

Take the Lowest Place

Luke 14:7-11

July 4, 2021

Let's turn our attention now to Luke Chapter 14. If you're not there, you can take your Bible and turn there to Luke 14. Last week we started into the first 24 verses, at which we said is a single unit of thought, as a single theme governing that whole section where Jesus is in the home of a Pharisee, he's exposing and confronting pride, but he's doing so in an indirect way by teaching about humility.

So let's start just by reading the first verses that we covered last week, verses 1 to 6, "One Sabbath when [Jesus] went to dine at [a] house of a ruler of the Pharisees. They were watching him carefully. Behold, there was a man before him who had dropsy, and Jesus responded to the lawyers and Pharisees saying, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?' But they remained silent. And then he took him and healed him and sent him away. And he said to them, 'Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out?'"

They cannot reply to these things. So as the narrative goes, as Luke has written it, we can see that the Pharisees invited Jesus into the home of this ruler of the Pharisees, intending to entrap him. They wanted to lure him into an ambush on the Sabbath to do what before them, what their traditions had judged as work on the Sabbath, thereby discrediting him. And he walked straight into the ambush, spotting it from the very beginning, and he walked right through it. He turned their weapons against them and silenced the opposition.

It's amazing, I always find it amazing as Jesus does that as he enters into what he knows to be a hostile situation. He's in a very unfriendly environment and he turns it into an opportunity to glorify God. Here by healing a very needy man. So, as the scene continues, Jesus is observing, this is in the entrance into the, into the mealtime, they go toward the, the dining area and as he observes, the guests make their way into the dining area to take their seats around the table, he's seeing on display the pride that characterizes the occasion. The pride of the lawyers and the Pharisees. The pride that really saturates the whole environment and frankly spoils the meal, but as he watches them, as he observes, the observes them, he

formulates a plan and approach of how he's going to love them by teaching them.

So look at the next section, verses 7 to 14. "Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, 'When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, "Give your place to this person.'" Then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you were invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, "Friend move up higher," and then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. For everyone who hu, exalts himself will be humbled, and who exalt who he who exal, humbles himself will be exalted.'

"He said also to the man who had invited him, 'When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind and you will

be blessed because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just.'"

So in verses 7 to 11, Jesus addresses the guests and then in verses 12 to 14 he addresses the host. And those two addresses, first of the guests then to the host, are parallel to one another. As they flow, there's a symmetry of expression. Same message, but it's applied to two different people, the beneficiaries first and then the benefactor second. Two different stations in life, but the same message.

Look at verse 8 "When you were invited by someone" when you're someone's guest, and then verse 12, "When you give a dinner or banquet", when you invite someone to be a guest in your home. So parallel expressions there. In verse 8, Jesus is warning the guests how not to select a seat lest they face an unanticipated experience of shame. In verse 12, he also warns the host about invitations lest he experience an unanticipated loss of reward. In verse 10, Jesus advises a humble approach to being a guest. In verse 13, he advises a humble approach to being a host. He promises honor to humbled guests at the end of

verse 10, and then in all of verse 14 there's blessedness to the humble host.

So the main message is right there in the center. In verse 11, you see it there, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and [corollary] he who humbles himself will be exalted." It's the same message we hear summarized in James and Peter, in their epistles, as we've heard read for Scripture reading this morning, James 4:6, and also in 1 Peter 5:5. "God opposes the proud but gives Grace to the humble."

So Jesus intends to convey this singular message. The main message, which is there in Luke 14:11, the main message of this section, both to the guests who are beneficiaries of the host invitation and hospitality, and also to the host, the one who acts as a benefactor to all the rest the one who does the inviting. For everyone, everyone, guests and hosts alike, rich and poor alike, "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Everyone, that's a universal word which includes you and it includes me as well.

It was on June 1st, 2021 that President Biden released a statement from the White House entitled Quote "A proclamation on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer Pride Month," dubbing June as Pride Month from now on. From a biblical perspective, which word in that title of the statement from the White House is the most offensive to God? Perhaps it's the one sin that's at the root of all the others. The one sin that drives all sin. The one sin that unites all sinners in rebellion against God, making the highest religious Pharisee on par with the lowest sexually immoral person.

Before God, it's the voice of wisdom, Proverbs 8:13 that says, "The fear of the Lord is the hatred of evil. So pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate." That's the Word of the Lord. "God opposes the proud, but he gives Grace to the humble." When we are a nation that takes pride in its pride. Whether it's for immoral reasons or for wholesome reasons, taking pride before God is an abomination to him. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble, and I can think of really nothing more frightening for a Christian then the disfavor of God.

None of us wants God to oppose us. We want his grace, we want his favor. We want to please him in all things because of his inherent goodness, because he is the ultimate benefactor of benefactors. Because of his kindness his many kindnesses to us in Jesus Christ our Savior. So we hate pride. In any form. And we need to hate it first and foremost when we see it in ourselves. Because it's really, as someone has said, "It's not a matter of if you have pride, but it's where is the pride and how much is there?" We need to hate pride, embrace humility as a lifestyle as a way of thinking, as something that comes from the heart, we need to mortify pride and nurture a spirit of humility within us. And we have every reason to hear from Christ and listen carefully this morning.

So we're going to look first, at the first address, verses 7 to 11 today, as Jesus teaches the guest and next week we'll see what he has to say to the host will cover his address to the guests in three points. The problem, the parable and the point, the problem, the parable, and the point. What is the problem that Jesus sees in the guests, of whom he is one? In a word, the problem he sees around him among the guests is pride and self-promotion. Pride and self-promotion. That's what Jesus has observed in their behavior. So point one the problem, the

problem is a scene of self-promotion. A scene of self-promotion. That's the problem.

Look again at verse 7, "And he told a parable to those who were invited when he noticed how they chose the places of honor. Saying to them." He spoke to those who were invited saying to them because he was observing how they chose places of honor. Several things to observe in the verse here. First, there are two verbal phrases about Jesus speaking and he's speaking targeted words. He's aiming the words at particular people beginning the verse he told a parable "to those who were invited" and at the end of the verse saying "to them". Emphatic in the Greek.

So who's he targeting? He's targeting the guests of the rule of the Pharisees, who are, verse 3 tells us, they're lawyers and their other Pharisees. But as we read, and if you look down at verse 12, you can see that that when Jesus addresses the host, he warns the host against inviting friends, brothers, relatives and rich neighbors to his banquets.

So if this meal is taking place in Jerusalem at the house of this ruler, which we have a good reason to suppose, and if it happens after the synagogue service, which is the clear inference of verse 1, then it is very likely that the reference to friends brothers, relatives and rich neighbors. That's not hypothetical. That's not for the sake of the story. This is real. This is Jesus looking around. He's sitting among this ruler of the Pharisees, his friends, brothers, relatives and rich neighbors. He's getting to see them in action on this occasion.

Jesus is speaking to those who were invited, the, and they are the upper crust of Jerusalem society, Jerusalem, the major cosmopolitan city in the world at that time. These are the movers and the shakers. These are the wealthy elites. These are the legal minds, political influencers, powerful businessmen, and he's speaking directly to them, looking them in the eyes. Luke as, as I said, he's emphasized that fact in the original.

So why is he targeting them with this parable? Because secondly, he noticed how they chose the places of honor. The word that Luke uses there, he noticed, sounds a little bit mild.

Refers to, on Jesus' part, a kind of watching of the crowd of watching of all the guests, and involves thinking, it involves a mental process. He's taking note of what he sees.

So you can imagine Jesus kind of stepping back from the scene a little bit as he watches everybody move about and he fixes his attention on what's happening in front of him. And then he's processing that and he's assessing their behavior. Remember, ironically, these are the same guest, verse one, who came to watch him and now he is watching them. They become the objects of his observation, and his scrutiny, and his judgment.

What's he seeing? He's sees a scramble for the best seats. He sees kind of a, a sophisticated musical chairs as everybody moves around and finds the most prominent and most honored seats. These are the most esteemed men of the city. The lawyers, the Pharisees, the elite, all of whom are friends, brothers, relatives and rich neighbors of this ruler of the Pharisees, and there they are at an after synagogue meal.

The host has set the guest list, but the seating arrangements are not necessarily set at this, at this occasion

pecking order set it's based on perceived levels of honor, esteem, regard in the community, wealth that's reflected. Usually reflected in the seating arrangements. On this case, it's kind of open seating. Since the seating positions aren't set, the situation is a bit more fluid, and it allows the guests to kind of jockey for position. So Jesus watching all this go on in front of him, as they posture and prepare and, and move into the best seats, best seats, literally first couch, is how it translates literally. But it's the preeminent place on that couch, which is typically a three person couch.

We've, we've described this before. The meals here are not eaten at a typical table, using individual chairs like a high table and high chairs like we have in the West. In the ancient Near East the dining table is low to the ground, it's surrounded by couch like pieces of furniture called triclinia or a triclinium as a singular triclinium the plural, but it's a triclinium as a couch that fits three and don't think of like your sofa at home, or your love seat that fits two, sofa fits three. This is a low couch that fits a reclined person.

So it's large. It's not couches like we use where we sit upright, they're low to the ground, and it allows the guests to recline next to that low table with the food set in front of them. So guests would dine reclining, upper body toward the table toward the food, lower body and feet pointed away from the table. They're resting comfortably on their left side, propped up on the left elbow, supported by pillows. The right hand free to reach out for food. Reach out for drink and have conversations. So a number of these triclinium these couches for three, they're arranged around the dining table in a U shape.

So at the base of the U down here was a place for the very highest honor. That's where, that's where, the, the place of the highest honor. That's where that person can be seen by everybody in the U. The middle of that position on that Couch was a place at the very highest honor reserved for the host, but on either side of the host two places, a very high honor, highest honors on the couch is next to the Hostess couch and then extending along the base of the U and then descending and rank and honor as you go, and then as you follow that you shape arrangement, moving from the base to the prongs of the U to the place of the lowest rank and honor at the far ends.

So once the purification rituals were completed, Jesus is watching these otherwise dignified men lining up to get pole position so they can make the mad scramble for the highest ranking seat that they can grab. I've seen the same thing happen at Disneyland, where otherwise dignified parents, they may be doctors, lawyers, scientists in their professional life, but when they've got children with them, they're getting in that line before you and they're going to nudge you out when it comes to lining up for some kind of little thing that's going to take him up and then down. Somehow, that drives him absolutely crazy.

But the verb here, they chose, they chose, *eklego*. It's a verb that's used actually when God is the subject, it's used for divine election. Here, non referring to God's election with, *wi*, *wi*, with these guys as the subjects, it has the connotation of someone picking through the fruit basket after a harvest, rejecting all but the very best piece of fruit. I mean, they harvested all of it from the tree. It's all edible. It's all good, but they're picking through chucking this one, chucking that one, finding the very best that one for me.

One more thing to notice here. In this scene, a third thing when Jesus observed all the guests choosing places of honor for themselves, he told them a parable. He chose to address it with a parable. Our English word parable transliterates Greek word *parabolē*, which literally means to cast alongside of. So a parable to cast something, cast to a story alongside of the truth, that's in illustration, it's, it's setting something that's concrete and familiar alongside of something that is abstract and unfamiliar, and the point is to provide a comparison to make an analogy.

Parables come in different forms. There come sometimes in short stories or pithy statements or proverbial sayings. In this case, it comes in the form of a *sa*, sagely advice, wisdom. Here it sounds like a lesson in banqueting etiquette, but it is far more than that. We're getting the parable in a moment, but it's worth pointing out how Jesus' approach to tackling the very difficult problem of human pride is to speak to it, not directly, but indirectly. Why is that?

Pride by its very nature is a blinding sin. Those who are the most proud are the most blind to it. They think themselves

to be the most humble people and they would be offended at the very insinuation or hint that you think they're a proud person, because after all, I am humble. I live my life in a humble way. I'm kind, generous, gracious, winsome, always appropriate, tactful, diplomatic.

Pride by its very nature is a blinding sin. Someone full of pride, unable to see clearly. Un, unable to see the self clearly how they are, how they come across, how other people see them, and they're offended at the thought that you would think otherwise, that you wouldn't share their most humble estimate of themselves, which is to be a humble man. They're unable to see the scales of pride that cover their eyes because scales of pride cover their eyes.

So rather than taking a direct approach like, "Hey guys, take a look at yourselves, I mean. Aren't you ashamed? I mean, really. Scrambling and just setting aside all propriety decency, dignity, and you're going to scramble for a good seat. The food's all over the table you're gonna get your fair share. I'm sure they'll be interesting conversation with whoev, whomever you sit next to." But they're like anxious teenagers amped up

with Red Bulls. You know, running after amped on sugar and caffeine. They want that seat.

That would be my inclination. The direct approach. But what would happen? In saying something that direct? Defensiveness, right? Argument would ensue. Self-justification would ensue. Dismissiveness would ensue. Pride comes to its own defense very quickly and throws up all manner of walls. It spins out self-justifying arguments. Counter accusing, justifying, that's the warning actually of Proverbs 18:19 that "a brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city. And quarrelling is like the bars of a castle." You're not getting in there.

So Jesus, wisely, takes an indirect approach and he does that in two ways, one of them, is just the whole approach to teach positive lessons on the virtue of humility in an environment that is saturated with pride. That, those lessons on humility sting the proud. It exposes the proud. It gives a, a counter, a contrast, to how they're acting. But the other way to approach this, which we see Jesus doing is to address the matter indirectly by use of an analogy. Illustrating the problem by means of a parable.

So without further ado, let's look at the parable itself, which takes us into the second point. We've talked about the problem. Here's the, the second point. The parable, the parable, and this is the shame of self-promotion. The parable is about the shame of self-promotion. We've seen the problem. The scene of self-promotion. And now Jesus wants to point out the shame that's in it, which he does by means of the parable verses 8 to 10. And it takes the form as we said, of counsel sound, wise, sagely advice. So Jesus advises them how to be wise guests, take a wise approach when they are invited to a wedding feast and first he gives them negative counsel advising him about what not to do, and then he gives positive counsel advising him on what they should do.

So first, let's look at what not to do when you're invited to a wedding feast. It says there, verse 8, "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, less someone more distinguished than you be invited by him the, the host. And he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place."

So Jesus sets the scene of the parable he's telling at a wedding feast. And he wants these guests who are sitting with him at this less formal after synagogue meal to imagine themselves as guests at a more formal setting, at a wedding, they're invited to participate to be there to see the ceremony itself, but also the festivities that follow. As we've said before in other contexts, those wedding festivities can take up to a week, but there would be a formal large meal. That's what he's talking about.

It's that setting. Most often we we've come to understand that Jesus' parables always have a little twist in them, something, something that's out of the ordinary. He wants to grab people's attention by throwing in a curveball. So he always adds an element his listeners would, would notice as something that's kinda, kinda odd, something that doesn't sit quite right with them, something that that provokes them intellectually.

This parable is no different. The occasion of a wedding feast it's, it's far more formal than what they are sitting at now. This after synagogue meal where they're listening to Jesus

speaking at a wedding feast and especially the wedding feast of the kind that this crowd would be familiar with. A wedding feast would have a, a predetermined guest list obviously, but also would have a predetermined seating arrangement. That means an invited guest doesn't intend a wedding feast and then just go simply and go and sit down in a place of honor. That's not done. As an invited guest, your seat has already been chosen for you, so you know your place. You sit in your assigned seat. You don't sit in somebody else's seat, especially in a place of honor that hasn't been assigned to you. So Jesus is here giving a, a subtle poke to the men around him who've done exactly that in this less formal meal.

He's saying, imagine yourselves acting like you did today, but at a wedding feast. Try to picture yourselves doing the same thing there that you've done here. Jockeying for positions, scrambling for the best seats, taking the highest place of honor for yourself. Jesus' audience hear that, have a very hard time imagining themselves as doing what Jesus is described, that is invited by someone to a wedding feast having no sense of propriety, having the audacity to sit down in a place of honor and take that for themselves, they couldn't imagine that for

themselves. They're much higher than that. They wouldn't do such a thing. Ah, but haven't they just done such a thing?

What they would imagine as upper class urbane, sophisticated religious men, legal minds. It imagine that they themselves may be the ones sitting in the places of honor. Already assigned in this shame, honor culture here in the ancient Near East. Among the lawyers, the Pharisees of Jerusalem, their social fantasies, and they have them. Consists of outranking all the other guests. With everyone else beneath them, with themselves, honored and esteemed by all, everybody looking at them in awe of them.

So again, verse 8 Jesus says don't do that. Don't sit down in a place of honor to which they think and response wouldn't happen. Not with me. But then Jesus asked him to entertain the thought anyway, saying don't, don't do that "lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him".

The word lest there it's more, like lest, per chance or in the off chance that this should happen, that this would come upon you in the remote possibility, it's almost a little

humorous in the real possibility that there may be somebody there of more stature than you of higher social standing than you are. Probably not, but just, just go with it for a second, Jesus says. Here's where their little social fantasy they've been imagining starts to take a dark turn. And becomes a total nightmare.

It's hard to find, you know, an exact analogy for this today. In a country like ours that's tolerated and now celebrates such shameful behavior. We have really forgotten what it means to be ashamed of ourselves because we've taken the things that are really signs of God's judgment, all the sin that is celebrated, and we've turned that into an occasion to honor ourselves for it. Calling it Pride Month. But those who grow up in like maybe places like the global south. Or in the east, the Far East. Much better grasp on what it means to be the subject of great shame or of great honor.

But just to try to get a sense of this purportedly for many years, running 75% of Americans, list glossophobia, that's the one I'm doing right now. The fear of public speaking. They rank that as their number one ranking fear, glossophobia. Literally

fear of the tongue, but it's fear of speaking. So after public speaking comes, the more common fears that you're associated with, like fear of heights and bugs, and snakes, and drowning, and needles, and claustrophobia, and all that stuff.

Why is public speaking so scary? So physical pain in public speaking. There's no danger element in public speaking, usually. Speaking in public, it seems like such a silly thing to be afraid of. Why would people be afraid of that? And when shooting at you, normally platforms aren't so high, you're going to fall off and get injured or they usually have steps that ergonomically situated so that you may get up without trouble.

Why be afraid? It's the social component, isn't it? It's this sense of shame and embarrassment that we feel this fear of losing dignity, a fear of losing honor publicly in front of other people, everybody watching you. Fact, the more I talk about it, the more I'm feeling afraid. But in biblical terms. It's called the fear of man. Right?

We still have that sense of shame and honor in the West. We're not so different from our brothers and sisters in the

global south and the east. We, we all have this innate sense of personal dignity. Kind of a keen sense of social propriety, and then they desire to, to protect it, that we might avoid embarrassment. To avoid any public disgrace and humiliation. The trouble is in our country, our sense of propriety has been so warped by the wickedness of the culture. They were all turned around, calling evil good and good evil. But that sense of shame and honor, it's still there. Make no mistake.

So imagine yourself verse 8, as an invited guest to the wedding, and you have been so bold, so audacious as to take a seat of honor for yourself. And that imagination turns nightmarish, when, behold, someone more distinguished than you, someone of a higher class outranking you in honor and respect, higher status, that person. He also was invited by the host he was on the guest list before you knew there was a guest list. You're sitting in his seat. What would happen then? Look at verse 9. "He who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person.'"

In 1st Century Jerusalem, this walk of shame that Jesus wants them to imagine this is as bad as it gets, socially. The

ESV translation I'm reading out of it kind of, it, it, it inserts the possessive pronoun into the sentence. It's not there in the original, so instead of "Give your place to this person," it's "Give to this man the place." It was never your seat to begin with is the idea.

The sentence here, this word from the host is short direct curt. It's even a bit sharp. The host is, everybody's seated, everybody is there in the coast is coming. He's trying to show discretion. He wants to avoid embarrassment in front of the other guests, not for the offender, the one who took the place, but for the more honored guest, he wants no shame and embarrassment for him, none for himself. He's irritated at the offender. So his command to this presumptuous self-promoting guest. Get out of this honorable man seat.

So imagine that for yourself. You're there, settled in laying down at the couch, lying down at the couch. You're settled in comfortable, enjoying refreshing drinks, tasty appetizers, polite conversation. Guests around you. Getting to know them, catching up. I think everything is fine as you've taken this seat, which you think, kind of deserve it anyway.

Your host approaches. A very distinguished looking person in tow and he utters this short imperative to you. In front of everybody, your face goes flush. You turn beet red all of a sudden it's very warm in the room, and you, end of verse 9. "You will begin with shame to take the lowest place."

The language in the original draws this out. It makes it uncomfortable for the reader. Be uncomfortable for Jesus' listeners. It portrays this abject shame that someone is feeling at that moment. In this situation, it's a vivid picture, and the emphasis is very strong, so Jesus wants everyone here to feel what it would be like to experience, public shame of having to stand up while everybody else is reclining. To stand up while they watch you as you, your shame of self-promotion, is exposed before all. You step away from the place on the couch that you usurped. Make your way from that man's place to the lowest place.

Why the lowest place? Why not just another place? Because Jesus is causing everyone to imagine that by this time all the other places are now occupied. All that's left is the lowest place that's the only place to go. So the fall from social grace

couldn't be farther in the walk of shame couldn't be longer. The disgraced guests might rather walk past that lowest place and find the closest rock to hide himself underneath.

So now that Jesus has everybody's attention. Maybe they're ready to listen to some council, ready to take a closer look at themselves, think about their behavior. Verse 10, Jesus says, "When you were invited. Go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you friend move up higher. Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you." It's a happy ending to the parable. He gives him the uncomfortable part at the very start, but then he gives him a very happy ending.

Several features to point out here. First, notice the host is the one who comes and looks for you. The host, the one who's putting this thing on. Or his assigned master of ceremonies who does the host bidding. He comes looking for you and then when he finds you he calls you friend. He acknowledges a relationship with you. It implies even a, a touch of intimacy as opposed to a casual acquaintance. Here he could have just called you by your name, but instead he calls you friend. Most importantly, it's

the host who says friend move up higher that legitimizes in front of everyone there, that the move you make from the lowest place up to this seat of honor that has the affirmation of the host himself.

Everybody there trusts the host judgment. All who sit at the table with you, they're inclined to share his view so they're gonna steam you because it's the host who has put his imprimatur upon you. He holds you in high regard. What's the prerequisite for this happy ending? What does Jesus want all these people to see? "When you're invited," verse 8, "don't go sit down in a place of honor, but instead," verse 10, here's the prerequisite, "go and sit in the lowest place." That's the prerequisite. The prerequisite to attain honor is this. Don't seek honor for yourself. Don't be a self-promoter. Take the lowest place.

Just a quick note of clarification here. We're going to see this shortly. Jesus is not encouraging this motivation for going to the lowest place is motivated or driven by a desire to get to the highest place. That would be another case of pride

masquerading as humility. Which is the same mask that was worn by the scribes and the Pharisees.

Religious people do this all the time. They, they fake this humble image in public. Really, there are snakes in their hearts. We see that all the time, political leaders, religious leaders, there's even some professing Christian leaders they put on an oh so humble face, speak softly, watching their tone. Always saying what's socially appropriate. Never saying anything that's, might come across as harsh or unkind. They mimic all the the, the popular gestures. They give the same, the, the right amount of pathos in their speech. Card carrying members of the tongue police, always measuring their words. Making sure to offend, no one, never coming across as harsh or unkind. That's the chiefest of all sins.

It's exactly what the Pharisees were like. They drift with that kind of public persona stuff. Careful to curate an acceptable public image. David exposed them in Psalm 55:21. They had speech as smooth as butter. Words softer than oil. But they're snakes, they're rotten to the core.

True humility is not just a matter of words, tone. Humility is a matter of the heart. It's the thoughts and intentions of the heart, the motivations of the heart that only God can see, and only God can know. True humility is a matter of humble actions and submissive to God in his word, which God interprets and neither approves of or disapprove, disapproves.

So moving to the lowest place and seeing that as a ploy to climb to the top. That is not what Jesus trying to teach these Pharisees at all. I remember making a similar observation to what, to what Jesus saw at this after synagogue meal on this Sabbath and it was in a ministry setting. Sadly, a place that trained students from ministry. And sadly, in this particular place it was occupied at the time by, well, I just have to admit are prideful self-promoters, even among many in the leadership.

All the young men pined and longed for the best seats they'd be noticed by those who were esteemed, and in kind of in a twisted, deranged way to prove themselves worthy of promotion, to get up to those places and get those opportunities, the young men were told that humility taking the lowest place, being

willing to clean the toilets at four in the morning, or whatever it was, that's the pathway to glory.

That's the way to the most coveted ministry positions, and so they basically had to enslave themselves to those above them in the pecking order to prove their humility to them, to ingratiate themselves to proud men and move up the food chain. It didn't happen to anybody who took that kind of council that kind of manipulation, seriously. They were caught over there, cleaning all the toilets and never were seen anymore, so it was only the proud young men who found their way into the highest places, just perpetuating the cycle. Again, moving to the lowest place is a means of getting the highest place. That's nothing more than pride masquerading as humility, and that is not what Jesus' teaching here.

So what is he's saying? What is the point? That's our Third Point is the point. The point is the honor of humble estimation. Number 3, the point, the honor of humble estimation. It's not unlikely that Jesus adapted this parable, he told from Proverbs 25:6 and 7, which says this, "Do not put yourself forward in the King's presence or stand in the place of the great. For it is

better to be told come up here than to be put lower in the presence of a noble."

As lawyers and Pharisees, we might think that they would be familiar with all the wisdom literature, but since wisdom is attainable only to the humble, to those who live in the fear of the Lord, they can stare at those texts all they want to, but because of their pride, they will never get the lessons that the wisdom literature are teaching. So Jesus saw fit to remind them of the principles of wisdom and humility, and the fear of the Lord. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Knowledge of the holy one is understanding."

If you don't fear the Lord, you don't have wisdom. All the knowledge in the world will not help you overcome your folly. The Pharisees root problem is their folly. It's the presumptive pride of self-promotion, thinking more highly of themselves than they ought to think. Rather than thinking with sober estimation and sound judgment.

Paul asked the Corinthians who were sinning this same kind of pharisaical sin of pride. "What do you have that you have not

received?" You weren't born into this world. Like everybody recognizing your greatness. You're born in this world and things were given to you. Opportunities were given to you. You're born into a certain station in life and out of that station, you were able to advance, and you had all your limbs, and your mind, and your eyes, and your, everything that God is granted to you. You had air to breath. Then you, you were able to use that for a benefit.

"So if you've received it, why do you boast as if you hadn't received it?" It's the sin of pride. It's blinding to. So how do you spot the problem? How do you detect the pride of self-promotion? Look at verse 11, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled. And he who humbles himself will be exalted." There's an active component there, isn't there? You have to be active, know it, trusting that what Jesus says is true. You have to trust that what he says is true, that you are proud by your sinful nature. You're proud, it's there. So if you trust that, then you have to actively humble yourself.

You have to make decisions in your life in what you say, what you don't say and what you do, what you don't do, how you

behave, and how you will not behave. You have to make decisions actively against your pride. As, as it said, it's not whether we have pride, it's where is it and how much is there?

So the question we need to ask ourselves is, am I seeking to exalt myself or am I seeking to humble myself? Is this an active component that humble myself in my life? The honest answer to that question. That's what we're after here. And it really is the grace of God to reveal it to us. What we're prone to ignore, to be oblivious to, because pride is such a blinding sin.

We need to leave it to somebody else to help us to see it, and thankfully God has said in his grace he will expose our pride to us if we ask. The lesson here in Jesus' parable, the point, kind of threading its way through the parable, is that we need to leave it to somebody else to exalt, honor and esteem us. It's not our prerogative to seek it for ourselves.

We especially need to be wary of that scene in our hearts, in our thinking. So whenever you think, hey, I don't deserve, then fill in the blank, or when you think, wait a minute I

deserve, and then you fill in the blank. That's a danger sign. When you start thinking you deserve something other than death in hell for offending God, when you cease to be grateful, when you cease to be content with your station, when you cease to be content with your pay, your possessions, your relations, when you stop remembering and being conscious of the fact that on your own merits, what you truly deserve is death in hell because of the sins that you've committed against a holy, righteous God, who is your judge.

When you forget that all that you have, you have by God's grace that you breathe the air by God's mercy, when you forget any of that and you think otherwise, you're in danger. So, actively cultivate humility as Jesus says in, verse 11 by actively humbling yourself, you let somebody else exalt you, your job, humble yourself. Same principle as Proverbs 27:2, "Let another praise you and not your own mouth, a stranger, not your own lips." In fact, verse 11, is the key to interpreting Jesus' parable and knowing the point.

The possible source material of that verse, verse 11, is Proverbs 25, Proverbs 25:6 and 7. And there it says in Proverbs

25:6 and 7, "do not put yourself forward in the King's presence, or stand in the place of the great, where it's better to be told. Come up here than to be put lower in the presence of a noble."

So again, who is it that's telling you? Come up here. Whose voice is that? It's the King's voice speaking either through the king or through one of his, envoys, one of his servants. Someone representing the king, someone expressing the King's wishes. The King is the only one in the Kingdom with the right to demote and promote his subjects. So that's why it's inappropriate in his Kingdom to put yourself forward. It's not your place. As soon as you've done that, you've stepped out of your lane.

King's prerogative not yours to promote and demote. Same thing in Jesus' parable. Who has the power in verses 8 to 10? Whose prerogative is it to demote and promote at the wedding feast? Three times it says one in each verse you were invited by someone. In verse 8, it's the one who invited you verse 9 and it's your host in verse 10. The host's prerogative. It's his right, his money, his power, it's his role. It's not the

productive of the guests to create the guest list to make the seating arrangements and enforce them tears.

Host exalts the guests and any guests who tries to usurp a position and take honor for himself. That one will be debased. That's the parable, and in verse 11, Jesus gives the greater principle. That's the key to unlock the meaning of the parable to interpret and apply it correctly. "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled." Future tense passive voice, and "He who humbles himself will be exalted," future tense, passive voice, will be humbled will be exalted. The passive voice there hides the subject. In this case, the subject is clearly God.

God is the one who will in the future. He'll right all wrongs. He's the God of all justice. There's a lot of injustice in this world we're hearing cries for social justice, racial justice. All kinds of concern about justice, but no one understands justice. There is not one unifying principle absolute authority that says here is the standard. Here is the righteous way "Walk ye in it and I will judge according to that standard."

According to the world, it's all relative, so if everything is relative, if all morality and ethics are relative or it's just by social consensus and convention? And there is no standard, and there is no such thing as justice or injustice. There's nothing to complain about. But we know that to be false, nobody lives that way. That's why you hear the cries for justice. That's why you see the fingers pointed at injustice, injustice, injustice. There's a longing in the heart.

God put it there longing in the heart for justice. And there is an absolute standard, the righteousness of God based on his holy character that does not change. He is the lawgiver. He is the judge. He will bring justice to pass. Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, abased, humiliated, demoted. Everybody who humbles himself will be exalted subject is God. God is the one who in the future. Rights all wrongs he humbles he debases he humiliates all those who try to exalt themselves in this life, and then, conversely. It's God who is the one who will also in the future exalt those who humble themselves before him. Those who walk meekly before others.

What Jesus teaches these lawyers and Pharisees. It draws on a lesson that is replete in Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. So many places to see that theme of God's opposition to the proud, but his gracious dealings with the humble. And it's a good summary in Proverbs 3:33 to 35, "The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked but he blesses the dwelling of the righteous. Toward the scorers he is scornful. but to the humble, he gives grace. The wise will inherit honor, but fools get disgrace."

Negatively, God curses the wicked, scorns the scorers, disgraces the fools. But positively, God blesses the righteous, gives grace to the humble, and he bestows honor on the wise. Short version, God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Again, it's the same thing, Young Mary said, reflecting on her Bible reading and Bible knowledge and understanding that God has quote, "scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts."

Luke 1, "He's brought down the mighty from their Thrones and the rich he sent away empty." May not come to pass in this life, but it will come to pass. Her head is full of biblical

narrative thinking of Kora, Dothan, and Abiram. Thinking of Amalek and Edom, Ahab and Jezebel, Sennacherib, and Nebuchadnezzar, and so many other stories that illustrate that principle.

As Calvin says, "Scripture is full of similar testimonies that God is an enemy. To all who desire to exalt themselves as all who claim for themselves, any merit must have necessity. Make war with him." Don't make war with God. You'll come out on the losing end every time. Reflecting on God's ways, Mary also thought this, about his exalting the humble, "God has shown strength with his arm."

She says, "God has "exalted those of humble estate. Filled the hungry with good things. It's helped his servant Israel and remembrance of his mercy. She remembered Joseph hated by his brothers. They wanted to murder him with the cast into a pit so they could make a profit off of his misfortune. But God exalted him in Egypt, made him second only to Pharaoh. Sarah was treated with contempt by the proud Hagar, but God exalted her, giving her a baby. Leah was treated as a rival by her sister Rachel in having children, but God exalted her making another mother of

the of, of most of Israel, including Judah, the Messianic tribe. Greatly honored.

Hannah too was barren. God gave her Samuel. David was treated by with distain by his brothers and then through his life by Saul, Nabal, Absalom, Shimei, God exalted him as well, in spite of all their efforts to demote him and kill him. God exalted David made an everlasting covenant with David, which he has fulfilled all the promises about the Messiah. All those so many more examples. They humbled themselves before God, they were actively promoting their own humility. Pursuing their own humility. God exalted them.

Again, it's John Calvin who says this, "Humility must not only be an unfeigned abasement, but a real annihilation of ourselves." Love that language. But it's shocking to the modern sensibilities, the modern era. Annihilation of the self? Today it's all about self-esteem, identity, identity, politics. Humility is about a real annihilation of ourselves, proceeding from a thorough knowledge of our own weakness. The entire absence of lofty pretensions and a conviction that whatever excellence we possess comes from the grace of God alone.

That is sound pastoral wisdom from John Calvin from the 16th century. And it bas, it's based entirely on what it means to be a Christian. Knowing our own weakness, before God. Knowing all in weakness and pleasing him. We need his grace. It all comes from God. Even the ability to believe comes from him regenerating us, causing us to be born again that we might be having new nature. That out of that new nature we are even enabled to believe and repent of our sins. Has nothing to do with us. Everything to do with him. Humility from the start.

That's what Christianity is. What it means to be a Christian is about mortifying every lofty pretension. Every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God. We tear down first in ourselves. It's about killing every selfish ambition. It's about knowing that whatever we have we have by God's grace, that's what Christianity is. That's how it's lived.

It's about the end of you. As Paul said in Galatians 2:20. "I've been crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me and the life that I now live in, the flesh I live by faith in the son of God. [It's about him, not

about me.] The one who loved me, the one who gave himself up for me.”

Look if the author of our salvation. If he considered that his life was nothing more than a living sacrifice, pleasing the will of God, saving and serving us by saving us, by dying for us, that he humbled himself to the point of death. Yes, even the death of a cross, should we not follow? He's not only the author of our faith, he is the perfecter of our faith. We walk after his pattern by his grace.

Jesus here advises telling this parable advises humility. Not to gain honor for self. And it's really not even about wedding feasts and banquets and meals or anything like that. It's about an attitude of the heart. Honor does come through humility. But Jesus advises humility for humility sake, because it is such a blessed precious virtue, it's a, it's what Gurnall? William Gurnall, the Puritan writer calls “A self-emptying virtue.” The virtue that it doesn't promote anything about itself, it empties itself.

It's about being content with your station. It's about leaving the results to those above you. Those who are in a position to either honor you or not honor you. Being content with that. And ultimately, it's about leaving the results to God because God is the one who works in the authorities and the people around you either honor or not to honor you. So be content with God's decision.

It's very wise counsel from Jesus. As Godet says, by following Jesus' counsel by taking the lowest place, he says quote, "We run no other risk than that of being exalted. Because from the lowest place there's nowhere to go but up." We leave it to God and his will to place us in the station of his choosing. And we give thanks for all things in Christ. Let's do that.

Father, we do thank you for all things in Christ and because of Christ we know that in our, in and of ourselves we are nothing. In fact, anything that we are or have because of sins affect in us because we're born in sin and have a sin nature. Everything we have in our is really an offense to you. "There is no one righteous, not even one. No one who does good. No one that pleases God, none who seeks after God."

Father, that's the doctrine of depravity. Total depravity that we all affirmed, acknowledged, and admits confess. But when we come to you and admit our sinfulness and our need for a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who took our place dying in our place on the cross, taking our sins upon himself that you would pour your wrath out on him. We see that he has done it all. He has done the works that no one could do.

He, being the perfect, sinless, spotless sacrifice, he should not have died for his own, so he didn't have any sin. He should not have died. He should have been protected. But you were pleased to crush him. Put him to grief and open shame. Because you placed our sin, that is shameful. That is sorrowful. You placed it on him. And you punished him instead of us. He died on that cross because at your hand, ultimately. He was buried in a tomb. You did not leave him in the grave because you were pleased with that sacrifice. You raised him from the dead.

Raised him bodily and he walked and lived and spoke to his, to his people for 40 days before he was ascended into heaven bodily, where he is now at your right-hand interceding for us,

even praying for these people. Now in this service at this time. Just as he spoke to those lawyers and Pharisees long ago, our Lord Jesus speaks to us through these words written in Scripture.

Pray father that by your grace, by your kindness. These words would hit their intended mark. That they would be targeted to those in this room. Particularly those among us who profess to know you, who are Christians. May there not be a whatever trace of pride we find ourselves. May there not be an indifference to it. Let us track it down, pursue it, hunt it down and kill it. And instead foster a spirit of humility in our lives in this church let us be meek people, humble, submissive to you, for your glory, for the name and honor of Christ. Because it's in his name we pray, amen.