

## "Who's Humble?"

**Narrator:** Back in Jesus' time, the Romans ruled many countries including Israel. The Romans divided these countries into areas and paid men from each country to collect taxes from their fellow countrymen. Those men who collected taxes were called tax collectors. The tax collectors agreed to pay the Romans a certain amount of money every year. Any extra money they took over the agreed upon amount was theirs to keep. Because they were often greedy, they would tax people twice for the same thing so they could get more money. The people were required without question to pay whatever the tax collectors told them they owed. So you can see that tax collectors were hated because they worked for the enemy and themselves and against their fellow countrymen. They were considered traitors, so others refused to talk to or be with them. The Pharisees, a group who tried to obey all of God's laws plus a bunch they'd made up on their own, taught that being around tax collectors even made you dirty.

But Jesus didn't agree. He knew tax collectors were people who needed His love just as everyone does. When Jesus talked to the tax collectors about God's love and forgiveness and warned the Pharisees not to look down on them, He told this story...

(Tax Collector & Pharisee meet)

**Tax Collector** Greetings, Oh Pharisee! Are you up to date on your taxes?

*[Jingles purse]*

**Pharisee** Hmmpf! You know very well that I am since you gouged me yesterday morning! Besides, you aren't even at your gate. Be gone! I've important matters to attend.

**Tax Collector** Just kidding, Phar, old boy. I know you're paid up—for now. But you know we can't afford to have the Romans angry with us. When they lose their heads, so do we!"

*[Looks around nervously]*

Don't worry, I'm off duty anyway. I need to go to make my offering at the Temple.

**Pharisee** Hmmpf! A million unspotted rams wouldn't be enough to pay for your sins, you, you--slimebag, you! Stay away from me!

*[Hurries off in a huff]*

**Tax Collector** *[Shakes with anger]*

Ooh, I can't stand those self-righteous, hypocritical Pharisees!

*[Yells out...]*

Hey, bud, your tax rate just went up!!

*[Hangs his head & speaks quietly]*

I can't stand it even more when they are right! But what can I do?

*[Slowly walks off stage]*

*[Close curtain & put "Temple" backdrop up. Re-open curtain. Enter Pharisee, to one side of the stage, followed slowly by the unhappy Tax Collector. They take up positions as far away from each other as possible]*

**Pharisee**

*[Glances over at the Tax Collector and sticks his nose in the air; haughtily prays to himself]*  
Oh just and righteous God, I thank you from the bottom of my spotless and obedient heart—remember the shekels I gave to the widows & orphan's fund last Tuesday?—that you have made me unlike other men! Like robbers, evildoers, adulterers

*[Glances at Tax Collector]*

or even fiends like the TAX COLLECTOR!

*[Looks back up toward heaven]*

I really don't know why you put up with them all, but of course you are a God of mercy. Perhaps one or two of them will finally see the light and seek to live holy lives like mine. Oh, did I tell you? I've been fasting twice a week! And I've been giving a tenth of all I get to the Temple treasure!

*[Grumbles]*

At least what the Tax Collectors don't rob me of first. I await your blessing, Oh Holy One.

*[Stands quietly, looking up]*

**Tax Collector**

*[Stands with head bowed and beats his beats]*

Merciful God I...I am a sinner. You don't owe me anything but judgment and anger, for you are perfect and holy. I am less than nothing compared to You. But I want to be right with You and to know You. Please...have mercy on me.

**Pharisee**

Hmmpf!!

*[Sprinkle glitter down on Tax Collector and have him look up and dance around]*

**Tax Collector**

Wow! You even love me? Thank You, merciful God! Thank You! Hey! Everyone listen...!"

*[He rushes off to spread the news.]*

**Pharisee**

*[In outraged tones]*

What?? Are you kidding me?

**Narrator**

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

**Pharisee**

Hmmpf! Poppycock!!

*[He starts to walk away but trips and falls flat.]*

*[The End]*