

TEETER TOTTERS AND THE KINGDOM

(Luke 18:9-14)

- Intro: I started my formal education in a two-room country school.
- St. Paul Lutheran School.
 - #Outside of Boone, Iowa.
 - *Home of Mamie Doud Eisenhower.
 - +First Lady of the United States at the time.
 - Parochial school.
 - #My dad was pastor of the congregation.
 - Lower room.
 - #Grades K-4.
 - Upper room.
 - #Grades 5-8.

We didn't have much in the way of playground equipment.

- Four swings.
- Two teeter totters.
 - #I haven't seen any teeter totters lately.
 - *They've probably been retired.
 - +For safety reasons.
 - #But you know how they work.
 - *If I push you down.
 - +I go up.
 - *If you push me down.
 - +You go up.

I. The Pharisee Liked To Play On The Teeter Totter.

A. He Was A Model Of Religious Piety.

1. He fasted twice a week.
 - a. Twice the norm.
2. He gave a tithe of all of his income.
 - a. Not just of:
 - Crops.
 - Animals.
3. He would probably be welcome in this congregation.
 - a. He was faithful in prayer and worship.
 - I recently read a study about changes in religious practice.
 - #It used to be that "regular" attendance at worship.
 - *Meant every week.

- #But for many today.
 - *"Regular" means once or twice a month.
- Pharisee was old school.
 - #He would be here every week.
- b. He was a tither.
 - He gave 10% of all of his income.
 - #Not 10% of what was left.
 - *After paying his living expenses.
 - #But 10% of all of his income.
 - *If we had a congregation of tithers.
 - +We would have no money problems here.
 - =We could:
 - Balance our budget.
 - Increase our benevolence.
 - Pay for our building.
 - +Think about that.
 - We would love to have more Pharisees in this congregation.

B. But The Pharisee Loved To Play On The Teeter Totter.

1. He lifted himself up.
 - a. By putting other people down.
2. The Greek text can be read a couple of ways.
 - a. "He stood to himself, praying."
 - b. "He stood, praying to himself."
3. His prayer:
 - a. "God, I thank you that I am not like other people."
 - b. "God, I thank you that I am not like the thieves, rogues, and adulterers."
 - c. "God, I thank you that I am not like that tax collector."
 - Tax collectors were often considered to be:
 - #Thieves.
 - #Rogues.
 - *If not adulterers.
 - Palestine was ruled by the Romans at the time of Jesus.
 - #Romans collected taxes through tax farming.
 - *Selling tax collection franchises to local businessmen.
 - +So the Romans got their money up front.
 - *Tax collectors then did the dirty work.
 - +Collecting.
 - +Extorting, some would say.
 - =Taxes from the people.
 - To pay for their franchise fee.
 - Whatever they made over and above that.
 - #Their profit.
 - *More they collected, the greater the profit.

II. Do We Like To Play On The Teeter Totter?

A. Bullying Is A Form Of Playing On A Teeter Totter.

1. Putting other people down.
 - a. In order to lift ourselves up.
2. Bullying might take the form of:
 - a. Name calling.
 - b. Social ostracism.
 - c. Physical abuse.
3. Based on differences in:
 - a. Academic performance.
 - b. Athletic ability.
 - c. Sexual orientation.
4. Those who do the bullying.
 - a. Probably don't feel very good about themselves.
 - b. If I'm OK with me.
 - I don't need to put you down.
 - #In order to feel like somebody.
 - We can lift each other up.
 - c. If I'm not OK with me.
 - I may feel a need to put you down.
 - #So that I can feel better about myself.
5. Those who are the victims of bullying.
 - a. May respond with violence.
 - Violence is often a substitute for tears.
 - #People are hurting.
 - *But they don't always have a sympathetic audience.
 - +If they want to talk it out.
 - *We have this perverted notion.
 - + "Big boys don't cry."
 - #So violence can result.
 - Columbine High School Massacre.
 - #Littleton, Colorado.
 - #April 20, 1999.
 - #Done by two young men.
 - *Who were tired of being bullied.
 - b. Suicide is sometimes another response.
 - There have been a rash of suicides in recent months.
 - #Among high school and college students.
 - *Who were taunted because of their sexual orientation.
 - Violence is often a substitute for tears.
 - #Suicide is a form of violence.
 - *Turned in on one's self.
6. Teeters totters can be hazardous to our health.

- B. Religious Intolerance Can Be A Form Of Playing On A Teeter Totter.
1. Putting down the faith of others.
 - a. In order to lift ourselves up.
 2. Last month was the 9th anniversary of 9/11.
 - a. Four airplanes were hijacked.
 - Two were flown into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center.
#In Lower Manhattan.
 - One was flown into the Pentagon.
#In Washington, D.C.
 - One was crashed in a field.
#In Pennsylvania.
 - b. Who of us will ever forget those horrific terrorist attacks?
 3. Last month I watched a couple of TV specials about 9/11.
 - a. One was on the background of the terrorists.
 - b. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.
 - Mastermind behind the attacks.
#Didn't fly on any of the airplanes.
#Did the planning for Osama bin Laden.
#Captured in 2003.
#Now in Guantanamo awaiting trial.
 - Attended a Baptist college.
#In North Carolina.
*For awhile in the 1980s.
+As an engineering student.
#He and other Muslim students.
*Used a dorm room for their daily prayers.
+Leaving their shoes outside the door.
=As is their custom.
 - #One day while Khalid Sheikh Mohammed was at prayer.
*Other students:
+Took those shoes of the Muslim students.
+Threw them into the campus lake.
 - *I'm not trying:
+To excuse.
+To condone.
=Hijacking airplanes.
=Flying them into buildings.
=Killing thousands of people.
 - *But when I heard that part of the story.
+I couldn't help but wonder.
=If there wasn't a connection between:
*Shoes in the lake.
*Airplanes into buildings.

=That wasn't perceived by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

*Not as an innocent practical joke.

*But as a putdown.

+Of himself.

+Of his culture.

+Of his faith.

*Violence is often a substitute for tears.

4. Teeter totters can be hazardous to our health.

C. If We Think We're Not Like That, Don't We Get Caught In The Same Trap?

1. God, I thank you:

a. I'm not like that Pharisee.

b. I'm not like those schoolyard bullies.

c. I'm not like those shooters at Columbine High School.

d. I'm not like those people who take their own lives.

e. I'm not like those students who threw the shoes into the lake.

f. I'm not like those terrorists who flew airplanes into buildings.

2. Aren't we all on the same teeter totter?

a. Exalting ourselves.

b. By putting other people down.

III. How Do We Get Off Of The Teeter Totter?

A. Same Way The Tax Collector Did.

1. Not through our own efforts.

2. But by appealing to the mercy of God.

a. God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

b. God, be merciful to me, a teeter totterer.

B. God Gives Us A Cross Instead Of A Teeter Totter Board.

1. Weight of our sin.

a. Brings us down.

-Disobedience.

-Unbelief.

b. Helped raise Jesus onto the cross.

2. His death.

a. Brought him down into the grave.

b. Raises us up.

-New life in this world.

#Resurrected life.

#Forgiven life.

#Faithful life.

#Mutually uplifting life.

-Eternal life in the world to come.
#No more teeter totters.

Concl: All who exalt themselves will be humbled.
All who humble themselves will be exalted.

If that's the way it will be in the Kingdom of Heaven.

-Isn't that how it should be here?

#No put downs.

#No bullies.

#No violence.

#No terrorism.

#No teeter totters.