-collector. We do not know who was the tax-collector was in today's Gospel reading. But Jesus told the story about him to teach us more about humility and repentance.

During Great Lent, we Orthodox believers take the time to look inside, in order to see if what we do and think is what Christ taught.

We are "justified" when we repent and ask God to be merciful to us by forgiving our sins, and **ask Him** to lead us away from making the same mistakes again. That is why our repentance and our asking for God's forgiveness are so important. We do that, over and over again, **so that we can grow as spiritually healthy persons.**

St. Michael's Orthodox Church, Jermyn, Pennsylvania