

To those who loved riches, thinking only of themselves, the storyteller told a set of parallel parables¹.

Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector².

On the way there, the Pharisee found a coin in the road, and picked it up. He felt that it was a special blessing from God for him because he was a righteous man³. He equated the poor to the unrighteous, and never thought that it might be badly needed by someone much less well-off than himself. Finding it simply added to his feeling that he was entitled to the good life⁴. Of course, he would give a tenth of the value of the coin to satisfy the law.

The publican, whose business it was to collect money, also found a coin on the way. He immediately began a search for who might have lost it, because keeping it would have been an insult to God's grace and His blessings. He eventually found that a woman had lost it⁵ and was desperately searching for it. She was extremely grateful to get it back, and celebrated the fact with her friends – and of course, she invited the publican. She later made a donation⁶ to the temple in her gratitude to God.

It is not difficult to consider the impact of the lost coin on someone. The woman in the story was devastated and made it her top priority to find it. The loss of the coin that the Pharisee found would likely have caused a similar reaction from its owner, but he essentially stole it from his poor neighbor⁷. This situation reminded me of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus⁸.

It is clear that the publican, rather than the Pharisee, went home justified before God⁹. For we know that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil¹⁰.

1. Luke 18:9
2. Luke 18:10
3. Luke 18:11
4. Luke 12:18
5. see Luke 15:8-10
6. it is hard not to think that this woman might have been a widow, and then think of the widow giving her two coins to the temple; Mark 12:41-43 and Luke 21:1-3
7. see Nathan's parable to David about the poor man's stolen sheep; 2 Samuel 12:1-6
8. Luke 16:19-31
9. Luke 18:14a
10. 1 Timothy 6:10