

01-20-2019

Message: God Elevates the Humble and Humbles the Proud

Text: Luke 14:1-11

Introduction

A. Years ago at a church in metropolitan Philadelphia where I had served as a part time youth director, I was asked to share a few thoughts or memories at a dinner honoring our senior pastor for his 25 years of service. Wanting to add a little humor to the evening, I brought my guitar and planned to sing a Mac Davis song that people in the Northeast would not likely recognize, because few listened to country music. I spoke some words of appreciation for Manny, and then added how much I appreciated his humility. I said, "I know he works hard at being humble, and prays a lot to the Lord about it, because one day while painting at the parsonage, I heard him down the hallway singing in the bathroom ..."

O Lord, it's hard to be humble, when you're perfect in every way.

I can't wait to look in the mirror, 'cause I get better lookin' each day.

To know me is to love me. I must be one swell kind of man.

O Lord, it's hard to be humble, but I'm doin' the best that I can.

B. The people hadn't heard this, and they were howling - Manny maybe not so much. Yet it was all in good fun. And of course I sang it in love.

C. But you know, it actually is hard to be humble. There is a saying, "Humility is the one virtue you lose as soon as you think you have it." Yet whether or not we live humbly before God and one another is a very serious matter. Did you know that Jesus teaches us that it is a matter of eternal life and death, that humility is a necessary product of that faith in Christ by which Jesus forgives and justifies us?

1. If the faith in Jesus that we say we have doesn't produce humble submission to Jesus Christ as our great God, Lord, King and Savior, can that faith save us? Not according to Jesus.

Luke 14:11 "**For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled**, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

2. If our faith does not produce a humble trust in Christ that enables us to wait for Him to exalt us rather than exalting ourselves before God and one another, can that faith save us? Not according to Jesus. We can see by comparing His statement in 14:11 with 18:14 that to be exalted by God includes being justified, and to be humbled by God includes remaining unforgiven, condemned.

Luke 18:14 "I tell you, this man went to his house **justified** rather than the other; **for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled**, but he who humbles himself will be

exalted."

- D. The section of Luke's gospel beginning at 9:51 and continuing into chapter 19 is often referred to as "the journey to Jerusalem, the journey to the cross." It begins with Jesus setting His face resolutely toward Jerusalem, where the journey ends at the cross. By inspiring Luke to record this journey, Jesus invites all of us who read and hear these words to deny ourselves, take up our crosses daily, and follow Him.

Luke 9:51 When the days were approaching for His ascension, **He set His face resolutely to go to Jerusalem;**

Luke 9:23 And He was saying to *them* all, "**If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.**"

- E. What it means to follow Jesus, to be a Christian, is what He teaches us along this journey. In our text today we see that walking with Jesus in paths of humility for His Name's sake is to walk in the steps of faith and trust in the Lord that leads to eternal life in Christ's eternal kingdom. Jesus begins teaching us by giving us two examples of failing to humbly follow Jesus, followed by His positive instruction.

I. Example #1 of failing to humbly follow Jesus.

- A. In 14:1-6 we have yet another incident of Jesus's healing on the Sabbath, resulting in controversy with the Pharisees and lawyers (experts in Old Testament law).

Luke 14:1 It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on *the* Sabbath to eat bread, **they were watching Him closely.**² And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy.³ And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?"⁴ But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away.⁵ And He said to them, "Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?"⁶ And they could make no reply to this.

1. You might ask, "What does this incident of Sabbath controversy with the Pharisees have to do with Jesus's teaching on humility in 14:7-11?"
2. Remember our discussion of the significance of Jesus's healing a bent over woman on the Sabbath in 13:10-17? Christ's miracles manifested the present encroachment of God promised Messiah/King and kingdom upon the kingdom of this world. The weekly Sabbath that God instituted pointed forward to the eternal Sabbath rest in God's consummated kingdom over which His Messiah, Jesus, would reign.

Luke 9:11 ... He *began* **speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing.**

Luke 10:9 and **heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'**

Luke 11:20 "But if **I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.**

3. Jesus was giving the Pharisees yet another chance to recognize and humbly receive Jesus as God's promised King to reign over creation forever. And yet what do we see them doing? Jesus's opponents were not yet regarding the signs of God's promised kingdom present in the person of Jesus. They were instead watching Him closely, maybe setting Him up by inviting this man with dropsy, and certainly setting themselves up as judges over Him, elevating their definition of Sabbath keeping over Jesus's definition. They regarded themselves and their word as having more authority than Jesus and His word.

B. What about us? If we regard ourselves and our word as having more authority than Jesus and His word, then we are not a humble people, but full of foolish, self-promoting pride. God is giving us yet another chance to come to Heaven's King for forgiveness, confessing your pride, and submitting your life to Jesus as your great God and Savior. If we do, we become part of the "all" Isaiah spoke of whose sins fall upon Jesus in our place.

Isaiah 53:6 **All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way;** But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

II. Example #2 of failing to humbly follow Jesus.

A. The foolish pride of the Pharisees was not only manifested in their lack of humility before the Lord Jesus, but by their lack of humility toward Him was manifested in their lack of humility before one another.

Luke 14:7 And He *began* speaking a parable to the invited guests when **He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table,**⁸ "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him,⁹ and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give *your* place to this man,' and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place.

B. (Show slide of table seating) What you are looking at is a diagram of a low rectangular table in the center (maybe a foot off the ground) with low couches in a horseshow around it on which 3 persons each would recline on their left side & elbow and reach to the table food with their right hand. The host sat at the head table at the center, with seats of honor descending from there, the seat to the left of the host followed by the seat to the right, then the couch to the left of the host followed by the couch to the right.

C. Jesus's opponents had taken the places of honor at their meal versus giving that place to Jesus. So Jesus gives a parable about invited guests to warn them to humble themselves

before God's Messiah, or He will one day humble them. Contrary to what God had taught them in Prov 25:6-7, they were claiming honor in the presence of Heaven's King!

Proverbs 25:6 **Do not claim honor in the presence of the king**, and do not stand in the place of great men;⁷ For it is better that it be said to you, "Come up here," Than for you to be placed lower in the presence of the prince, whom your eyes have seen.

III. Walking in the path of faith that humbly follows Jesus

- A. Jesus came to us, taking as it were the last seat. He did not claim the honor for Himself that was His right to claim, but humbly waited for God to exalt Him.

Philippians 2:5 **Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,**⁶ **who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,**⁷ **but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and** being made in the likeness of men.⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, **He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.**⁹ **For this reason also, God highly exalted Him,** and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- B. We, who would be followers of Jesus Christ, are commanded by Him to take one seat in life and one seat only - the last seat. Showing initiative in God's kingdom is taking the last seat, and waiting for God to elevate us should He desire. We dishonor Christ and devalue His humility when we prefer to elevate ourselves rather than to imitate Him, when we won't believe that imitating Him is more satisfying and rewarding.

Luke 14:10 "But when you are invited, **go and recline at the last place**, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher'; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you.

- C. What will taking the last seat look like for us?

1. Considering others and their needs as being more important than our own, our children's own.

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but **with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;**⁴ do not look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.⁵ **Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,**

2. Don't assume your ministry and ministry's agenda is to take priority over the ministries of others.

Romans 12:3 For through the grace given to me I say to **everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment**, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.⁴ For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,⁵ so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

3. Relinquishing the honor of an "A List."

Luke 14:12 And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, "When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and *that* will be your repayment.¹³ **"But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,**¹⁴ and you will be blessed, since they do not have *the means* to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Romans 12:16 Be of the same mind toward one another; **do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.**

Conclusion: Jesus concludes His parable with final warning and promise.

Luke 14:11 **"For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."**

- A. If we do not humble ourselves before Christ in this life, then He will humiliate us when He returns in glory, casting us away from His presence into eternal hell.

Proverbs 18:12 **Before destruction the heart of man is haughty,** but *humility goes* before honor.

- B. Humility before Christ and others is an expression of faith in Christ as our Lord, God, Savior, returning King of creation, who can be trusted to satisfy and elevate us at the proper time, at His return, according to His promise.

Proverbs 22:4 **The reward of humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, honor and life.**

- C. So through His apostle Peter, our risen King commands His church ...

1 Peter 5:5 ... **all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another,** for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.⁶ **Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time,**