Many will probably ask, Why do we have to wait? Why doesn't God straighten out things right now? The answer is found in the fact that God seems to work in strides. He does not do things all at once. Even the Genesis writer realized this. In his conception God could have spoken and the whole universe would have come into being all at once, but instead he chose to spread it out over six days. Apparently God sees that his purpose in the universe can best be realized by working in strides. An all at once method of creation would not give man a chance to grow and develop. He would be a blind automaton. So God chooses to work in strides. This is why a theory of evolution should never frighten us. May it not be that God is working through the evolutionary process.

Wait, therefore, on the Lord. Your circumstance may seem to overwhelm you now, but wait on the Lord. Some disappointing experience may have you shivering in the cold winter of despair, but wait on the Lord. We as Negroes may often have our highest dreams blown away by the jostling winds of a white man's prejudice, but wait on the Lord. You may now be quivering in the midst of the chily winds of adversity, but wait on the Lord.

Isaiah waited on him, and in the dark and dreary day of the exile he could cry out, "The grass may wither, the flowers may fade away, but the word of our Lord shall stand forever." Job waited on him.

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9 Genesis 1
10 Isaiah 40:8
11 King refers to the perseverance of Job's faith in God despite overwhelming adversity.

"Pride Versus Humility: The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican,"
Sermon at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church

[25 September 1955]
[Montgomery, Ala.]"Pride Versus Humility: The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican,"
Sermon at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church

King draws upon George Buttrick's interpretation of Jesus' parable in this handwritten sermon. He observes that "the perpetrators of many of the greatest evils in our society worship Christ," and uses the jurors in the Emmett Till case as an example of those who "worship Christ emotionally and not morally." 

1 Buttrick, The Parables of Jesus, pp 87–91. On the inside of the file folder in which he kept this sermon, King wrote "Preached at Dexter, Sept (4th Sun), 1955."
In order to understand the revolutionary teaching of this parable, it is necessary to understand the positions which the Pharisee and Publican held in the community. The Pharisee was by far one of the most respected persons in the community. He was distinguished as a pillar of the Church and as a citizen of highest character. On the basis of strict adherence to the Jewish Mosaic law, he was certainly the "good" man of his community. The Publican, on the other hand, was looked upon as one of the disgraceful characters of the community. And yet the parable implies throughout that Jesus condemns the Pharisee—the good man—and approves the Publican—the sinner. The stand was not only unorthodox, but revolutionary. It was a staggering blow to the accepted judgments of that day. It was an appalling affront to the high-ups in the intricate ecclesiastical machinery.

Now the question is, Why did Jesus condemn the Pharisee and approve the Publican?

The first thing that caused Jesus to look askance at the Pharisee was that he confused ceremonial piety with genuine religious living. His logic seems to have been this: "I go to the synagogue regularly. I pay ten per cent of my income to the church, and I fast twice in the week, therefore I am a religious man, and I must be better than the publican, because he doesn't do any of these things." Jesus says the Pharisee is wrong because he attempted to incarcerate religion within the walls of religious observances, he made ceremonialism an end rather than a means to an end.

There are basically two sides to the religious life—the inward and the outer. The inward side of religion is the actual relationship between the I and the thou, it is the devotion of the individual to that object which concerns him ultimately. The outward side of religion is an expression of this concern through ritualistic and ceremonial means. Now the great danger confronting the religious man is that he will allow the outer side of religion to become a substitute for the inner side. There is the danger that actual contact with God will be lost beneath a maze of external formality. There is the danger that the fresh flowing stream of religion will be overwhelmed by ritualistic tributaries and ceremonial eddies flowing in. There is the danger that the ceremonial demands of Sunday will become substitutes for the ethical demands of Monday.

This was one of the basic errors of the Pharisee. He thought that the fulfilling of religious ceremony was a religious end. But ceremony is a religious means, it is a junction, not a terminus. Genuine religion is more than a ceremonial act, more than a Sunday form, more than a ritualistic observance, it is an attitude to life.

Jesus condemned this over-emphasis on the ceremonial, because he knew the ominous effects it could engender. He saw that it could be the springboard of a religion which worshipped Christ emotionally substitutes emotions.
for moral. This is what we are seeing in the world today—countless millions of people worshipping Christ emotionally but not morally. Great imperialistic powers, like Britain, France, and Holland, which have trumpeted and crushed Africa and Asia with the "iron feet of oppression, worship Christ. The white men who lynch Negroes worship Christ. That jury in Mississippi, which a few days ago in the Emmett Till case, freed two white men from what might be considered one of the most brutal and inhuman crimes of the twentieth century, worships Christ. The perpetrators of many of the greatest evils in our society worship Christ. These troubles that all people, like the Pharisee, go to church regularly, they pay their tithes and offerings, and observe religiously the various ceremonial requirements. The trouble with these people, however, is that they worship Christ emotionally and not morally. They cast his ethical and moral insights behind the gushing smoke of emotional adoration and ceremonial piety.

To those who would follow such a religion, we can God saying through the prophets: "Get out of my face. Your incense is an abomination unto me, your feast day trouble me. When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my face. When you make your loud prayer, I will not hear Your hand are full of blood."7 Again he says, "Take away from me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream."8 This is always God's response to those who would make ceremonial piety a substitute for genuine religious living.

This is the danger of Phariseesm and the continual threat that hoovers over every religious expression.

Another thing that Jesus found wrong with the Pharisee was that he compared himself to another to that other's disparagement. The Pharisee looked at the Publican and said in substance, "I thank thee that I am not like that poor devil." The Pharisee makes the Publican "a dark foil for his gleaming whiteness."7 But the truly religious man never does this. Instead he finds himself saying with Richard Baxter, as he watches a poor wretch go off to prison, "There but for the grace of God go I."8 Whenever a man lives close to God he is able to see in his soul the slumbering giants of evil always on the verge of awakening in his soul, he discovers staggering tides of badness which are capable of rising to flood proportions. Consequently, he cannot boast like the Pharisee, and whenever he sees humanity at its worse the inner voices of his soul cry out, "But for the grace of God, I to would be like that."

What the Publican needed was not condemnation, but encouragement. We never

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4 Till, a fourteen-year-old African American from Chicago, was lynched during the summer of 1955 in Money, Mississippi, for allegedly whistling at a white woman. On 23 September 1955, an all-white jury in Sumner, Mississippi, took just over an hour to acquit Roy Bryant and J W Milam of Till's murder.
5 Cf. Isaiah 1:13–16
6 Amos 5:23–24
7 Buttrick, *The Parables of Jesus*, p. 88. "The poor publican, standing at a distance, is thus dragged into the 'prayer' as a dark foil for the Pharisee's gleaming whiteness."
8 This quote is sometimes attributed to English clergyman Richard Baxter (1615–1691), although its source is Puritan martyr John Bradford (1510–1555). While in prison, Bradford watched criminals go to their execution and exclaimed, "But for the grace of God there goes John Bradford." (The *Writings of John Bradford* [Cambridge University Press, 1853], p. xliii)
help others by condemning them. Mere condemnation is always wrong. The evil is to be condemned, but not the person who does it, though he may have to be restrained and punished because of the evil he does. Mere condemnation tends to set up an impassible gulf between the condemned and the condemned person. As the Psychoanalyse Jung has said so well in the last chapter of his book Modern Man in Search of a Soul, speaking of patient who come to him concerned about their guilt feelings:

Condemnation does not liberate, it oppresses. I am the oppressor of the person I condemn, not his friend and fellow sufferer. Modern man has heard enough about guilt and sin. He is sorely beset by his own bad conscience and wants rather to learn how he is to reconcile himself with his own nature, how he is to love the enemy in his own heart and call the wolf his brother.[9]

As a minister, it falls my responsibility from time to time to talk with people concerning their problems, mistakes, and guilt feelings. I try never to embark upon such conversations with an attitude of condemnation and passing judgment. I seek not to appear before them with the holy-art-I attitude. Every counselor must to create for the patient a permissive atmosphere. He must learn to project himself in the patient's situation, never condemning or being shocked, trying to understand and helping the person to make a new start. The truly religious man who tries to help others will say, in effect, "I cannot condemn you, for I have erred too many times myself, but I can tell you of Jesus who forgave me, and I can show you the upward path which I and trying to follow".

The Pharisee did not do this. He saw his brother stumble on the rugged paths of life, and rejoiced in his falling. He watched his brother being crushed by the battering-rams of his passions, and gained his ego-satisfaction therefrom.

[The Pharisee regarded God as a corporation in which he had earned a considerable block of stock, so that at any moment he might be invited to become a director. His prayer told God that he was waiting for well deserved honors.]

The Publican had a soul open to God, while the pharsee was locked in himself. [Here] Once a man has confronted God, he can never turn on one who has stumbled and fallen, and feel superior. Perhaps he comes to see that he might be thinking things and doing things that are just as bad. Never forget that if sin were punished by society on the basis of God's assessment of sin, we would all be in jail. How we turn up our noses at those who commit sins like stealing or drunkenness or other crimes of the criminal courts. But often we do things far worse. We may never rob a bank, but how often do we rob our fellows of their good names through mali-

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9 C G Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, pp. 234-235, 237
10 Psychologist Carl R. Rogers stressed that effective client-centered therapy was enhanced "if the counselor creates a warm and permissive atmosphere in which the individual is free to bring out any attitudes and feelings which he may have, no matter how unconventional, absurd, or contradictory these attitudes may be" (Rogers, "Significant Aspects of Client-Centered Therapy," American Psychologist 1 [October 1946] 416)
11 King wrote the main body of this document in pencil. This concluding section was written in pen.
cious gossip. We may never become drunkards, but how often have we staggered before our dearest friends intoxicated with a bad temper. We may never murder a person with some physical weapon, but how often have husbands killed the spirits of wives and wives killed the spirits of husbands with the deadening bullet of mental cruelty. On the basis of God’s standard we all deserve to be punished.

All of this the Pharsee failed to see. It is no wonder that Jesus condemned his attitude.

Let us look at a third reason why Jesus condemned the attitude of the Pharsee — and I think here we find the crux of the whole story, the most important thing we are to learn Jesus condemned the Pharsee because he was a victim of inordinate spiritual pride. From this tragic attitude stemms all of the other faults of the Pharsee. Pride, as it is used here, is not “snobbishness” or respect for achievement. Pride has a much more comprehensive meaning. It is more akin to the idea of self-sufficiency, or as Webster’s dictionary puts it, “inordinate self-esteem.” Spiritual pride is the worst of sins, because it imagines that sin can be conquered by the efforts of man. The Pharsee felt that he had saved himself by the doing of a few good deeds.

Every that Everything that he says is centered in himself. His whole philosophy of life is wrapped up in the one word “I.” He uses the word “God,” but it is only a perfunctory prelude to a panegyric of self-praise. He first congratulates himself on his virtues of omission. Then he informs heaven of his virtues of commission. Herein was his mistake. His virtue was negative. His goodness was mummery.

But the story takes of another character. He stood afar off as one unworthy to be the neighbor of a righteous man. He looked upon himself with agonizing shame. He was aware that the sin of his nature had separated him, not only from himself and his neighbors, but from God. In the midst of this deep awareness and this dreadful shame he cries out to God, “God be merciful unto me a sinner.”

The minute he says this Jesus came to the terse conclusion of the matter. “I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other.”

AD CSKC Sermon file, folder 59, “Pride Versus Humility (Parable of Publican and Pharsee)"

12 Buttrick, *The Parables of Jesus*, p 88, “He used the word ‘God,’ but it was only a glance in the general direction of heaven to prelude a panegyric of self-praise. He first congratulated himself on his virtues of omission.”

13 Buttrick, *The Parables of Jesus*, p 89, “His abstentions from wrong having been listed, the Pharsee next informed heaven of his virtues of commission. His virtue was negative. His goodness was mummery.”

14 Buttrick, *The Parables of Jesus*, p 88, “The Pharsee’s virtue was so cankered by pride that it was almost rotten.”

15 Buttrick, *The Parables of Jesus*, p 89, “He stood afar off as one unworthy to be the neighbor of a righteous man.”

16 Buttrick, *The Parables of Jesus*, p 89, “The Publican by his own confession was infamously separated from all others by his sin.”

17 Buttrick, *The Parables of Jesus*, pp 89–90, “Then the terse conclusion of the matter: ‘I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other.”