

When someone stands up for his/her beliefs in the face of adversity... they are called a “*moral rebel*.” ... (Another term might be “*whistle-blower*.”) Modern media has been highlighting “*moral rebels*” (and whistle-blowers”) in news reports lately. A prominent example is the case of the sexual predator Harvey Weinstein. ... He seemed *too big to fall* until actors Ashley Judd and Rose McGowan courageously came forward... risking their careers if unsuccessful. ... [P A U S E] ...

What seems to have become a popular subject in today’s society... is actually *an identity that every true believer in Christ ought to have*. Every follower of Jesus **should be** a “moral rebel” (standing up and rebelling against evil.) BTW - I think that I like the term “moral rebel” better than “whistle-blower.”

Let me give you four qualities that every “moral rebel” must have (according to an article that I was reading... written from a modern psychological point of view.) **#1.** Secular psychologists say “moral rebels” must have high self-esteem and are confident of their own “judgment... values... and ability... and thus that they have a social responsibility to share those beliefs.” ... The follower of Christ should say “*Exactly!*” ... (Go ahead – I’ll wait...) ... Are you confident in Biblical values and judgment?

#2. The moral rebel **must NOT** be afraid of occasional embarrassment or a lack of social harmony. They are far less concerned about conforming to the crowd. So... when they have to choose between *fitting in* and *doing the right thing*... they will choose to do what they see as right. ... The follower of Christ should say “*Exactly!*”

#3. A moral rebel needs to see many examples moral courage in action modeled from parents... peers... (and here – I will add: especially modeled by other believers in the church.) The follower of Christ should say “Exactly!”

#4. A moral rebel needs to get outside of themselves and feel genuine empathy for those who suffer injustice. The follower of Christ should say “Exactly!”

We have just described Jesus - in our passage from Luke that we come to today. He is the ultimate “*moral rebel*” (in the best sense) – showing us what **we** will be like... by allowing Him to develop His Christlikeness in **us**. (It is a process that is called “sanctification.”) The moment we are saved – the Holy Spirit begins the process of sanctification (making us more and more like Jesus.) It is a process that continues the rest of the time that we are on earth.

In our passage today... Jesus acts like a moral rebel... as Luke relates another Sabbath confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees.

We’ll see Jesus’ opponents watch for an opportunity to trap Him... but Jesus is not fazed. ... He challenges the Sabbath practices of the Pharisees... and then heals a man with dropsy. ... They are left in silence to ponder His daring challenge. ... This miracle and the reaction of silence is another illustration of the stupidity of unbelief (senseless Sabbath rules). ... I almost titled this message “The Stupidity of Unbelief” - because Jesus exposes the inconsistency of the leadership’s Sabbath practice (which reflected their unbelief)... Jesus felt empathy for a man being unjustly treated... and (then) extended compassion to him.

(But) I don't think Jesus only had compassion for a man with a terrible infirmity. Here is part of Chuck Swindoll's introduction to our passage:

Jesus didn't come to earth to win arguments; He came to redeem people from their sin. And that included the Pharisees, whose tenacious hold on legal tradition kept them from grasping the spirit of God's Law, which is grace. When you brush aside the jots and tittles of man-made traditions, cut through the fleshy sinews of rules and regulations, and penetrate the center of Old Testament Law, you find the heart of God—and you discover it beats for people.

The Pharisees had forgotten this and had wandered far afield of God's original purpose in giving the Law. Jesus broke bread with these wayward legalists to bring them home again. But in that casual setting, would they heed the Lord's call?

Remember – Christlike “moral rebels” must be equally concerned for the victimizers (who they confront)... as they are for the victims of the injustice. Jesus was concerned for these Pharisees. (He accepted the invitation to dine with them. Why else would He have gone? ... Why would He persist in trying to teach them?)

Luke 14:1-3

A prominent Pharisee invites Jesus for dinner. ... This is not the only time we have seen in Luke's Gospel that Jesus accepted an invitation to dine at a Pharisee's home. We have already seen it twice before.

Luke 7:36 (ESV)

³⁶ *One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.*

Luke 11:37 (ESV)

³⁷ *While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table.*

But the invitation (here in chapter 14) was different: it was a request to recline at table with a RULER of the Pharisees and the other guests. More than one commentator stated that this indicates that “Ruler of pharisees” indicates that he was a member of the Sanhedrin (Israel’s highest court.) (Also) this meal was an important *sabbath day dinner*. All preparations had been made the day before (of course).

We MIGHT be inclined to think: “*How kind of this prominent Pharisee to extend such an invitation to Jesus!*” ... But we don’t... because Luke adds: “*They were watching him closely.*”

The mood is clear from the start: they were watching Him. In the Greek it says: ἦσαν παρατηρούμενοι (*ēsan paratēroumenoi*). The term means to “watch lurkingly.” The wording means they had malicious intent. It is the same wording that our author (Luke) will use in the Book of Acts... when he described how the Jews kept a sharp watch on the gates of Damascus – when they planned to murder the recently converted Saul of Tarsus (in Acts 9:23-24.)

The objective of this invitation seems as though it was to give the Pharisee and his cronies an opportunity to maliciously watch Christ from a closer view than the public. The privacy of the home gave opportunity to scrutinize the conduct of Christ *thoroughly* so they could find fault. ... (As a side-point)... This reminds us that Satan’s crowd is always watching God’s people. ... So Folks... we must always be on our guard to conduct ourselves Christ-like.

Kent Hughes writes:

It was a setup all the way. The place had been carefully chosen—the home of a prominent Pharisee where he and his notable guests could observe Jesus firsthand and then bear unified testimony to any and every transgression. Also, the dinner party was scheduled on the Sabbath, a day that Jesus had reportedly violated on three separate occasions when he cast out demons and healed Simon Peter’s mother (4:31–41), then healed a man with a withered hand (6:6–11), and most recently healed the bent woman (13:10–17). Further, most conveniently, a sick man was present—“a man suffering from dropsy.”

And right there in front of Him... was a man afflicted with dropsy. ... Today we call the condition “edema” (which is an abnormal accumulation of fluid that causes swelling in tissues, joints, and body cavities.) ... The condition frequently causes the feet... ankles... and legs to appear puffy and larger than normal - which can seriously affect major organs. ... It’s a painful and potentially deadly disease. The Pharisees would have responded very negatively to the physical deformity. The Rabbis saw conditions like dropsy to be the result of a grievous sin (committed by the sufferer). And they certainly would have objected to the man’s presence in this prominent Pharisee’s home.

But [there] he “*happened*” to be...

Some Bible commentators write that *we cannot say for sure*... but I believe the evidence is clear enough - a terrible snare had been set for Jesus... baited with misery that Jesus’ compassion would find irresistible. They knew that Jesus could not be in the presence of human suffering very long without doing something about it. ... If He ignored the afflicted man... then He was without compassion. ... But if He healed him... then He was openly violating the Sabbath and they could accuse Him. They put the dropsied

man right in front of the Master so He could not avoid him... and then they waited for the trap to spring.

If so... then how **heartless** of the Pharisees to “use” this man as a tool to accomplish their wicked plan! ... Here is something else about the stupidity of unbelief... Their heartless treatment of the man... was far **worse** than our Lord’s behavior of ignoring their man-made rules for the Sabbath.

Jesus confounded them with a single question: *“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?”*

It was a loaded question. ... It was a brilliant move. They had tried to put Jesus in a public no-win scenario... but He turned the tables. When Jesus asked what their convictions were about the Sabbath Day... He used on them the weapon they had forged for Him. ... If the Pharisees said that nobody should be healed on the Sabbath... the people would consider them **heartless**. If they gave permission for healing... their associates would consider them **lawless**. ... The dilemma was now theirs... not the Lord’s... and they needed a way to escape. ... As they did on more than one occasion... (trapped)... their only response was sulking silence. ... (No doubt) the pharisees had an opinion to answer Jesus’ question – but none dared to speak.

Luke 14:4

When Jesus now asks his critics whether a work of healing is permitted on the sabbath day, he is repeating in essence what he had asked in connection with the healing of the man with the withered hand (back in Luke 6:9).

The wording for how Luke described Jesus' healing was that Jesus seized the man in a tight hug. He held him tight for a little while and then set him free from His embrace. The man was entirely healed.

This must have been an amazing spectacle because "healed" here means completely healed. The watery fluids dissipated... his organs healed... the swelling disappeared! ... But Luke (the physician) gave little detail because he wanted his readers to focus on the utter (turn-around) entrapment of the Pharisees... by Jesus.

Next Jesus takes the offensive... defending His action... despite the Pharisees' silence. ... He knows what they are thinking.

Luke 14:5-6

The Lord again (as we saw back in Luke 13) used the illustration of an ox to make His point. In chapter 13... Jesus spoke about feeding these animals on the Sabbath... which everyone did. If you have this kind of concern for your animals – why don't you have it for your fellow human being? (And now... here in chapter 14)... Jesus talks about their willingness to pull their son or animal out of a pit on the Sabbath. The Lord is trying to expose their inconsistent man-made teachings about working on the Sabbath day. "*You make allowance for your own animal or family member... but would condemn me for saving a fellow human in need...*"

The Lord's rhetorical question not only exposed the men's inconsistent application of the Law... it showed their reasoning to be self-serving. The man with edema was *somebody's* son who needed saving on a Sabbath day. ... But because he wasn't the son of a leader... the rule didn't apply.

To the callous rulers of petty legalism... the man became nothing more than a pawn in their pathetic scheme to trap a political adversary. ...

The stupidity of unbelief is full of selfishness.

Here (again) is Chuck Swindoll...

We all have certain religious rules we live by. One of yours may be that whenever possible you attend worship on Sunday. On the Sabbath, you try to be in your place, in your church, celebrating the grace of God, worshiping and singing praises to Him. That's a good rule to keep. But suppose in keeping that rule, you feel superior to your neighbor. You say, "He or she seldom goes to church. I always go." We are in trouble if we keep the rules to justify ourselves and to feel more righteous than others. In the Christian life, we are not striving for success in keeping the rules. We are to love our neighbors and put their interests first.

Jesus continued to speak with this group by sharing a story with them. The story stressed the importance of conquering pride and selfishness and adopting a humble spirit. ... This would be a need among most Pharisees. It's a need among us... too. ... Jesus knows this old flesh loves to be praised... pampered... publicly promoted and placed on a pedestal. The Lord revealed the wrong way to get these desired things and the right way to get them. He showed them how you can lose face in the fuss to be first.

So our passage today is just as much about standing up to others and confronting them... as it is about confronting the evil in ourselves.

People want to feel important. We all want to be praised and made to feel special. ... Is this really an important issue? ... Of course it is! ... How many times have you gotten upset or in an argument because you felt you did not get the recognition you deserved? ... Need I say more?

The Lord revealed (next) that there is a wrong way and a right way to gain importance or praise. ... The wrong way will cause you to lose face in your fuss to be first.

Luke 14:7

We will get to the parable in a minute... but first... lets acknowledge the circumstances that prompted it. ... I like the way that Warren Wiersbe sets up Jesus' parable...

Experts in management tell us that most people wear an invisible sign that reads, "Please make me feel important"; if we heed that sign [that others are wearing] we can succeed in human relations. On the other hand, if we say or do things that make others feel insignificant, we will fail. Then people will respond by becoming angry and resentful, because everybody wants to be noticed and made to feel important.

In Jesus' day, as today, there were "status symbols" that helped people enhance and protect their high standing in society. If you were invited to the "right homes" and if you were seated in the "right places," then people would know how important you really were. The emphasis was on reputation, not character. It was more important to sit in the right places than to live the right kind of life.

In New Testament times, the closer you sat to the host, the higher you stood on the social ladder and the more attention (and invitations) you would receive from others. Naturally, many people rushed to the "head table" when the doors were opened because they wanted to be important.

This kind of attitude betrays a false view of success. "Try not to become a man of success," said Albert Einstein, "but try to become a man of value." While there may be some exceptions, it is usually true that valuable people are eventually recognized and appropriately honored. Success that comes only from self-promotion is temporary, and you may be embarrassed as you are asked to move down.

Jesus was a well-mannered man. He was a guest in the home of the Pharisee. The behavior of the other guests (however) grabbed His attention as they behaved terribly. ... Imagine as they scurried to get to the best places at the table. Perhaps... they were pushing and shoving to get the place they felt they deserved. It must have been a site to behold because it grabbed Jesus' attention.

The Bible tells us that the Lord "noticed" how they chose out the chief places. The word "**noticed**" is from the word *epecho* {ep-ekh'-o} which means "to get or to fix your attention on something." ... The Pharisee invited Christ to the feast so he and his cronies could watch Christ to find fault... but it turned out that the watcher was Christ... Who watched their terrible... disgraceful conduct.

Rabbinic sources that were written somewhat later than the 1st Century... probably furnish a true description of dinner habits that prevailed during Christ's time on earth. (If so) this is what it was like. The couches (or more like "mats) on which they reclined to eat were arranged in the shape of a U around a low table. Only three people would be on a couch.

The central (or middle "couch) position was table No. 1. It was considered the place of highest honor.... And the person in the middle of that "couch" was in the very highest place of honor. **To the left** of the most highly honored person... the one **second** in honor would be reclining. **To the right of the most highly honored one** the third in honor would take his place. ... On the three-person couch to the left of table #1... the order of reclining would continue as follows: in it's center was the fourth most important person. Left of center... would be the fifth... right of center... sixth. ... This was the same for table #3... The person in the center ranked

seventh in importance... to his left was the eighth... and to the right was the ninth and least important guest.

What Jesus noticed was this - that when the moment arrived for the guests to recline at table... there was an unseemly scramble for the places of honor. The jostling pride that filled the room must have been most comical.

I simply have to show you J. Vernon McGee's comment on this scene...

It is entirely probable that one of the older Pharisees would not have been able to move as fast as some of the younger Pharisees. When the cook called, "Soup's on," the old Pharisee, who had moved as close as possible to the dining area, ran for seat number two. One of the younger Pharisees got there before he did; so he turned the corner fast and tried to reach number five seat. He was too late again because someone was already sitting there. Quickly he tried for seat number eight, but he did not make it to that seat in time either. He turned the corner and made a dive for seat number eleven and made it. It was the lowest seat, but still a seat of honor. He reclined there out of breath.

Can you imagine what a hilarious picture it must have been to see these men running as fast as they could for the seats of honor? Now our Lord will correct their manners.

Luke 14:8-10

What Jesus was saying came close to be a citation of Proverbs 25:6-7.

Proverbs 25:6-7 (ESV)

⁶ Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great, ⁷ for it is better to be told, "Come up here," than to be put lower in the presence of a noble.

So these learned Pharisees should have known better!

(And) when Jesus advised the guests to take the lowest places... He was not giving them a “gimmick” that guaranteed promotion. ... He was not advocating a “staged humility.” ... Any kind of false humility that takes the lowest place is just as hateful to God as the pride that takes the highest place. ... God is not impressed by our status in society or in the church. ... He is not influenced by what people say or think about us... because He sees the thoughts and motives of the heart. ... (LISTEN) - God still humbles the proud and exalts the humble.

Luke 14:11

Whether or not you are into memorizing Scripture... I am going to strongly recommend that you memorize **this verse**... and contemplate (at least) at the end of every day if you exemplified it. ... (Please write it down... or mark it in your Bible.) Humility is to be a distinguishing characteristic of EVERY follower of Christ! ... Christ’s teaching on humility is one of the most important and constantly recurring subjects in the entire New Testament. ... It is far better for others to recognize who you are... than to suggest to them what your proper status is.

The way to humility and shame is to toot your own horn and push yourself into the spot light. The philosophy of “self-esteem” so popular today ignores this principle and will lead many to shame. The world will not criticize one who honors himself. The world likes exalting ourselves. But it is the way to great shame. The way of honor is true humility. Bowing low puts the humble on the fast track to the top. The world thinks you will never get ahead this way. But they argue with God and God is always right.

Humility is a fundamental grace in the Christian life... and yet it is elusive. ... If you know you have it... you have lost it! ... It has well been said that humility is not thinking meanly of ourselves. It is simply not thinking of ourselves at all.

Our humility is to express itself in IGNORING issues of class or rank.

Luke 14:12-14

Jesus knew that the host had invited his guests for two reasons: (1) to pay them back because they had invited him to past feasts, or (2) to put them under his debt so that they would invite him to future feasts. Such hospitality was not an expression of love and grace but rather an evidence of pride and selfishness. He was “buying” recognition.

Our modern world is very competitive... and it is easy for God’s people to become more concerned about profit and loss than they are about sacrifice and service. “What will I get out of it?” may easily become life’s most important question. We must strive to maintain the unselfish attitude that Jesus had and share what we have with others.... Our motive for sharing must be ***the praise of God*** and not *the applause of men* (the eternal reward in heaven and not the temporary recognition on earth.)

Inviting the humble says you are more interested in heavenly honors than earthly honors. The lowly cannot give you honors for the meal... but God can. We are to have God’s honor in view and not man’s honor in view in all our behavior.

Let me say that the Lord was not condemning inviting your friends and family to a meal. There is nothing wrong with that at all. He was

condemning **the motive** of inviting only those folks who could return the favor of the invitation. This is why He instructed them to invite people who cannot return any favors or honors. He instructed them to invite those who were poor, maimed, lame, and blind. By doing this, they would show they were not controlled by a spirit of repayment... that their giving was unselfish... and their love was genuine.

(LISTEN... HERE'S THE DEAL)... The Lord is trying to get us to examine **our motives of service and doing things for others**. Is it for self-glory or for God's glory? ... Are we seeking to be seen of others? ... Are we trying to gain something down the road? ... One day our motives will be revealed.

1 Corinthians 4:5 (ESV)

⁵ Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

Jesus (in our passage today) has been saying: **how we live reveals the authenticity or absence of our faith**. ... A proud... me-first lifestyle (no matter how deftly hidden)... indicates we are not part of the kingdom.... A selfish *quid pro quo* social life is not a kingdom life.

Is there some standing up to evil that needs to be done in your life (in yourself or in others.) Let Christ enable you. Don't try to do this in your strength. ... As I close today... I am going to pray for Christ to make each of us MORE like Himself. We need His changes in our life!