

# OTHER PEOPLE

## Focus scripture Luke 18:9–14

### Two Worshippers

Click [here](#)

### Talking With God

Click [here](#)

### Bible Dictionary

Click [here](#)

### Today's Bible Reading

Click [here](#)

**God, be present to us  
in words of  
affirmation and love.  
Be near us  
in the constant  
challenge to overcome  
our arrogance and  
pride. Help us  
to be led by  
your grace to  
find humility in  
ourselves this day.  
Amen.**

A public shaming frenzy swept over social media in the COVID-19 pandemic. Fingers were pointed perhaps because it's harder to do the soul work to find a balanced view of oneself as a child of God in the large web of Creation than it is to point at other people. Isolation didn't help. The pandemic made this so much worse.

Remembering who we were and how we behaved in the pandemic might help as we listen to Luke 18:9–14. Verse nine reveals that this parable is a teaching moment for people who thought themselves "righteous and regarded others with contempt." Is that me? Was that me? What would God say? It is a good question to ask of these two temple goers.

The Pharisee, known to be a strict follower of God's rules, believes himself to be beyond reproach. Like all Pharisees, he would have been especially concerned with prayer, but those prayers would have praised God. Here, he praises himself for fasting and tithing.

The other, a tax collector, seems to consider himself worthy of all blame and humiliation that comes his way. The Pharisee would have regarded him this way. The tax collector is not the centre of attention, and he doesn't want to be. He prays for mercy by beating his chest. It is this one that Jesus says goes home "justified," just as the widow did in the previous parable. The tax collector is the one who shows humility rather than the Pharisee.

The irony of this text, and the point Jesus makes, is that judgment is God's realm, and we – no matter our status – are called to humility and repentance. The Pharisee has much to repent of but cannot see it. The tax collector has much to repent of and does. God, listening in to all the prayers, sees clearly where forgiveness and compassion belong. We are called to learn as we listen in with God through the teaching of Jesus.

